

2011 Wall to Wall Ride

Diary of the Baton Run

After the success of the 2011 Wall to Wall ride to Canberra, the National Committee and motivators for the event, decided to 'co-opt' the magnificent wood turning skills of NSW Superintendent Stan Single to strike commemorative batons for each Policing jurisdiction within Australia. Stan has hand made these batons, and engraved each with the Police emblem for the relevant area. Each baton has been hollowed out and comes apart to reveal a compartment big enough to take a roll of parchment. The thought being that if a member pays the ultimate price between wall to wall rides, their name and details will be inserted in the baton and conveyed to our National memorial by a rider designated by the relevant Commissioner.

On behalf of the National Committee, I can say that we all fervently hoped that each baton would remain empty. Unfortunately, Queensland will be placing two names inside their baton, Acting Sergeant Dan Stiller who died in tragic circumstances while escorting a wide load, and Detective Senior Constable Damien Leeding who was murdered by armed robbers while attempting to arrest them as they fled the scene of their crime. Both Police Officers left behind young families who will forever feel the pain of their lost loved one.

As Police Officers, we swear an oath to serve and protect our communities, we all know that we may one day be asked to pay a terrible price, but we do that willingly. When tragedy strikes as it too often does, we gather together to mourn. At these times, it is heartening to see Police Officers from all jurisdictions stand as one to honour a comrade. But there is more, there is an undercurrent of steely resolve to ensure that loved ones are cared for and lost comrades are never forgotten.

Police Officers from all over our great land contributed via their Police Associations to the formation of the National Police Memorial in Canberra. We have a National Police Remembrance Day when the whole community can gather to honour our fallen heroes. But we have also now created the "Wall to Wall" ride or event when Police Officers, their families and friends can gather to remember their mates, make a pilgrimage from their home States/Territories memorials, to the National memorial. The event is designed to raise monies for Police Legacies – the organisations that look after those left behind through financial, welfare and moral support.

The wonderful batons will add to the event.

On Thursday the 7th of July, National Chairman, Inspector Brian Rix from Victoria, accompanied by Senior Constable Georg Berk will collect the batons from Superintendent Stan Single and deliver them to each Commissioner or their representative. The ride is symbolic by demonstrating the common bond we all share. While the task of riding around the country is not an easy one, this small hardship is nothing compared to the hardships and sacrifices our members make to keep our communities safe all hours of the day and night.

Brian and Georg commenced their ride from Melbourne, you can follow their journey on the wall to wall website under 'baton run'.

Wednesday July 6.

0700 – Oh my God that's early! _ Not really for a police officer, we just wanted to use that famous line from "Good Morning Vietnam. Weather was cold and foreboding but at least it wasn't raining. The rain started at Clonbinane and didn't stop until we got to Gundagai. It certainly tested the waterproof clothing and bags. Temperature got down to 6 degrees, but for most of the day it was 8 degrees. Then the rain started again in Yass Valley. By the time we got to the Hotel in Canberra, the hot showers were most welcome. Travelling was a good steady pace with no dramas. The inevitable photo with the dog on the tuckbox was also taken. 690 kilometres for the day – averaging slightly over 100KPH, fuel consumption knocked around by the wild weather.

Thursday July 7

Commissioner Negus – who rode in the event last year was very pleased to see us and ensured that the baton would hold pride of place in AFP HQ. He will again ride this year if he can. Commissioner Negus has also made the International Deployment Group facility available for a Sunday morning breakfast on the 18th after the wall to wall ride and before we all return home. The Sponsors will be there with their new bikes for us all to look over and maybe test ride. Stay upright and other 'professionals' are planning to give us a 'bike control demonstration'.

NSW Sup't Stan Single gave a description of the woods he used and the time and effort that went into making the batons. At least three hours each!

After all presentations we ensured all the batons were well wrapped and then it was up the Hume highway up to Sydney.. 328 k's for the day. Uneventful run, although still cold and windy.

Friday July 8.

After good night with gracious hosts, it was off to Richmond for the next presentation. We were met at Richmond by Act. Deputy Commissioner Mick CORBOY on his Harley and looking resplendent in his bike gear! Senior Sergeant Paul BOUSFIELD met up and had 2011 shirts for us. After checking out the badges, hats and shirts that will be for sale we travelled behind Mick's Harley to the NSW Leadership centre at the University of Western Sydney. Acting Commissioner Cath BURNS was gracious in accepting the NSW Baton and stated that her partner Peter rides a Suzuki Hyabusa! Ms Burns ensured that Commissioner Schipione was also looking forward to this year's event and would be riding with his members into Canberra. NSW Police Association Scott Webber came out to the hand over ceremony but made no commitment to ride! Come on Scotty – it won't mess up your hair too much!

There were quite a few photos taken with the Media contingent for NSW Police media, NSW Police Association journal and well wishers from the course being conducted at the Leadership centre. Finally left at 1345 hrs. Weather was good, clear

and sunny but still a chill in the air. The Putty Road was all it promised to be but with the late start, the sun was getting low and gave a new dimension to blind corners. Refuel at Singleton and off again. By now it was getting dark and COLDDDDDD. The temp gauge on the 1200GS was showing 4 degrees. To top it off it was dark for the last 40-50kays coming into Tamworth – the GPS started to play up, not sure if it got too cold to work or operator error due to frozen fingers trying to push the buttons and stuffing it up! . Time to thaw out and have a feed at the local pub. The locals were in full flight, we didn't win the meat raffle and there were genuine and not so genuine cowboys floating around the cowgirls. Georg and I retired early! 442 km for the day.

