

The Road to Camdeboo.

September 2013.



Yes. It's a long road in places. And this being my second visit, I was much more excited because a number of my Free Chapter members were coming too. I had arranged long in advance with fellow chapter member Ivor Wills to join me, sharing accommodation once there. We sneaked out of Somerset West on Wednesday 18th to get ahead of all the bad weather forecast, after a severe attack of nerves regarding the rain. Once past

Botrivier we were into glorious sunshine which took us through to Barrydale for the



night at Sandy's Place, stopping en route to enjoy the scenery of Tradouw Pass.

After settling into bargain accommodation we took a fast burn out to Ronnie's place for a few quick ones to get in the mood. That night we dined with Clarke of the Karoo at his new venue, enjoying what must have been the best food in town. Clarke's selection of wine was also of the finest which got us more in the mood, requiring a short stagger back to our lodgings much later.

Thursday dawned bright and clear and we were away by 8, stopping at Calitzdorp for breakfast. The riding in the early light was superb with a clear road all the way. After a short fuel stop in Oudtshoorn it was on to Willowmore via De Rust, with more great open road riding which must compare with the best in the world. We needed a break at Willowmore and after topping up, we sat for awhile on the stoep at Sophia's with cold Cokes and toasted sandwiches. The next leg was the hardest and we set off with renewed energy, dealing with the long straights as they came. With an angled tail wind we made good time and pulled into the Yellow pad stal at the cross roads of Aberdeen for another Coke and to rest the backsides. Here we saw our first other Harleys for the day come thundering past. The final stretch was a short 60 k's, of which the last 10 took us through a high electric storm with streaks of lightening flashing across the dark skies with a smattering of rain. Entering Graaff Reinet it was clear and hot, and we went straight to our lodgings in Middel Straat where I had stayed the year before. Our host Antoinette made us most welcome and quickly settled us in, and after dumping our gear, rode up to the rally site for a look see.

We met instant confusion about where to park, and after being shunted from one side to the other and then back again, eventually kicked the stands out against a kerb near the entrance tent and went in. There was nothing going on besides the various setting up of stalls and band wagons, and we found our way down to the little pub on the corner where a few other weary bikers were slaking their thirst. We met Rutger and his wife from Somerset West plus a few others and joined them for awhile as evening set in. Clearly,

nothing was going to happen here tonight, so we rode back to our lodgings then walked to the Spur for a chow down. The weather was also changing for the worse, with the locals looking forward to some rain and we called it a day.

A wet and cold Friday morning found us back at the Spur for breakfast, after which we rode up to the Desolation Valley site for a look around. It was dull and bleak, and decidedly desolate. It was also icy cold, and we did the cliff walk in full leathers with helmets and gloves.



The ride itself was most pleasant however, but with the northern horizon looking clouded over, we abandoned our planned ride to Nieuw Bethesda, returning to the rally site for a progress check. The official entrance was now in operation with registering in progress so we collected our Camdeboo gear and went looking for a drink. The rally bar was also now in operation so we downed a quick one then returned to lodgings to dump the gear and the bikes. We were a pleasant 15 minute walk from the rally site and decided to make use of this to boost our exercise requirements. A little after lunch Brad and Dienne Dale joined us at the 'Eagles Nest', and we got chatting about the road. They had had a dry run from De Rust that morning but things were looking decidedly bleaker as the day wore on. We wondered how our other chapter mates were getting on, and were glad that we had left when we did.

Early afternoon found us back at the tents which had now been fully cordoned off from the public, with a buzz of action on the go. There was a constant thunder of new arrivals, and we were pleased to find our Free Chapter mates in the crowd. The music had started up and the bar was taking a beating, and we settled into what turned out into a long session at the tables. A variety of food choices were on offer, and I'm sad to say my giant hamburger went more over me than down my throat. Other guys had better luck with Chinese and Indian chow, and a real treat was the free coffee on offer. This went very well with numerous brandies and Cokes. My friend Archie from Addo had also arrived late but in good cheer. He had spent a cold night in some tiny Eastern Cape hotel with a power cut, with a candle and bottle of 'Jack' for company. I sent him down to the 'Nest' to get settled in. The highlight of the evening was the raffle of a Sporty, and a damn good band which got the legs moving and feet tapping. It was a strenuous stagger back to the 'Nest' much later, with a handful of Panados to put me to sleep. Some time during the night, Ivor rolled himself out of bed !





