

## 2012 Sidecar Africa Convention - Clocolan

### 1-4 March 2012

Difficult to believe but a whole year has flown by and are setting off for the Eastern Free State again – St Augustines at Modderpoort near Clocolan .

First collection for the Sidecar Bus is at Skyview, our regular RideAlong departure point. Richard and Paisley is already waiting – monkeyless today, not even his honorary blow up monkey made it into the sidecar! Turns out this would be very fortuitous for Ken – but I’m getting ahead of myself.

So once Zeta and Arno on Sputnik arrive, Ryno and monkey Emma on Vladimir and monkey Klara and myself on our trusted and willing Lola, all kit up for our next collection point and of course a Wimpy Breakfast!

Arriving at the Grasmere 1 Stop Wimpy we are joined by Jude and Sheilagh on Leyla, Ken on the BMW (whispered tones used here) and Ray and Bronwyn towing Verushka on their brand new red matching Ural trailer. Lindsay and Nikki swing in on Pushkin, have a cup of coffee each, and we’re ready to set off.

As with every journey – the price to pay for beautiful breathtaking scenery is usually some mind altering piece of highway and in this case stinky Vanderbijl and Sasolburg. We hold our breaths for the kilometres it takes us to get past this stretch and when I see the first poplar tree 50 kilometres after Sasolburg and a sandstone fence post not too long after, I know the journey as opposed to covering distance has started.

Just after Heilbron, where we all fuelled up, we have a break at the Vegkop Monument. Having Ken Dalgleish, a veritable walking encyclopaedia re matters of the Boers, their battles etc etc, with us, made this a worthy stop.

Of course we had to take photos of our sidecars and ourselves and the monument but finally we settled down enough for Ken to tell us what had happened and why it was significant.

Imagine this – it is the year 1836. On the 18th of October, 35 armed Voortrekker men and their families draw their 50 ox wagon into 2 laagers. The wagons would be tied together with chains and thorny branches on the outer circle.

These Voortrekkers waited for 2 nerve racking days for the estimated 4000 to 6 000 Matabele impi. Once the battle started, it was fierce and bloody. Some sources say 2 Voortrekker men died as a result of wounds received, but approximately 430 Matabele were killed. After the event more than a 1 000 spears were picked up inside the laager. However most of the Voortrekker cattle, sheep and oxen were taken which left them stranded at the time.

More interesting was Ken explaining to us why this was such an important battle. Paul Kruger who was a boy of 11 years old, took part in this battle and it would have had a profound impact on him and his thinking. The Voortrekkers believed that their victory was a sign of God being on their side. This also had great bearing on the other Trekkers as this would have been a symbolic victory for all of them. It contributed to the Voortrekkers drive to move into the interior, making it look more

possible. It was the first significant battle with the indigenous people and the outcome was significant in shaping the history of this country.

Wow how's that for digressing!

Back onto our own iron horses and a pleasant country road all the way to Lindley. It was not too far past Lindley that Richard's Paisley got a flat tyre. He got lots of assistance, moral and otherwise and it was not too long before the Ural train got going again. After Lindley we passed Arlington and then on to Senekal and the .....Wimpy!!!

It was on the road between Marquard and Clocolan that the BMW (remember in whispered tones as it was the only one at the Convention) and Ken came to a standstill. It transpired that one of the attachments holding the motor cycle and sidecar together was giving up the ghost.

This being the Eastern Free State – we drove into an entrance to get out of the road as the potholes force motorists to drive everywhere but on the road, when he arrived. Just like in the movies.... a blonde, friendly farmer called Boeks. He directed us to his dad and a workshop that would make most mechanics drool with envy. Turned out we'd be riding on their farm the following day for the Dirt Route – small world!

After they had welded the BMW and sidecar together again, we waved goodbye for the last leg of our journey to St Augustine's.

By Thursday night most of the sidecar owners had rolled in from all different directions and we were all very happy to kuier with kindred spirits and some other spirits!!

Friday morning is a bright shiny thing reflected in our eager smiles. Today the dirt lovers will do some gravel travel – a term the Free State contingency uses. The tar cruisers are doing their thing on tar and we all lunch in Rosendal.