Saturday 9

We woke up to the radio saying it was minus 5.5 degrees! Stuck my nose out the door and nearly got frost bite! We covered the bikes last night but there was still plenty of ice on everything. A light breakfast, quick top up of fuel, the obligatory photo of the bikes at the 'big guitar' and it was off to Brisbane. The Temp gauge on the bike kept flashing its "ice on road warning" – it does that if the temperature gets below 2.5. Up and over the mountain out of Tamworth was great although we should have put more clothes on! I still can't get the GPS to work properly so no music, just the thundering wind noise – must put the ear plugs in. Georg enjoys the sweeping bends as we push on to Glenn Innes for fuel and coffee – Maccas coffee is improving. Even though we are continually heading North, there is no appreciable raise in the temperature. Re-fuel bikes and us at Warwick and then the run into Brisbane. There are significant road works coming down the mountains into Brisbane with kilometre plus long queues. We trickle the bikes up towards the front and hear the truckies on the radio grizzling and one states he wants to knock us off the bikes – I'm sure they are just frustrated. GPS is still not working but after contacting QPU President Ian Leavers, we find our way to the QPS Police Academy without taking a wrong turn (its right next to the freeway). We have a room each, Commissioner Bob Atkinson rang to ensure all was alright and Georg and I walk over to the Oxley Hotel for a quiet meal – just what we need – an early night. 574 Kays for the day

Sunday 10th July

Attempted to re-configure the GPS, no joy, it's frozen, can't input locations, view the map or worst of all, play music!!

Queensland Wall to Wall Liaison office Acting Inspector Bradyn Murphy and his family are at the Academy bright and early, Assistant Commissioners, and Commissioner Atkinson. Some of the local Blue knights attend with their President, Inspector Johan (Taz) Tennerman, 6 of them on their bikes. Bradyn has organised marked motorcycles to attend and help escort us out of Brisbane. QPU President Ian Leavers is there with his young son Jack. We hold a small ceremony with some heartfelt words. Commissioner Atkinson put it all into perspective as we remembered Dan Stiller and Damien Leeding – two young men who leave behind young families – that is why this event is raising money for Police Legacies. The organisers of this event have committed that every cent raised by each jurisdiction goes back to their Legacy to support families of members left behind.

Commissioner Atkinson stated he would follow the ride from Sydney and attend our event in Canberra in September, I look forward to meeting him there.

Georg and I were escorted out of town by the marked motorcycle escort and Taz and his Blue Knights Queensland contingent as far as the freeway turn off to the hills. They took that for a little scenic ride while Georg and I pushed Westwards into a strong headwind. We make our overnight stop in Roma well before dark. An easy 477 Km cruise.

Monday 11th July

We're trying for an early start today – frost on the ground, chill in the air but not too bad. Nice Breakfast, pack up, load up the bikes, go to fire up – Dead Battery on my GS – Bugger, These things pull a lot of power and there is no way I want to jump start the beast. A call to RACQ and we are waiting around the motel. The owner gives me the name of the local battery and tyre service centre. A quick call to 'Nola', she checks their stock and low and behold, they have a motorcycle battery – two blokes come out in the truck, check out the battery is exactly what I need before filling it with acid. It fires up straight away. I make a call to RACQ to cancel their service, while on the phone, their truck rolls in. Oh well. \$150 for a battery out here is not too bad. Finally on the road an hour and a half after we intended.

Crossing the Darling Downs you start to get a sense of the outback, the open highway, big sky, broad horizon views and road kill everywhere. 'Roos by the hundred lie dead – all shapes and sizes a couple of wild pigs as well. Also live Emus just standing next to the road – I hate Emus, from previous experiences they are so unpredictable, we slow to a crawl waiting for them to dart back across our bows. We push on and make Longreach before dark – a couple of quick photos next to the Qantas Jumbo and into the motel for the night.

We are told by the fellow motorcyclist Motel operator the RSL is the best feed in town, sure enough the obligatory bus tour is in there, always a good sign. Georg orders the spare ribs – small serve, It's massive, Georg ends up with half the BBQ sauce over his face to the amusement of several patrons. 700 plus kilometres for the day.

