

## RIDERS RALLY 2018

Yahoo - it's that time of year again, bright evenings and long summer days, and the big one "The RIDERS RALLY 2018". Here we go, a mystery tour, a challenge, an adventure, a treasured memory, a wonderful experience, a real engagement with all your senses, living at its best. And all of this done wrapped around an engineering masterpiece, our own individual soul mate, our motorcycle.

Over 1000 kilometres of wide road, narrow road, loose gravel covered road, cowshit covered road (careful) taking you through lush green countryside, multi-coloured mountain ranges, coastal roads, stone walled boundaries, hugging our beautiful country's rugged cliff face. Rolling out before us wide and narrow sweeping bends from left to right, and indeed many unexpected dangers all along the way, (careful), Oh man, and I'm only filling out the application form.

This is the 44<sup>th</sup> Riders Rally, started way back when, by a group of young enthusiastic bikers whom I'm glad to say are still involved and promoting motorcycling in its truest form today. The purpose - to satisfy that Great Spirit within all real motorcyclists, to ride, tour, discover and be a contestant and not just an observer, this is it, the real deal, let's go.

Ok, application form all complete, biggest decision, camping or B&B, went for B&B this year, it's been a long winter. Have to say will miss the tent and the outdoor vibe it brings, however won't miss unzipping it three times a night for a "hit and miss", or alternatively sealing the plastic bottle in the dark, or even worse seeing it filling up two quickly (very careful), however I digress.

Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> of June is almost upon us, checklist time. Map, satnav, oil levels, tyre pressure, chain, tee shirts, fresh underpants, toothbrush and most important of all D.M.T.C. shirt cleaned pressed and ready to go.

Arrived at Grand Hotel Moate around 12.30, thinking I would be early, not at all, a hive of biker activity, Teddy and Nessa elbows deep in stickers, forms, biros and bags, setting up everyone with a calm word and a smile. Meanwhile Big Jim and Alan hovering out front greeting everyone, and dealing with all queries and unexpected details.

Now armed with route sheet on tank and satnav loaded, headed off on this wonderful odyssey. Stage one, immediately we were into it, all of the above descriptions, superb. Have to say Kinnity to Mountrath really good. Had to get two photos on this stage, The "Slieve Bloom Bar" and the "Vivaldi Gardens", click, click.

Onwards and downwards to sunny south east through the uncluttered uncongested super roads specially selected for our motorcycling pleasure 230 Km in total plus a lot more for the odd wrong turn, Brill

Our first night - The Gold Coast Hotel, Ballynacourty, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford. Shower, change, pints, food, and then plenty of catching up. Stories of great places, trips just completed and future trips being planned, followed by more pints and music, some dancing and good fun.

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup>, a clear head, and up early for Stage one, 198Km. A good breakfast, more chat, some tyre kicking, then “suited and booted” and off we go again. Once again super uncongested sweeping roads all a pure joy to travel on. Taking in the Vee drive and many beautiful towns like Killaloe along the way, checking in in Gort to be greeted, stamped by Teddy and John. Some lunch then onwards and upwards for stage two, to Strokestown, again a great route, to be greeted, stamped by Ray and Dermot 107Km. Finally stage three beckons 149Km with a” statue of Eagle” in Roosky to be clicked, then on to Tracy’s Hotel, on the Kingscourt Road to be greeted and stamped by Michael and Stephen. Then a great evening and night into the late hours, out on the deck, warm air, red sky, horses tied up, and of course Dino in the lounge belting out song after song, hour after hour, with all the gestures and movements of a gifted artist committed to his craft, great buzz all-round.

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup>, hearty breakfast, lots more banter, Jim had some really interesting observations, something about a glass and a wall; Stephen found it really funny. Anyway, Stage one 152Km, upwards towards Carrick on Shannon taking in photo of “waterways Ireland HQ” in Enniskillen again greeted and stamped by Ray and Dermot, wonderful. Coffee in the bright warm sunshine, no real rush to leave, timing all good and under control.

Then to final stage of rally 105Km, taking in photo in Glenamaddy and on to final destination “Shamrock Lodge Hotel” Athlone to be warmly greeted, congratulated stamped and badged by Alan, Nessa, and Teddy.

Now it was time to relax, wind down, recap and refresh ourselves with a lovely complementary meal. Then on to presentations and some fine words from Jim.

**Youngest Rider - Harry Duggan**

**Oldest Rider - Ronan Gill**

**Oldest motorcycle - BMW R80 1980 - Pat Burke**

**Smallest Motorcycle - Honda CB 500 - John Marshal**

**Furthest Distance travelled - Gordon Tuck from London**

This was a super Rally where everything fell into place, the sunshine, the routes very cleverly selected to avoid congestion and traffic, the distance, the accommodation, the participants and of course the skilful organisation. Have to say the country looked great too. Thatched cottages, Manor Houses, limestone Cathedrals, lakes, rivers, cut stone humpback bridges and of course beautiful landscapes. To be able to ride through it all and experience the soft warm air and the variety of natural smells coming from the freshly cut grass, the hedgerows in bloom and the smell of slurry and decomposition was welcome and a privilege to experience. Great credit is also due to all the “Tidy Town” committees, throughout the country, evidence of their work in every town and village is a joy to see.

Finally we are all familiar with the “Big Grin” this is something that unconsciously comes upon us when for example, we hear great music, when our team are playing really well, when our bike is looking and driving really well, when we watch beautiful women or men dancing, when we are in good company and the banter is flying. Have to say this event should be renamed the “Big Grin

Riders Rally” as everyone who took part in this event had a permanent grin from ear to ear and really enjoyed every kilometre travelled and the big social catch up throughout the weekend.

Great credit and thanks to the organising committee of DMTC for providing us yet again another great motorcycling memory.

Conor Gill 25/6/2018



