

## **Timbo's unplanned Tassy Adventure**

After three brilliant days of riding based in Tullah it was time to pack up, load the bikes, and move to Maydena, our next base for the 2013 MSR Tassy experience. I felt very happy with my riding on the trip so far, and was undeniably pleased with my decision to take up Steve Mudford's special pricing deal on supply and installation of Ohlins 30mm fork cartridges - these had clearly made a dramatic transformation to my front end, somehow making the ride less harsh, yet increasing composure when pushing hard at the addictive lean angles we all crave.

I had decided to try to back off a bit today, and treat the ride as more of a loaded up, touring day rather than the three virtual track days prior. Ben led us back down the Lake Plimsoll road for the last time, through Queenstown, and up the tight twisties climbing out of town to the lookout. Billy wasted no time sitting behind me when he approached after the previous tight corner, and he rounded me up and disappeared around the next one before I realised he was there. He was clearly riding in "the zone" on this trip, having had trouble keeping him in sight the previous day as he blasted along on Misho's tail through Hellyer Gorge.

We regrouped for photos at the lookout, peeled a layer of clothes off as the day was warming up already, then stopped again further up the road at the Iron Blow lookout to check out the old open cut copper ore mine. I was among the last half dozen or so riders to leave this point, and was again making an effort to back off and ride at a more relaxed pace today. I did my best to remain in my position and not pass anyone, but eventually the glorious open sweepers got the better of me. I pulled out on a long, picturesque, ridge top straight, and shot past the 4 or 5 bikes ahead of me, enjoying a brief burst of speed before backing off again. However, I don't think I reached the point of backing off...

My next memory is one of confusion, frowning, and trying to make sense of what appeared to be the faces of my riding comrades looking me in the face through my helmet visor. It took a while to realise that I was laying on my back, beside the road, unable to move, but not in any pain as yet. I figured out that I must have somehow crashed, but had no recollection of any of it (and still don't). As far as I can piece together, I have no one to blame but myself, seemingly going too quick over an unsignposted rise that I wrongly assumed followed the sweeping line indicated by the tree line, but instead dropped into a tight corner, followed directly after by a tighter one in the opposite direction. I've heard that there was a hump in between the two corners, right on the change of direction. All I can assume from the description is that I was clearly going too quick, but managed to hold a decent enough line through the first corner, but was probably still trail-braking over the hump as I was pushing a hard change of direction into the second, tighter corner, and ran out of downward force on the front to maintain the level of grip I was demanding, and went into a front wheel slide, resulting in a low side that ended up with the bike slamming into the embankment wall and snapping in two!

I think Rob Langer was the first to come around the corner behind me, and was confused to see my front wheel and forks with fork springs hanging out, leaking my precious Ohlins fork oil in the middle of the road. It took a while to locate the rest of my bike, and me laying face-down, unconscious on the side of the road. My apologies to all who had to witness such an unsavoury sight on what was clearly otherwise quite a lovely day.

Once I realised I must have crashed, I think I remained quite calm, knowing I was in the best hands, unfortunately well experienced in these situations, and I settled in for the 40 minute wait for the paramedics to arrive from Queenstown. They were keen to cut my leather pants off (my helmet and jacket had already been removed once it was clear I hadn't sustained any upper body injuries), but we convinced them that we should at least have a go at removing them first. We succeeded, and thankfully someone packed all of my leathers, and tank bag (and ignition key that Tony somehow found in the grass, bent around like a question mark!) into my Ventura bag which accompanied me in the ambulance.

A 40 minute ambulance ride took me back to Queenstown, where I was transferred into a fixed wing Air Ambulance and flown to Hobart, and checked-in to the Royal Hobart Hospital. A few x-rays and CT scans later, and eventually word was passed on to me that my left foot had suffered fractures to both ankles and heel, my right knee was labelled as "a mess" of fractures and damaged ligaments, my spleen and left lung had sustained strains, but my neck and spine had been cleared of serious damage, and my neck brace could be removed. The bulk of the pain I was experiencing at this stage was my throbbing neck and shoulders, ringing ears, and pounding headaches. These have all gradually improved over the weeks, with no intervention (apart from my osteopath sister giving me a sneaky 40 minute treatment in the cafe downstairs, two weeks after the crash).

The following week I went into surgery in Hobart, and both of my left ankle bones were put back together with plates and screws, but my heel was still too swollen to operate at this stage. It was also arranged that I would have surgery on my right knee by a specialist in Melbourne, as the damage was too messy for anyone in Tassy to deal with. It turned into quite a bit of work pushing the hospital social worker into assisting with the transport arrangements back to Melbourne. They were suggesting I contact Qantas and ask if I could fly with my right leg in a solid brace, resting on a pile of pillows, or otherwise book myself a ticket on the Spirit of Tasmania! They didn't indicate how I might wheel my bed onto the boat, or how to get myself to Devonport. My lovely wife stepped in, and spent days dealing with the TAC, and gave the social worker daily instructions on what she needed to do, which documents needed to be signed by which level of doctor,

I had been moved from ward to ward every day or two, and was very pleased to have been coincidentally moved into a bed directly opposite Andrew Newbury, two nights prior to our escape. We joked that Ben should make sure he reserves the MSR ward at the hospital next time around... Eventually my wife's work payed off, and the Victorian Air Ambulance was confirmed to pick up Andrew and I as soon as we had beds reserved somewhere in Melbourne.

The flight was great, and the two crew kept us well entertained with stories until we landed at Essendon airport, and were whisked away in opposite directions, Andrew to the Austin, me to the Epworth, who claimed they had no record of me upon arrival, and certainly no beds available. After an hour or so of being moved out of people's way, they made up a temporary bed for me, moving through three different wards over the next few days, until settling on a four bed room in the orthopaedic ward, where I've been able to test my tolerance levels as any chance of sleep during the night was shattered on an hourly basis. The other three beds were generally filled with new patients, fresh from surgery every two or three days, meaning lights on for hourly checks, beeping machines going off every 30 minutes or so, and plenty of gut-wrenching howls of pain. I have been in this bed for over two weeks now, and have met and farewelled 13 roommates, and have learnt to disregard the many promises I've received of being sent home or transferred to rehab that have never eventuated.

I've had my 4+ hour marathon operation on my right knee, which is still held extended in a full leg splint, I've experienced a level of pain I had never imagined when the nurse pulled out my blood drain tubes from my knee the day after, and I've gone back into surgery to have some more meccano fitted to my left foot holding my heel plates together.

In all, I've managed to maintain a very positive frame of mind, knowing I have only myself to blame for ending up where I am, and that it could have been me broken in half instead of the bike, which makes my injuries seem more like minor inconveniences even if they do take a long time to mend. I've been very spoilt with a constant stream of phone calls and visits from MSR members as well as family and friends, and have scored a ton of fruit, sultanas, dates and nuts to help keep my system moving, and much to my wife's disappointment, plenty of bike mags! I was disappointed that I couldn't make the Dargo ride this month, but I'll hopefully attend the next one, even if I'm only driving to Dargo in my GTI, and hearing about the ride over a few beers at the pub!

**Tim Emons**