Tuesday 12th July

We are up at a reasonable hour, the morning is the best yet so we hit the road at 0830. Now we are really into the Eastern reaches of the outback, long straight roads. Many bumps and roads works, courtesy of the Road Trains and recent flood damage. We make good time, pull up at Winton for a Morning coffee and re-fuel, a nice little town and main street with a classic outback pub. Three old men sitting at tables outside the pub having a beer at 10am! Too early for me! Georg has relinquished to the wind noise and gets some ear plugs. We both use them – I can still hear the UHF radio and truckie talk even with the plugs in. We decide to push on to Cloncurry for the next fuel stop – we pass such icons as "Walk-About Creek hotel the name made famous by the original Crocodile Dundee movie. Georg is leading and slows down dramatically as we come to some road works 40 kays out of Cloncurry. I look down as his front

tyre deflates before my eyes. We pull off to the side of the road. We can't find a puncture so I use the portable compressor running off my bike to put some air in. We find that the rubber valve insert for the tubeless tyre is split down the side. We try several fixes, including the tyre glue normally used for punctures with gaffer tape – no luck. I leave him on the side of the road and ride into Cloncurry – find the local tyre repair place – their main clients are the road trains but they do have a replacement valve and a truck to go out and pick Georg up. I have a rest and follow up back to help Georg. I get there and no truck! The driver sailed straight past and didn't see him a little way off the road in the shade. A wasted 45 minutes and he finally back tracks. We haul the bike up on the truck and off into the repair shop. They won't pull the wheel out because they don't want to held responsible if something goes wrong. Okay, we do it. I ring my mechanic Phil Marshall just to make sure I have the routine right for Georg's bike. Within 5 minutes we have it out, the boys have the new valve in within 2 minutes and we put the wheel back in easily. For the tow and repair, they sting Georg \$100. Pretty fair really. We fuel up and head out of town into the setting sun through Roo country. I use all the lights I have, ride with the Visor up and eyes as big as saucers. We see plenty of cattle including a huge white Brahma bull surveying the road put no hoppers trying to commit suicide. We crest a raise and see the bright lights of Mt Isa – beautiful! Because the GPS isn't working I accost a taxi driver, a couple in a car park and a nice young lady on a push bike for directions and eventually finally make our way to our Motel.

A courtesy bus to the Irish Club, a feed of Barramundi and in bed at a reasonable hour. What a day – This was supposed to be 646 Kays but another 700 plus day for me.

Wednesday 13th July

Mt Isa, breakfast at Maccas, coffee is OK, phone calls made and it's on the road again. We re-fuel near the border and bump into two guys on Harley's heading our way. They're heading to Alice Springs. While we leave after them and stop at the border for the obligatory photo, they are doing the same thing. We make good time to the next fuel stop at again, they Harley boys are there. Talking to these guys, one of them says they carry octane booster they put in their fuel because the fuel outback is 'pretty ordinary' – especially for bikes that prefer 95 or above octane rating. We have a longer break and then head for three ways. A wide load escort answers our CB call and moves over to let us past. An easy run today, still plenty of road kill. We make our way South to Tennant Creek, fuel up so we can get away at a reasonable hour. I have a few spots of oil over the rear of the bike, it looks like small weeps from the bottom of the gearbox. A bit of a worry, we get to the Police Station and try and raise someone – Vince Kelly has arranged some accommodation in the Police facilities. We get onto Pauline Williams and her husband Ken who are great characters and auxiliary police officers. We find the officers accommodation which is great, a quick shower, throw the washing in and then get picked up and taken to the sporting club for dinner, then it's back to the rear of the Police station where they have their own 'club' between the police and fire stations. A great idea where the members can unwind in private – very important in small country towns, particularly in the outback. They have a gym, playground for the kids and a wet bar for the bigger kids!

663 kilometres and a good time in Tennant Creek.

Thursday 14th July.

It's up early, I get some gearbox oil and check levels in the gearbox and diff – all good. As we head out of town there are a few spots of rain. We take advantage of the 130KPH limit out here and push along at a good pace but you still have to very wary of wandering stock and wildlife. Re-fuelling on the way we start to notice the bikes labouring a bit but push on as the temperature rises. By the time we get to Katherine its nudging 34 degrees and we are starting to get tired. We push on the last 300 kays to Darwin and all of a sudden the tediousness of traffic and traffic lights, not large by Southern capital standards but that seems so long ago. We are hot and bothered and pull up for a cool drink. Vince Kelly and his lovely wife Andrea are putting us up at Chateau Kelly and we are just around the corner. Vince meets us and puts on a wonderful feed of curry, cold beers, red wine and Whiskey!!! We have a another great night sitting outside yarning. 990 kilometres covered today.

Friday 15th July

Andrew from the NT traffic on his BMW police bike, he escorts us to the Police facility out of town where there are half a dozen bikes waiting to travel into town. There resplendent on his K1300S BMW sports bike is Commissioner John McRoberts. We make an eclectic group travelling under police escort – our dirty well travelled steeds, the Commissioner on his shiny new sports bike, a couple of Harleys thundering along and a Suzuki Hyabusa. We are greeted at the Darwin memorial in the park overlooking the harbour by the Police chaplain, the NT Police Association Executive and some other officers and on lookers. We say a few prayers with the Police ode, and present the NT Baton to Commissioner McRoberts. A moving and simple ceremony. Mr McRoberts formally greets us warmly and accepts the baton, promising to ensure its safe delivery on the wall to wall run.

Georg and I head into town and create a bit of interest in the main street where we park and have a cool drink, just like the locals. Around to the Police Association for a lunch with the Executive and discuss their issues – policing is the same everywhere with the same problems, we compare notes. We check out the rear tyres but they seem to be wearing very well and don't need replacing. Later that night it's out to the Irish tavern with Vince and a few of his mates and out for a great Asian feast.