Saturday morning dawned sunny and clear but chilly. My head wasn't very clear however and after a slow start, we wound up again at the Spur for eggs and bacon and coffee. It was a slow meal, and we missed the mass ride completely, eventually heading straight out to the air field. Here things seemed to lose momentum after the excellent stunt bike show, with a lot of dawning around and indecision. Instead of getting on with bike business, we had to wait through lengthy free falls and aerobatics which I think we could have done without. The show of Harley hardware however was well worth a look.





The showing of Free Chapter Battledress was also very prevalent. Ivor and I eventually left with Brad and Dienne for Niew Bethesda where we sat down to a late lunch of tasty soup and bread at the Karoo Lamb Café. There was a festival of it's own on the go there with music and fracking demonstrations with donkey cart rides and a lot of drinking going on. A late ride back in icy weather under a weak sun had us back at the 'Nest' about 5. Here we stood around the bikes under the carport with more brandies and Cokes for over an hour talking bike business and swapping stories. Archie told us all about his lodge at Addo and invited us to visit anytime at his pleasure. He also confirmed having already registered and booked for Montagu in February. That night we dined in fine style as a chapter group at the Coldstream Restaurant, after which we attended the final showdown at the tent with *Kiss the Sky* belting out a great sound.



After the usual prizes and stuff, the new Sporty was raffled off to a winner on the spot. I was later informed that within 10 minutes of this taking place, the show was over and the tents were empty.

Ivor, Archie and I were away by 8 on the Sunday morning with our first stop at Willowmore for breakfast at Sophia's. Brad and Dienne had already left. It was so cold riding that early dawn that my legs had the shakes by the time we pulled into the garage, and I had doubts about being able to put my legs down to steady the bike! Man. I need to get some heavier leggings some time. Here we split, with Archie returning direct to Addo, and Ivor and I heading off to another mate of mine at his Swartberg Private Nature Reserve where we were spoiled rotten. Within 15 minutes of our arrival at 1, we were sitting down to springbok carpaccio followed by the tastiest little venison pies made by Nicki. Host Andre also came to the fore with the coldest and crispest sauvignon blanc and unlimited ice cold beers. We pigged out accordingly. Much later, around 5, both Andre and Ivor couldn't wake me for the sundowner game drive. Ivor returned suitable impressed with the place, and we started all over again. Other guests joined us for the evening for another pig out of fine food and endless drinks. I retired with serious doubts about ever making the morning.



Monday morning had us up bright and early however with a clear sky washing the towering Swartberg Mountains. We were away by 7.45 and a fast burn returning along Route 62 had us home in Somerset West by 1.30. The roads were again surprisingly clear of traffic and the riding was superb. I clocked up 1829 k's for the trip and came home with a worn out rear tire. Oh well, just more bucks to cough up.

As for the overall rally itself, I thought it had gone well but was a little unfocused with two seemingly unrelated sources competing for the music. What made it for me this time however was the company of my chapter mates, and I look forward to our next time together. But Ivor also has a few words, and I think it appropriate to let him have the final say as follows:

I thought I would share some of the highlights of our trip to Graaff Reinet to the Camdeboo Rally. Brian Neebe and I had planned to leave on Thursday the 19 September. As we scanned the various weather forecasts we could see that stormy weather was approaching and decided to change plans and leave on Wednesday afternoon. With panniers full and Harleys gleaming we headed off up the N2 towards

Caledon . The weather was mild and sunny and the scenery spectacular, the Canola fields in particular were quite amazing as we approached Caledon .

We were diverted off the N2 at Caledon due to road works and on to the Bredasdorp Road, the sweeping bends and sunny skies were spectacular.

As we approached Riviersonderend we could smell the fresh baked pies and coffee and made that our first stop.

Sitting outside next to our Harleys we met a couple of guys who commented that they had always wanted to own a Harley and maybe next year would be the year. Brian commented, "why wait for next year?!"

We set off up the N2 and headed for the Tradouw pass. When we reached the top of the pass the weather was warm and sunny and the Harleys gleamed in the sun. We headed off down the pass with the stunning mountains as a backdrop and rode into Barrydale, our overnight stop.

We checked into Sandy's self catering which was basically a house to ourselves, with two bedrooms, large lounge, kitchen, undercover braai etc. The highlight was the garage for the Harleys! After a quick blast out to Ronnie's Sex Shop for a cold beer, we returned to Barrydale and headed off to Clark of the Karoo for dinner. As it was 'local's night' we were offered a set menu of rare roast beef, roast potatoes, Yorkshire puddings and veggies. This was all washed down with copious amounts of sauvignon blanc !!

I awoke in the morning with a rather large hangover which needed coffee and a Berocca from Dr Brian.

