NEW PLYMOUTH CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE CLUB INC.



Club Night speaker Robert Taylor from Kiwi Suspension Solutions.

NOVEMBER 2026

C/- PO BOX 5092
WESTOWN
NEW PLYMOUTH 4343

NEW PLYMOUTH CLASSIC MOTOR CYCLE CLUB

New Plymouth

Classic Motorcycle Club

Committee 2026 - 2027

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Geoff Davies	Phone:	021 484 188

Wednesday ride 4 November 2026

The forecast looked ok and I decided to go but as always happens when I got the bike out some light misty rain settled on the seat. As I had my gear on I decided to go anyway.

As I turned onto Northgate the road was dry so thigs were looking up. I was first there and thinking it was a no show but two other intrepid riders soon turned up in the form of Don Baker and Guz Lythgow. We had a brief discussion on where to go. Guz mentioned a newly opened classic motorcycle museum in Opunake so destination Opunake was the consensus. We headed down Mangorei Road, right at the Golf Club into Baker Road and left onto Carrington Road. By the time we got to Plymouth Road the weather wasn't looking that great so a committee meeting was called. Guz said stay clear of the mountain and stick to the coast which was what we did and it turned out to be prophetic.

We headed straight for the Sugar Juice Café and low and behold there was the Highway Forty Five Classic Motorcycle Shop on the corner of Tasman and Napier Streets. So we said let's get a coffee and then go and have a look which is what we did. Over coffee we canvassed WOF's, cost of registration and the election.

As there was a polling booth in the library I decided to cast my vote for the party offering free WOF's and registration for motorcycling superannuatants.

We won't spoil it for the next scheduled Club visit but suffice to say that Bernadette and Murray were very hospitable and have established a very nice shop with some interesting classic motorcycles for sale together with a range of merchandise related and unrelated to motorcycles.

We returned home via Mid Kahui Road as one is bound to do. A thoroughly good time was had by all three.

Graham



HIGHWAY FORTY FIVE
45
CLASSIC MOTORCYCLES
Murray
0299203785
klinksgarage@gmail.com
-Compliance preparation
-Restoration and modifications
-Electrical diagnosis and repairs
-Taranaki bike rescue

N P Classic Motorcycle Club's

Christmas BBQ is to be held on

Sunday December the 13th at the

Beach Street Hall,

Beach Street, Fitzroy.

Meet and greet from; 4:30 pm.

Please contact Fay and Mike for numbers coming to allow for catering requirements

mfgalvin@xtra.co.nz

Mike 0211443533 Fay 0277801283

WHITEBAIT RUN

The annual October whitebait run was held on Sunday the 20th.

Twenty-five members and partners gathered at the Z Waiwhakaiho service station at 10:30 a.m. A total of 18 motorbikes and 3 "tin tops" (cars) departed to enjoy a pleasant, sunny ride and drive to Mōkau.

Upon reaching Mt. Messenger, the convoy was held up for roughly half an hour by traffic lights while a slip was being cleared further up the road.

Traffic control led the group from the south side across to the north side, and the same system was in place for the return journey.

Everybody arrived safely at Mōkau eventually, despite the group being split up by the traffic management lights on Mt. Messenger.

The Whitebait Inn had plenty of whitebait available, which was thoroughly enjoyed by our members. Everyone sat around the tables, enjoying their meals, the sunshine, and each other's company.

After a safe trip home, we are all looking forward to doing it again next year.
Fay G.





















Kiwi Suspension Solutions

Robert Taylor



Kiwi Suspension Solutions

For our October 20th Club Night speaker we were entertained by Robert Taylor from local Motorcycle suspension company Kiwi Suspension Solutions.

Kiwi Suspension Solutions (KSS) are New Zealand's main Motorcycle suspension business and have been in business here in New Plymouth for close to 20 years now . Their experience in suspension goes back to the beginning of the 1980s so there is a lot of accumulated knowledge within their walls. Suspension is sent to them from all around New Zealand for upgrading ..

They are the New Zealand and master agents for a large range of products including Nitron , RaceTech, YSS , Ohlins ,Andreani, Traxxion, and deal with Motorcycle , Automotive and Mountain Bike systems. They are located in

Saltash street and motorcyclists are always welcome there for help or advice .
Robert went through the various types of front suspension and gave some basics of how they function starting with the older pre Damper Rod forks then in some depth into how to get the best from damper rods systems . The damper rod controls both compression and rebound functions but in quite a crude way. The most popular way to upgrade the is with a Compression Emulator which upgrades the damper rod from just working at one travel speed to being infinitely variable and so functioning through the whole range of fork movement speeds . So much closer to how a well setup cartridge suspension fork works . Then by further modifying the damper rod clearance and sealing they improve the rebound (return) and then adjust that using to correct oil.

