

Ride Report 13 April 2005

By Peter Booth

To Camel Soak near Perenjori

Up at 5.30am, on the road at 6.20am heading to The Lakes to meet the others. Realise 20 minutes later I have left my Camelbak at home after carefully filling it the night before and leaving it on the bike. I put it aside to move the bike out and then forgot all about it. 10 minutes after that I remember that my lunch supplies which I specially went to the supermarket for yesterday afternoon is still sitting on the kitchen bench. No water, no lunch. Stop at Sawyers Valley to fuel up and get some expensive bottles of water and muesli bars. Arrive at The Lakes at 7.20am and meet with Peter Unger on an early 800 Paris Dakar fitted with a 1000 motor, Robin Morrith, and Lang Lefroy and Russell from Toodyay, all on 1150GS's.

At 7.30 sharp we're off on the road to York. Lang in the lead, Robin sweeping the rear. Straight through York, onto Goldfields Road, then left off onto a road with some nice fast sweepers which brings us to Meckering. Straight on the Great Eastern Highway to Cunderdin for a fuel top up and a late breakfast for some. Totally self service fuel, including going inside and getting a key to unlock the padlock on the bowser, then telling them how much fuel you got. Robin must have put too much fuel into his bike and affected the weight balance because he dropped it on its side when wheeling it away from the bowser.

Then we are off, over the railway line to the north, to Minnivale, then a right turn onto the dirt which soon gets us to the Rabbit Proof Fence Road. There must have been overnight rain between Cunderdin and Minnivale, there were puddles on the road and it was still quite cool. As we went further north the cloud band cleared into a clear sunny day. A quick stop to regroup, then we are off heading north again, remembering Lang's advice "there are lots of crossroads and people just drive straight through them, so watch out". Not a lot of traffic was seen, but you never know. The Rabbit Proof Fence Road follows Fence No. 2, though the fence really remains in name only, as it's now crossed by many roads and full of gates and entrances to wheat / sheep farms on both sides. Russell and Lang tested the acceleration of their bikes whenever they pulled away from a stop, leaving big furrows from the Conti Twinduros. Russell's custom exhaust system makes a nice racket. For about 60km's the Rabbit Proof Fence Road heads north, then it swings NNW and after another 100km's crosses the Great Northern Highway, going another 50km before swinging north again. The road is good gravel, with very little sand or soft going. Not many corners though. No worries at all for my 1200GS even with Michelin Anakees fitted.

We had a comfort stop somewhere north of the Koorda Hospital Road, and then off again for the Great Northern Highway, where we needed to travel west for 2kms and then pick up the Rabbit Proof Fence Road by looping back around to the north east. This is salt lake country, at the southern end of Mongers Lake, not to be confused with Lake Monger. Eventually another stop to regroup and check fuel levels. Speeds had been modest, not more than 100kph, to conserve fuel. We are on the north heading section by now. Then we are off again, on an excellent section of road that had been recently graded and rolled and only one other vehicle's tracks visible. Then all of a sudden,

there's a sign post pointing to the right saying Camel Soak, hang a turn, a quick twisty blat for just a km and we are there.

Camel Soak is a low granite outcrop with some natural hollows that collect rainwater that was used as a watering stop for men and camels during construction of the Rabbit Proof Fence between 1903 and 1905. Another hollow had been blasted into the rock to increase capacity, but it's not much more than 5m by 2m wide and maybe 0.5m deep.

Lunchtime bought the flies out, especially once the tins of tuna were opened! Robin quickly got his little stove going and soon had water boiled for tea. The GPS's came out and some speculation ensued about what the best route to Perenjori for fuel would be. We decided to keep heading north and then cut west. After a photocall on top of the rock with the bikes it was time to head off again.



A few km's north bought us onto the Perenjori – Rothsay Road where we headed west. The road is fenced on both sides, a crook looking kangaroo was caught in the road reserve and insisted on staying on the road in front of Peter Unger for a few hundred metres before he was able to sneak past, I got by while the roo was struggling to untangle himself from the fence, then it was Robins turn to guess which direction he would jump next. Eventually this road turned to bitumen which was a good sign for those of us getting nervous about fuel levels. Then we were at a T junction saying Perenjori 2kms, then we were pulling up in front of the only fuel bowser in town, outside the general store. It was 338 kms since Cunderdin, I was stunned to