Saturday 16th July

It's up early again, Vince sees us off as he heads of on his push bike to the Gym – he can ride two wheels but hasn't graduated to something with an engine, we need to work on him! We fill up on the outskirts of town and return back down the Stuart Highway to Katherine, the bikes again seem to be labouring, maybe there is something in the low quality of fuel up here? A quick pit stop at Katherine and it's off towards the Western Australian border along the Victoria Highway. The country side was fairly lush and the Victoria River spectacular. We take a break at Timber Creek and head for the border. At the WA Checkpoint the Inspector wants to open my panniers looking for fruit, that's fine by me, you shouldn't carry anything that could spread crop diseases.. We get to Kununurra at a reasonable hour and are surprised at the quality of accommodation the Western Australian Police Union

President and good mate Russell Armstrong has arranged for us at the Kimberley Grande. A great pool Georg and I take advantage of a couple of quiet beers to wash the dust down and early to bed again. Darwin to Kununurra – 830 kilometres.

Sunday 17th July

Breakfast as early as we can and we hit the road, we fuelled up last night to get an early start, this is the first of a series of long days in the saddle so we push on. The road and traffic is okay with the ever present road trains and their exceptional drivers who are in the main, very, very good. There are also plenty of grey nomads who are on the roads from about 10am, adjourn for lunch at 12 and then travel a bit before most getting off the roads by around 3 or 4 in the afternoon. A big eagle is a bit slow taking off from a piece of road kill and I have to duck as his talons clear my helmet by about 6 inches – they are a magnificent creature but I'd hate to hit one. It's a break at Halls Creek, another at Fitzroy crossing, another at Wilare Bridge road house and then a dash in the fading light for Broome. A bloody great snake crossing the road in front of me opens the eyes a bit wider than normal!

We eventually find our hotel - another good choice, the Mangrove Resort. As we unpack a band starts up, we go around to the grassed area overlooking the mangroves and there are people everywhere, it's a full moon and they are all waiting for the moon to rise over the shallow waters with the reflection creating a 'stairway to the moon' effect. The haunting sounds of a well played didgeridoo accompany the moon as it peaks through the clouds. A nice feed and it's off to bed with the band calling it a night at a sensible hour.

1045 kilometres travelled today and a 'moon show' to boot.

Monday 18th July

From Broome we back track to the Great Northern Highway and punch into a head and cross wind to the Sandfire Road house. A bleak place but a must do stop for us. We meet up with a husband and wife from Perth on their Harleys heading South like us, we follow along shortly after a good break and make the run to Port Headland. We head into this bustling industrial town to take on petrol and sustenance for us and have a good break. The road trains are covered in diesel encrusted red dust, as is everything else and monstrous locomotives hooked up to iron ore carrying railway carriages that can be kilometres long. Luckily for us they are in siding and not crossing the roads right now. We continue South heading inland on the Great Northern Highway stopping at the Munjina Road house on the edge of the Karuni National Park. We meet up again with the husband and wife Harley riders who are camping here for the night. We still have 190 kays to cover and head off with the setting sun at our backs. The colour spectrum puts on a great light show with the setting sun on the rugged ranges as the cooler night air gives us some relief. Again, its eyes wide open for wild life and cattle, horses etc. We watch a well fed dingo skulk off into the bushes as he hears the bikes approaching. We trundle into Newman right on 6pm, I spot a BP road house open and head there to fill up for tomorrow. The dirt road leading in is pretty rough and I look in the mirror to see Georg's headlight at a funny angle. He has hit a pot hole that is so deep it stops the front wheel dead in its tracks. Georg is laying on one side clutching his knee. Shit! I

race back and pick up his bike. Thankfully he is okay but may have torn a muscle at the back of his left knee as he tried to stop the bike from going over. Only a couple of scratches on the bike and a bruised ego – as any rider with any common sense will tell you, it can happen to us all, it was just Georg's turn tonight. We re-gather ourselves and ring the local S/Sgt, Shane Sadler. Shane greets us at the service station and guides us to the local SES centre where we have a couple of donga style rooms. Accommodation in Newman is very expensive and hard to find with a typical motel style room costing around \$200 a night. Connie from the local SES gives us bedding and states because we are on a charity run, they won't charge us anything for rooms. Shane let's us freshen up, picks us up and gives us a cook's tour of Newman. What a strange place, it goes 24 hours a day, lights up the night sky with the constant glare of lights from the mines and ore processing plant. The view from the highest pint in town is quite amazing at night. Then it's back to Shane's house for a home cooked BBQ the lovely Sue complementing the food with some baked potatoes, followed up with a warm pie for desert. Life's tough on the road!!

Shane is on the board of WA Police Legacy and organises the "Bloody Slow Cup fund raiser at Newman for Legacy – It's a great event that we should try and get back to one year. Shane runs us back to the SES and we turn in for the night.

Another big day 1070 kilometres, a dropped bike and a bit of sight seeing.