He went into the variation that is found in oil flow rates , as one brands 15wt can be a quite different flow rate to another brands 15wt so you really have to be careful in oil selection. It's always best if you can get you fork working correctly with the lightest oil , because it is much less temperature sensitive . Thicker oils can be quite dangerous in cooler temperatures because they make the forks unresponsive .

Another area that he suggested gave big improvements was friction reduction , an area they put a lot of work into, even for an older bike reducing the friction can make a major improvement to a bike .

The next discussion point was the old progressive fork spring verses linear. Progressive fork springs were very much a "70s thing to try to accommodate various weight riders but have not been carried on by any of the worlds main suspension companies.
The likes of Ohlins , Nitron , YSS , Ktech , Racetech basically never use progressive fork springs. The progression needed is controlled by the spring rate build up as it travels and setting the correct oil level in the fork.
The air pressure increase created by raising the oil level creates the progression. That way it's very easy to get the desired ride by selecting the correct rate linear springs to suit the rider / bike and setting the optimum base preload on those springs .

Robert then ran though how to set the sag for both bike and then rider. Doing this can make a huge difference to how

the bike performs and feels on the road. Many riders have never had this done correctly and then the corresponding resetting of dampening .

He also mentioned the common myth of Fully Adjustable Suspension, just by turning the screws on the units.
In most cases these screws are only adjusting bypass bleed , much like a carburetor idle mixture screw so in really have very limited effect.
The main control in most suspension these days is the flow ports in the pistons inside so he showed some examples of pistons with both restricted and open flow . Restricted flow is what causes the harshness and abruptness in most suspension . In other words he explained that when the oil can flow freely the the suspension basically hydraulic locks and then transfers the bump straight to the rider because it cant absorb it.

We were then shown a range of Shock absorbers both twin shocks and single shocks for later model bikes. He ran through how the mounting and therefore the leverage has a big effect on required dampening and spring rates especially in twin shock bikes. The effect of mounting position and swing arm length can be quite pronounced.

Unfortunately the need for Supper to happen brought things to an end about here , but hopefully everyone gained something from the night.

He was able to answer a few quick questions then too. Sounded like Robert would be more than happy to come again if there was enough interest.

Motorcycle suspension is a lot more in depth than we realize.

Dennis Shaw

Ducati Centenary “Collezione 100”
Ten significant moments in Ducati's history inspiring ten unique motorcycles, and produced in a numbered series of one hundred units each.
Ian Falloon
Oct 15, 2026



It seems that Ducati’s centenary is a gift that keeps giving. One of the more interesting series of limited editions is the Collezione 100, this comprising ten motorcycles inspired by historic events and each produced as 100 examples. Although released in May 2026, these are also for 2027 Model Year. The Collezione idea is sound, but the choice of ten historical events, and the chosen donor bikes, certainly got me thinking.

There is no argument around the inclusion of the Panigale V4S 100, inspired by Paul Smart’s 1972 Imola 200 750 Desmo. This event was unquestionably one of the most significant, if not the most significant, racing successes in Ducati’s history, and it’s appropriate that the Panigale V4S was chosen as a donor bike.

The choice of the second centenary model does ask some questions. While the Panigale V2S is suitable, Ducati claim the inspiration is the 1975 750 Super Sport Desmo that Franco Uncini rode to victory in the 1975 Italian 750cc Production Championship. The problem is that Uncini didn’t ride a 1975 “square-case” 750 SS, but a 1974 750 SS “Green Frame”, painted yellow. And while Uncini’s performance was admirable, does it really justify a top ten placing?

Coming to the third centenary model, the 1979 900 Sport Desmo Darmah. Ducati goes on to say, “In the 1970s and 1980s, black and gold graphics were extremely fashionable in the world of motorsports, and Ducati was no exception. Specifically, it applied this colour scheme to the 900 Sport Desmo Darmah, essentially a Streetfighter before its time. In Italy, there was also a strong fascination with exotic countries,



I am well versed with the 1979 900 SD, having bought one new from Lloyd Chapman Motorcycles in Perth, Western Australia in June 1979. I don't argue that black and gold graphics were fashionable at the time, but the Darmah was not really comparable to a modern Streetfighter. It was an evolution of the 750 GT-style sport-tourer, a style that has since been replaced by a multitude of more specialised models. And while I still have a soft spot for the Darmah, I don't see it as one of the ten most significant models, in Ducati's history.



The choice of the 2008 Monster S4Rs Tricolore as an inspiration for the centenary is also unconvincing. The Monster S4RS Tricolore is in a similar category to the 900 SD Darmah, possibly recognisable and iconic, but hardly a top ten model.