Paul leads out the tar ride, complete with his beautiful trailer custom made for his Ural. Jannie and Tracy with sidecar Anzelha, also sports one of these incredible sidecar trailers.

Although Ken's bike had been welded, it is decided that he would monkey with Richard. This turns into a whole new perspective and experience for Ken, an experienced rider, who has never monkeyed in his life. Always a first time!!!

After breakfast and our briefing, we ride out to meet Coetzee Zietsman, the man responsible for our route for the day. It takes us a little while to find a riding rhythm and once we get the stopping at turns and waiting for the rider behind you going it all moves along happily.

We drive onto the mountain on the farm where the welding happened and stopped to look out over the land that stretches as far as the eye can see. Interesting, according to Coetzee, just South of Clocolan is the biggest arable plateau in the Southern Hemisphere. It strikes one, standing up there, how much of the land is being farmed.

The little pass we drive down is almost straight down and personally I was real happy for the speed bumps. It is a real treat to be riding in the landscape as opposed to be looking at it from the big tarred road that follows the path of least resistance. We also ride a sand trap that lasted for almost 2

kilometres – I kid you not neither do I exaggerate – you can ask anyone who slithered through it. If the 's' in sidecar didn't stand for sand – we would have been in trouble.

Somewhere in the meandering country roads and the green fields, orangey sandstone cliffs and blue blue sky some of us had to do some maintenance and repairs but we all kept it together real well and rumbled into Rosendal for lunch a little after 2. What a fabulous lunch in a charming venue called The Rosendal.

After lunch it's decided that we are going to take the tar road home as the day was getting short. This enthusiastic rider got her 'F's wrong and next thing I was happily aiming for Fouriesburg instead of Ficksburg. I can claim that I was bewitched by the land- and cloudscapes! Magical and awesome with displays of sunlight and colour that is truly mesmerising and Louis Armstrong's What a Wonderful World in my heart. I should know, I was magicked into riding a little longer – my poor little monkey.

On Friday night we all kuiered some more. Saturday was a repeat of Friday's perfect morning. We had work to do however – we had to get ready for our mass ride to Clocolan where we were due to enter the Clocolan Feesterrein at 10h00 sharp. It was with a real feeling of pride in my heart that I rode at the back of 25 sidecars for 30kms – how far our little sidecar community has come!

We then got to ride round the arena a few times and parked our beautiful sidecars in a long row for everyone else to admire – we also did some admiring. Interested 'feesgangers' got taken for a whirl by our more enthusiastic riders. We missed Grant Pitt who last year took on the John Deere tractor – next year no excuses will be tolerated Grant, the John Deere was looking for you.

I saw my first real 'smiley' – with its little sheeps teeth! I watched as the man did a roaring trade in sheeps heads- all golden and crispy, that he sold off his Weber at 60 bucks (or is that sheep?) a head. Must confess if I was less of a stadsjapie I might have bought one, it smelled fantastic. Then I could have a monkey and a skaapkop in the sidecar! Also watched some real Volkspele, this place really has a bit of everything.

On Saturday afternoon we got together for our Convention Games. This time I didn't dump my monkey in the sidecar and we actually had a very respectable run – both events! For some of the other contenders – what goes on convention stays on convention. Some of us performed some unbelievable manoeuvres, not always intentional. Thank you to our Games Mistress, Jacquie Pastor and her team of mini monkeys for setting it all out – again and again and again and.....!

Our last night together we had a prize giving. Kobus and Tes, who really are no Bang-gatte!, and Paul and Salome shared the prize for most accurate round ridden/driven and Frits and Francois won the Haak en Steek event – even after a particularly gentlemanly move on Frits' side. Martin and Anita won the prize for Most Inspirational Couple – well deserved!

Most beautiful bike was won by Paul, actually not – it was won by Sofia and her trailer!

Sunday we rode home and I watched the clouds shimmy in the sky all morning, changing direction as the sky winds do, leaving wisps of candy floss against the brilliant blue sky. How I love riding my sidecar – for millions of different reasons.

I think I said the same thing last year – but it's true! I'm already looking forward to see what the Sidecar Africa team are going to cook up for us next year.

Gee gas!