Tuesday 19th July

We get the earliest start of the trip so far after a couple of muesli bars and a coffee. Despite the offer of a free bed, we leave some money for Connie and the SES boys and girls, they do a great job and need everything that comes their way to continue their community service. We hit the road with the rising sun, with only the road trains for company. A stop at the Kumarina Road House to fuel up Georg's bike and it's off to Meekatharra. We get there before lunch and pull up for a good break. The local BP service Station has Asian people running the kitchen and the food is really quite good, Georg's looks on with a bit of envy at my 'burger with the lot! South of Meekatharra the road is under water and we slow down as a fool in a 4WD hits the water too hard and almost aqua planes. He disappears in the water spray and comes out the other side a lot slower than when he went in. We trickle through the water and give the underside of the bikes a good wash. It's an easy run to Mount Magnet for more fuel and then off to Wubin and the start of the WA wheat belt towns to the North of Perth. Georg and I marvel at the change of scenery and on the bike you get to feel the changes in the air. We come into undulating hills and sweeping corners, but the tighter roads make passing the road trains more difficult. We roll into Wubin, fill up the tanks and make our way to the Dulwallinu Hotel – our rooms for the night, again organised by Russell Armstrong and his team at the WAPU. A good feed in the very friendly hotel we meet up with a couple of fellow travellers, a father and son in law team doing a 'road trip' – the son in law has obvious cancer and their little bonding trip is doing him wonders – he loves raced horses and gives us some tips for the local races on the weekend.

Another big one today, 960 kilometres.

Wednesday 20th July

An easy day today, we have a leisurely breakfast and mount up for the for the very pleasant 150 odd kilometres to the Bindoon Bakery. Where Blue Knights Australia President Mel Ainsworth has arranged to meet us with a 'few' riders – he tells me. The WA countryside coming through he is really lovely, hills, green and a complete contrast from the striking colours of the desert. New Norcia is a pretty place, established as a monastery and now quite a tourist attraction. We don't have the time to explore but will be back to have a good look one day. The Bakery is beckoning. We arrive before the Blue knights contingent and settle down to good coffee and pastries to await their arrival. Next minute 20 plus bikes roll in, complete with support ute. We are presented with Blue Knights hats, greeted like long lost brothers and generally made to feel very welcome. Mel, Paul and their merry men are a great bunch. Mel has organised a new rear tyre for me and anything else we want/need.

The WA Commissioner and confirmed motorcyclist Karl O'Callaghan has everything planned out for our arrival so we mount up and head off as one at the appointed time. We wend our way through the local wine district in the upper reaches of the Swan River and into Perth where we are met with a motorcycle escort. We re-group just around the corner from WA police HQ and proceed in again under escort. As we arrive on the forecourt, the band is playing and Karl is there to greet us with local media. He makes us very welcome in the media room and is obviously quite touched with the baton containing the names of all WA Police officers killed on duty. The gathered people nod in agreement as I talk about the reasons for the wall to wall ride, the baton and how we should never forget those who sacrificed everything for their community. It's the Australian way and let's hope it never diminishes. Karl reaffirms those values and has added to the events impetus in WA by his drive to involve sponsors and encourage his police officers to participate. As Chairman of the event this year, I am grateful for his efforts here in WA. I also am very grateful to WAPU President Russell Armstrong for his support for the participants this year, and also for being such a great host to Georg and myself.

As we wind up the formalities, it buckets down and we get a little damp riding to our hotel, once again organised by Russell.

We get picked up in a taxi by Russell and out to dinner with Karl, Greg Italiano and Deputy Commissioner Steve Brown. All are riding to Canberra this year again. My good mate Russell will also be in Canberra, but I can't convince him to ride all the way – he tells me he will mount up on a pillion seat for the final run to the wall – I will hold him to that. Rex Haw, an old friend now working as media advisor for Karl is there – he won't be riding, so he is the odd man out.

Only 320 kilometres today, easy!

Thursday 21st July

A day off the bike today - supposedly. My back tyre is down to the wear markers and is badly squared off. It had nearly 4K on it before the start of the trip and could get me home at a pinch but I've learnt from hard experience, don't take a chance with tyres on a motorcycle. We've been held up with riders who try to eek out every last bit of rubber on a long trip only to get a flat in some remote place. It's just not worth it. Mel Ainsworth meets me at the hotel, so it's back on the bike and a ride to "Tyres

for bikes” in Victoria Park. We share a coffee and a yarn and the new tyre is on in half an hour then back to the Hotel in Como, just out of Perth.

Mel Ainsworth and the Blue Knights have organised dinner at one of their favourite places. It starts out with only a few, but ends up with about 30 – we take over the restaurant with a lot of good natured banter that tends to happen when motorcyclists get together – Last years party after the wall to wall ride was just like that.

After a great night Georg and I sleep well.

Friday 22nd July

We pack the bikes and have an early breakfast, next thing there are half a dozen Blue knights bikes out the front to help escort us out of town – or to make sure we leave! We gear up and head for the nearest freeway. The tyre pressure indicator on my bike starts flashing low pressure in the rear so we need to pull off and check it out. Some fancy manoeuvres through the early morning traffic get me to the nearest service station. The tyre is down to 22psi. No problem, I think, just re-inflate it and see what happens. First problem. The tyre fitters have replace the tubeless valve in the rim with a metal one, which is great, but on the bike, the hub is too close to the rim and I can’t fit the service station pump onto the valve! I break out my mini compressor much to the amusement of a couple of Blue Knights. It does the job and the tyre holds 42psi – it must have just been underinflated. I keep a close eye on the pressures via the dash read out but it doesn’t change, all okay.