put only 15.64litres in. Keeping the speed down below 100kph and a soft hand on the throttle really had made a huge difference to fuel consumption. By far the best I have ever got from the 1200GS, which only has a 20litre tank. A bit before 3pm and we are off again but not before Lang's rules of the return trip have been settled. Russell in the lead, myself second, Peter Unger third, Robin fourth, then Lang. Lead rider must turn onto the first dirt road heading west or south, then only dirt roads west or south. If a bitumen road or north or east turn off is encountered, then the next rider moves to the lead. Russell and I eventually both got stumped by coming to bitumen roads but then Peter Unger won the afternoons award for best section. South down the shabbiest gravel road so far. One farm on the left, an abandoned farm house on the right, then it degenerates into a few 4WD wheel tracks. Down through a dip, then we are at a modest creek crossing. Peter's through no worries on the Paris Dakar, then Robin, who drops his bike in the mud. Lang then goes through, only to drop his bike in the sand on the other side. Russell powers his 1150 straight through, then it's my turn. With Anakee tyres which are



hopeless in soft stuff, I'm hoping the others haven't chewed it up, but no worries, it's straight through as well. Going west and south eventually gets us to the Midland Road north of Coorow, so we settle into some bitumen for a while. Pretty boring after being on the dirt for so long. No options heading west though, and it's 30kms south of Coorow before Lang turns right onto the Marchagee Track. This is a great section of road which goes through nature reserves and along the north side of the Watheroo National Park. Corners, a few small hills and creek depressions. There's one good set of four dips which if I was on my own I would have turned around a ridden through again (and again...). I keep getting into Lang's dust and having to back off, I'm really enjoying this road. I'm not worrying about staying below 100kph any more either! Left onto Coolara Road and head south along the west boundary of Watheroo National Park. A regroup on the top of a small hill. It's about 5pm by now and it's on with the jumper again as it will get cool as soon as the sun goes down. A quick drink and I scoff my last two muesli bars. We get going again, turn right when we get to Watheroo Road, then we are heading west on bitumen for the rest of the trip. We pass Lang Lookout on the way, no time to stop, then we are at the Brand Highway, about 60km's north of Cataby. That's the end of the good riding, then it's a hack down the highway into the darkness. Lot's of bugs, I wipe my visor, forgetting that its bugs not dust anymore and smear them all over it. I'm not great with night riding vision anyway, this just makes it a bit more challenging. We are a bit strung out

by this time, Robin and Russell are out front somewhere, Peter Unger is just ahead and Lang riding sweep. Peter pulls over, but only to take sunglasses off, I go ahead and then catch Russell who has stopped to swap to a clear visor. At Gingin we are all together again briefly at the Shell Roadhouse before we all head for home. I ring home to let them know where I am. It's now 7pm and Lang and Russell have a ride through Julimar forest with lots of kangaroos to look forward to get back to Toodyay. Farewells are made and then we are all off on our separate ways. It was a terrific days riding and I know we all enjoyed it tremendously. I don't bother with fuel at Gingin and of course as soon as I leave the fuel countdown warning comes on, showing 70kms to go. Perth is 85km away, but I won't go back so I press on through Muchea, down to Neaves Rd, then across past Wanneroo and to Joondalup. With 17kms fuel showing to go and about 25kms to home, I decide not to press my luck and fuel up at Joondalup, where I put 20.71 litres into a 20 litre tank.

At 7.55pm I roll into the driveway in Carine, more than happy after about 900kms and owing many thanks to Robin, Peter, Russell and Lang after one of the best days riding I have had for a long time.

Thanks to Peter Booth for this article— Ed.

SAME RIDE -DIFFERENT AUTHOR

All the riders met at The Lakes at the appointed time and headed off through York and Cunderdin. After refueling at Cunderdin we headed onto the rabbit-proof fence and ended up at Camel Soak for lunch.

We then headed W and S and "on game". Had a terrific time playing the game that Lang and I invented (our story and we are sticking to it...) some time ago. The leader has to take dirt tracks and only head W and S. As soon as you head E or N (maybe backtracking) or onto bitumen, you loose and head to the back of the line of riders. The next rider in line then takes the lead...

The return ride was good fun and we encountered sand and salt bogs (I was the only one to get bogged) along with everything else. We eventually hit the Brand highway on dusk and about 200km north of Bindoon.

I farewelled everyone at Bindoon and made a b-line for home at that time. A bloody great day riding with some great blokes. There should be more of it!

Cheers, Robin Morrirt

PS I am out of action for a few weeks so won't be able to make it to the ANZAC service or other rides etc. Too bad... But, I will be back in the saddle ASAP.