We hit the road and headed out on R62 towards Calitzdorp which was to be our breakfast stop. The hearty bacon and eggs were delicious and a cure for the hangover!

We set off for the next leg to Oudsthoorn which was our next fuel stop. The weather was warming up nicely and the ostriches were lining the road on either side in the fields, it looked like they were waiting for us but I think it was the roar of the Harleys that was sending them into a panic!

We left Oudsthoorn and passed through De Rust, heading for Willowmore.

The lunch and fuel stop was needed and the head was feeling much better! The weather once again was warm and sunny and the scenery amazing. We headed out on our last leg, which was to be the most spectacular - as we rode past Aberdeen we rode into the most amazing lightning show with the mountains as a backdrop. This was the only time we had a few showers which soon passed as we approached Graaff Reinet.

We checked into Eagle's Nest self catering which was very comfortable and included undercover parking for our Harleys.

When we arrived at the rally site we realised that the Rally only started on the Friday. This didn't stop us sampling a few cold beers and meeting some of the other early birds. Whenever we were spotted with our colours we were asked, "Where's Bruce and the boys?"

On the Friday morning we woke up to cloudy and cold weather. We rode out to The Valley of Desolation which was beautiful, but wet and cold. We then rode back into town and registered at the rally site. Once again we were asked, "Where's Bruce and the rest of the guys?" Our arrival was definitely anticipated and we were probably had one of the larger groups at the rally.

Friday night involved lots of beer, burgers and listening to the great music!

On Saturday the weather warmed up and we rode out to the local airfield, where we were entertained by the amazing Brian Capper on his trials bike. This was followed by some skydivers and an aerobatic display which seemed to go on forever!

Eventually the real fun started and we watched some drag racing down the runway with some brave, or stupid, guys seeing what speed they could screw out of there steeds!

In the afternoon we took a ride to New Bethesda, this little dorp is famous for the Owl House amongst other things. It should also be famous for one of the worst bloody dirt roads I have ridden on! After having a nice bowl of homemade soup and bread we called in at a small music festival. This town has also become famous for its anti-fracking campaign - there was a demonstration on while we were there and one of the locals told us to make sure we didn't put Shell petrol in our Harleys!

We then rode back to the rally site and got ready for the evening's activities. We joined the rest of our chapter and enjoyed a lovely dinner complete with skilpaaitjies.

We then proceeded to the rally site and enjoyed more beers. Brian seemed determined to sample as much Brandy & Jack Daniels as possible!! Once again the band played some brilliant music which was enjoyed by all.

At about 11:30 we were eagerly awaiting the Draw for the Harley Davidson Cactus Jack bike. As you can imagine I was well pissed off when my number was not drawn, but someone has to win it!

After this we were off to bed as we were planning to leave early in the morning. When we woke on Sunday morning the weather was bright and sunny but cold. As we rode out from Graaff Reinet we realised how cold it was. With numb fingers and toes we rode to Willowmore for breakfast. If I can offer one piece of advice to fellow riders it would be to invest in a decent all weather suit. With my thermal lining I was as warm as toast. All I need to sort out now is my fingers and toes!!

Delicious eggs & bacon and coffee in Willowmore were enjoyed by all. After this we headed back on the same route and our overnight stop just outside Oudsthoorn.

We were being hosted by a good friend of Brians, at the Swartberg Private Nature Reserve. The only downside was we would be riding on another dirt road, but this was soon forgotten as we were riding our Harleys past some giraffe and cape mountain zebra (a first for me on a Harley!)

Arriving at our host, we were greeted with ice cold beers, sauvignon blanc and a lunch of venison carpaccio, and home made venison pie. After lunch and a power nap we were due to go on a game drive. Unfortunately the sauvignon blanc was acting as an anaesthetic on Brian!

We left Brian In the land of nod and went off on our game drive accompanied by some beers! On returning from our safari it was time for more beers, wine and a beautiful dinner from our hosts.

In the morning we said our goodbyes and headed off back towards Oudsthoorn, as we rode onto the Cango Caves road we had to stop for a heard of camels which were crossing the road. This trip was a real Harley Safari with the variety of animals we saw!

The ride back to Somerset West was uneventful and we said our goodbyes. In my 37 years of riding motorbikes this was the longest and most scenic ride I have done. Being on a Harley Davidson and meeting so many interesting and like minded people, I would definitely recommend this trip to anyone!

Ivor wills.

Compiled by Brian Neebe and Ivor Wills 30/09/2013.



Ride on.....