We fuel up at Northam and say our goodbyes to the Blue Knights, they are really great guys and girls and made us feel so welcome in Perth. We make good time as we head North East. We take a break at Southern Cross and decide to have lunch. The place we choose has a couple of Harley’s parked outside. As we enter I notice there are three Gypsy Jokers OMCG’s with a girl inside. No dramas, they head off shortly afterwards heading towards Kalgoorlie. I have no issues with anyone who wants to ride a motorcycle but each to their own.

We have a great run South on the Eastern Highway through the undulating hills heading into Norseman and our digs for the night.

750 Kays for the day.

Saturday 23rd July

It’s up early and a 7.30am start, with the sun, it’s too dangerous to leave earlier due to the ‘roos and other wildlife. We are heading for the WA border town of Eucla. It’s a beautiful morning with a nice bite to the air. The only wild life we see is a bout 30 Emus pecking away – they are stupid creatures and liable to run in any direction if spooked. Some stick their heads up but don’t move in our direction. We pump out the kays and make good time, getting into Eucla early enough to go for a ride down to the old Telegraph post for some photos before a mist rolls in from the Great Australian Bight, blanketing everything in a thick fog.

Sunday 24th July

It's up early to make the last really big ride into Port Augusta. We get up at what should be just before dawn to be greeted by the thick fog that is still hanging around. After Breakfast, we decide to head off anyway, it's cold, wet and very poor visibility, I can count no more than four white lines before they disappear into the mist. Black shadows of road trains are grey nomad caravans loom out of the mist. Despite this, there is a small window of opportunity as the mist rises to catch a glimpse of the Great Australian Bight at one of the lookouts. The obligatory photo here and at the WA SA border, we move on.

The first 250 kilometres are covered accompanied by the thick fog which keeps us on our toes. After that, it's just a splash and dash fuel stop at Nundoo road house and then onto Wudina for the same and then Ceduna. We have a longer break here for a bight to eat. We sit in the sun and rest our tired bodies with some fish and chips - health food on the road! Georg makes a call and finds out that a dear friend, best man at his wedding has lost his battle with MS and passed away. We sit for a while before mounting up and making the final run into Port Augusta. It's been a long day so we break for fuel at Wudina and then hit the road again. There are few travellers at the sun sets quickly at this time of year. Road trains and a couple of intrepid travellers and that's about it. We come across one road train with smoke pouring off a nearside tyre. We smell it before actually seeing it - the joys of motorcycling. We try to call up the truckie on the UHF radio, another truck behind hears out call so hopefully the message is relayed. We pass through thick scrub, I want to try and get a photo of Iron Knob with the sun setting on it but we are too late. We continue on in the dark, I lead with the extra lights with eyes peeled for wildlife.

We make it into Port Augusta and contact SA Wall to wall co-ordinator Det/Sgt Peter Hore and meet him and his lovely Penny for dinner.

We have covered 980 kilometres today, traversed the Nullarbor plain, something everyone should do at least once.

Monday 25th July

We take out time this morning, up late, leisurely breakfast in town and then ride the 300 kilometres into Adelaide. It's windy coming down the East side of Spencer Gulf and my headlight globe blows, the yellow hazard light driving me nuts flashing at me from the dashboard. We find our way through to our hotel in South Terrace no problems and then meet up with Police Association of South Australia Mark Carroll, Andy Dunne and make our way to SAPOL headquarters, catching up with Peter Hore there. We meet with Commissioner Mal Hyde with several members of his Executive. They are all most welcoming with Mr Hyde stating the baton will hold pride of place at either their new Police Headquarters or the Academy. The members of Police Legacy present are most grateful for our efforts, although I imagine they think we are slightly mad! After a great afternoon tea, that reminds Georg and me that we missed lunch. Mr Hyde and I discuss the old days when he was in Victoria Police before taking up his current position.

Peter Hore is meeting some of the registered riders but before that I take off to get a new globe, the first bike shop doesn't have a dual filament globe and directs me to BMW. A new globe \$50 – bugger, they sure know how to charge.

Back to the meeting and we share a few laughs and ideas about travelling to Canberra and what to expect. They are a good bunch and are really looking forward to the adventure.

Back at the hotel and in the fading light I try to fit the new headlight globe only to discover that the wire spring retaining clip had broken away from its plastic mount, making the globe lose its fitting and probably causing it to blow. Georg and I fiddle around and I pack it out and hope for the best.

Dinner with our hosts Mark and Tania Carroll, Peter and Penny Hore and Georg's son who is in Adelaide on business was most pleasant.

Only 300 kilometres today.

Tuesday 26th July

We are down at the bikes early, packing up. We check out Georg's bike which has a slight oil leak coming from what we think is the pinion seal. It will be okay. I check out my bike and see a slight oil spray coming from the rear differential seal on the rear axle. This has been done before so I have been keeping an eye on it. We fuel up – ourselves first then the bikes and head out into the Adelaide hills and drizzling rain. We don't stop until Bordertown for a coffee and fuel. My rear diff is starting to leak a bit more.

We cross the border, take the photo of course and then head off. The road seems noticeably bad and there is plenty of roadwork happening. I pass a truck carrying sheep just before some road works when the traffic control signal turns to red. I slow to a stop and look in the rear view mirror to see the semi bearing down on me at a speed that looks like he isn't stopping. I take no chances and ride off into the dirt as he barrels through the red light. He would have driven over the top of me. Georg pulls up and we talk about how close that was and what a bloody idiot the dopy driver must be. There are some cowboys out there who are nothing more than dick heads here was a big one.

It is a salutary lesson, motorcycling is a great hobby but it has its dangers. You must be aware of everything around you at all times, front, back and sides.

We ride on without further incident, apart from a Kia people mover that wants to tailgate us, he barrels past in a road work speed zone, kids and all on board – another bloody idiot. Georg and I discuss how bad the road and drivers seem since we crossed back into Victoria!

A quick fuel stop at Ararat and then it's head for home – for a short while anyway. We hit Melbourne in peak hour traffic. The rear differential seal has gone again on the GS. Oil all over the rear wheel. It will have to be replaced before we head to Tasmania.

A home cooked meal, a sleep in our own beds for a change is most welcome.

740 kilometres today.

Wednesday 27th July

It's re-pack the bike, Georg and my son Stephen meet at home for the run into town. We detour to the Electronics shop to see if I can get the GPS working properly. We don't have a lot of time so no joy at the moment so it's off to the Police Association car park to meet up with our motorcycle escort, including Front Line Tourer motorcycle club member and friend Sergeant Scott McLean. An escort to the Victoria Police Centre creates plenty of interest, particularly with the smokers hanging around out the front of office buildings.

We meet up with Police Legacy President Roger Schranz, fellow board members Kevin Sheridan and Peter O'Neil and Victorian sponsor, Police Credit's Jenny Ayres.

Acting Deputy Commissioner Lucinda Nolan accepts the Victorian Baton on behalf of Acting Commissioner Ken Lay and ensures it will hold pride of place. A quick morning tea and Georg, Stephen and I have to head off. We have work to do.

It's down to "Doctor" Phil Marshall at K and R Motorcycle service – our BMW mechanic. Georg fits tyres, his are all squared off after the flat road running we have endured over the last three weeks. Phil cleans up oil spilt from his leaking pinion seal and checks out his diff oil.

Phil then changes the rear diff seal on my bike and shows me how to re-fill the diff oil if I need to do it on the road. That's not a simple process like on the old 1150GS I had, this one involves, taking off the rear brake calliper, removing the back wheel, unscrewing the Speedo drive out of the back wheel and slowly injecting diff oil in the Speedo drive hole. I'm not happy, this is the fourth time the diff seal has been replaced in under 50K on this bike. We check out the idle settings which are a bit all over the place, probably caused by the ordinary fuel that has been running through the bike.

Stephen's battery on his Honda VFR 750 gave up the ghost this morning so Phil finds a suitable replacement and we fit that to his bike. Coffee all around, our thanks to our special mate Phil Marshall and it's off to the Tasmania Ferry terminal. We line up with everyone else who appear to be making their way into the ferry lines and find ourselves on the wharf and unable to get off. That's a real problem because we skipped lunch and Georg is hungry! We stand in line for about an hour and a half and talk bikes with fellow motorcyclists in the cue.

Finally it's our turn to get on board, the bikes are tied down by the deck hands and we are assured that they'll be okay. We find our cabin which has everything you need but is tiny – especially for three big blokes. I take the upper bunk. A quick beer, a nice meal on board as we head out from Melbourne down the Bay.

We are in bed at a reasonable hour and sleep well on a very smooth crossing to the apple Isle.

Thursday 28th July

The early morning wake up call on the ferry has us up and showered in a military style operation in the confines of the cabin. Down to the car decks and mount up on the bikes. It's through the check points looking for plant and food materials and we are finally on Tassie soil.

We are meet in the darkness of the morning by Wall to Wall Liaison Officer for Tasmania, Gavin Cashion who must have got up bloody early to meet us. He is on his Yamaha 1900 V twin cruiser. We ride down the road to a lovely café for breakfast and then head down the main Highway towards Hobart. We only travel a short distance before pulling into a small bakery and meeting up with Matt and Todd, their bikes are a red 1200GS Adventure – an identical bike to mine and a Yamaha FJ1200. We cruise down the highway then take a back road from Bothwell and hit some typical Tasmanian Roads. These boys know the roads well and it's great to be led through some of the best riding country in Australia, particularly after the flat running Georg and I have done lately.

We make our way to New Norfolk and the Bush Inn, the oldest continuously licensed pub in Tasmania which overlooks the fast flowing river. A good feed and it's on to Hobart and our accommodation for the night.

We meet up with Gavin and Deputy Commissioner Scott Tilyard for a quiet beer before heading out to the "Drunken Admiral" hotel for a lovely dinner. With Tasmanian Bendigo Bank Rep Louise and her partner Steve, and Sgt Justin (Biddy) Bidgood from St Helens, who has come down to ride with us.

Approximately 250 kilometres today of great Tassie roads.

Friday 29th July

Our last presentation today, we wake up to drizzling rain, Gavin leads us to a meeting point at the botanical gardens where there are 17 riders and a Police motorcycle escort waiting for us. The rain eases as we ride out over the iconic bridge and onto the Police Academy. We are met by a media contingent, Deputy Commissioner Tilyard and Tasmanian Police Association Executive members. The Gardens here contain memorial plaques to fallen Tasmanian Police officers.

The Tasmanian Baton is special and unique. It has been fashioned out of Huon Pine that Gavin Cashion inherited from his recently deceased father. Gavin sent the beautiful timber up to Stan Single in New South Wales who fashioned the baton. I can see the pride in Gavin's eyes as I make the presentation to Deputy Commissioner Tilyard.

A cuppa with all the Tassie riders and we say our goodbyes and thanks to Mr Tilyard. We have many inquiries about the wall to wall ride with many present committing to next year.

Gavin, "Biddy", Richo – Biddy's partner from St Helens, Georg, Stephen and me mount up and ride down towards Port Arthur. We stop at the blow hole – that isn't blowing on the low tide, Devils kitchen and eventually make our way to Port Arthur, the locals have seen this plenty of times and Georg was here not that long ago so Stephen and I go into the site for a quick cook's tour before joining the other at the Fox and Hounds Hotel. ABC radio want to do an interview, the others don't mind waiting around in front of the open fire while I do the interview.

We mount up and head back into Hobart in the fading light.

We re-fuel just around the corner from our hotel, I just make it, I've done over 600 kilometres on this tank of fuel and only have about 25 kays left. We are all juiced up and ready for tomorrow. Again with are met by Gavin, Richo, Biddy and other fellow riders, Foggy and Stan, a few drinks in a pub in Salamanca and it's off for a great feed of steak. Then cruise the strip of Salamanca, the place is jumping with all the young beautiful people out for a good time. We have a night cap and head for our hotel.

Approximately 280 kilometres today, an easy and enjoyable day.

Saturday 30th July

We arranged to meet at 10am. We come out a bit early and the boys are gathering to take us for a ride, Foggy on his nice 900 Sport Ducati, the air cooled original style. Richo on his GS1150 BMW, Stan on his Honda Blackbird and Biddy on the 650V-strom Suzuki, commonly called a 'wee-strom'. The boys lead us out of Hobart, across the bridge and up to Gum Tree Hill Road, a typical motorcycling twisty road, then down out of the hills onto Richmond for a look at the old bridge built by the convicts. Then it's off again along back roads to Orford for coffee at a regular haunt for the locals. Foggy and Stan say their goodbyes and head home, Biddy and Richo take us North on the East Coast, We have a great run and then head up Elephant pass which has just re-opened after land slides closed it for some time. The road is still covered in gravel, dust and sand, but it's still pretty good. We don't stop at the Pancake place most bikers stop at, we continue on and then come down St Mary's pass, then turn South for ten kilometres to the Iron House Brewery. He have a great lunch overlooking the ocean from the warm confines of the brewery and tried some of the local drop – just one for a taste, no more. We then trickle into St Helens for the night. We have a room each at the local pub – nothing flash but a good bed and a great view over the water. A good feed at the RSL of local natural oysters and red wine hits the spot.

Just on 300 kilometres of some the best roads in Australia

Sunday 31st July

Up at a reasonable hour after a good night's sleep – a photo of the lovely St Helens waterfront, and as we are loading the bikes, Luke in the local patrol car comes in to say g'day – he is coming on the wall to wall ride from Tassie and also has a 1200 GS. We then head up to the local service station to top up the bikes and have a feed at the bakery next door. Stephen complains that his bike is playing up and won't run properly – maybe its poor fuel? We all have a look and can't work it out, I go around to the left side, and turn the fuel tap on!! It's running fine after that!

Having breakfast Richo calls in to say goodbye. These are great guys and we all look forward to catching up on a ride somewhere. Those that can't make it this year can hopefully find the time for a wall to wall ride in the future.

We head out for the North East, nice roads, a bit damp and cold but that's okay, we take the detour to the 'pub in the paddock' and slow down for a farmer shepherding a cow and her very new calf across the road. It's back on the main road past the Welborough Hotel then up into the clouds. We can see where sand has been put on the road to break down the black ice. We don't strike any but I keep my visor up to feel how cold it is – certainly cold enough for black ice. We make our way cautiously to Scottsdale, Stephen tops up the VFR and then it's onto Lilydale for lunch in the Café/Hotel. Several local motorcyclists from Launceston come in and have a chat.

We back track to the B811 and head North West wending our way on back roads to the Batman bridge over the Tamar river. Rather than heading into Launceston, we take Frankford Highway, yet another great Tassie road for bikes all the way into Davenport. We are very early for the ferry – time to relax as our mission to deliver the commemorative wall to wall batons comes to an end.

280 kilometres – and only the ferry ride home.

The purpose of this ride was to raise awareness among Police officers of the wall to wall event, ensure that the commemorative batons were passed onto their respective Commissioners in an appropriate manner and inspire camaraderie among all Police Officers in the knowledge of remembrance of all Police Officers who have paid with their lives protecting their communities.

Special Thanks

A special thanks to all the Commissioners of Police around the country who have given their support to the wall to wall ride, and for being so welcoming to us.

The baton run was made all the easier by the outstanding support of the Police Federation, all the Police Associations and Unions around the country, their Presidents, Executives and of course the Wall to wall National Committee, State committees and liaison officers. A big thank you to those members who took the time to meet us on the road.