Cook Neilson and Phil Schilling's 750 Super Sport "California Hot Rod" 1977 is definitely a top ten. Ducati says, "In the mid-1970s, Ducati's visibility in the United States was essentially limited to just one model, the Scrambler, a quasi-off-roader imported by the Berliner brothers, but things changed in 1977 thanks to Cook Neilson's memorable triumph on the Daytona oval track." Considering Berliner stopped importing Scramblers in 1972 I don't really understand this. During the early seventies Berliner imported thousands of 750 and 860 V-twins, and these were very successful. The "California Hot Rod" was built out of a 1974 750 Super Sport "Green Frame", a model that has more in common historically with a Superleggera V4 than the XDiavel V4 100





Similar irregularities are evident with the Diavel V4 RS 100, this inspired by the 1979 900 Replica. The 900 Replica was itself inspired by Mike Hailwood's 900 NCR that he rode to victory in the 1978 Isle of Man Formula 1 Tourist Trophy race. Ducati says "The distinctive green and red livery with white stripes, also represents the very first example of an "almost" Italian-style colour scheme." Hailwood's 900 NCR was actually delivered in red and silver NCR colours, and painted by Steve Wynne of Sports Motorcycles in red, green and white Castrol colours due to Castrol's sponsorship of the team. While the Diavel V4 RS 100 is based on the higher performance Desmosedici Stradale-powered Diavel V4 RS, it is difficult to see a close association with the racing style 900 Replica.

Another top ten Ducati I'm familiar with is the 1979 500 SL Pantah. I owned two 500 SLs in the early 1980s, and while the Pantah engine design was extremely significant, still continuing today, I wouldn't place the early Pantah amongst the greatest ever Ducatis. While the Multistrada V4 RS 100 is a wonderful high performance touring motorcycle, the 500 SL Pantah was basically underwhelmingly, both in engine performance and handling.

I don't know why Ducati always refers to the 1962 250 Scrambler as the most important model in America in the 1960s. In 1962 Ducati built 24,443 motorcycles, of which only 417 were 250 Scramblers for the USA. Ducati says, "Berliner requested an off-road dirt track bike from Ducati, a concept that hadn't previously been envisaged in Borgo Panigale." Someone forgot they made over 2500 examples of the 175 and 200 Motocross in 1960 and 1961. At least the modern Scrambler Nightshift is a realistic basis.

So we come to another of Ducati's major race wins of the 1970s, the 1973 and 1975 24 Horas de Montjuïc. In 1973 the Ducati 860 made its winning debut with Salvador Canellas and Benjamin Grau, and they repeated this in 1975 with a 905, now painted the red and silver of the NCR team. While certainly a top ten result, associating the 1975 Montjuïc racer with a Hypermotard V2 SP is a stretch.





The final top ten is the 1981 Pantah “Ice”. Even Ducati finds this baffling, saying the “1981 Pantah Ice is one of the most curious examples of product placement in Ducati’s history”. This was basically a modified Pantah 500, characterized by the addition of studded tyres and the removal of the braking system, so that it could be used on ice tracks. In the early 1980s EFIM, the body that controlled both Ducati and Alfa Romeo, organized a championship for Alfasud cars on the ice tracks of the Alps. The races were held in two heats; during the break between the first and second races, the brightly coloured Pantah “Ice” bikes put on a show for the crowd. While not exactly a top ten historic event, at the least the DesertX is a suitable donor bike.

So there we have the Collezione 100. Ten moments in Ducati’s 100-year history, and nothing before 1962



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November Activities

CLUB NIGHT;

17th Committee Meeting 6:45pm

Club Night 7:30

CLUB RIDES

WEDNESDAY RIDES

4th, 11th , 18th ,25th

Doubtful weather check with,

D PULLEIN 06 7578078 027 657 5788

SUNDAY Ride - G Davies

November.....D White CLUB DUTIES

NEW PLYMOUTH CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE CLUB INC.

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 20/10/26 at 6:45pm

Present:

President L Martin

Vice President P Hutton

Secretary M Galvin

Treasurer G Voss

Club Captain D Pullein

Vice-Captain G Davies

Newsletter Editor

Committee present, F Galvin, J Carter, B Millen, C Jamieson, P Sacree

Apologies, P Kingsnorth, R Briggs, F Mancer

Guests; Nil

Apologies accepted.

Moved J Carter Seconded D Pullein Carried.

Minutes of the previous meeting taken as read

Any matters arising from previous meeting,

Minutes Accepted;

Moved; J Carter Seconded; D Pullein Carried.

Outward Correspondence:

Letter to A Chapman concerning his membership payment.

Inward Correspondence;

Beach St Hall Invoice

Copier World 3 x Invoices

Canon Activity Statement

The Sign Shop Honours Board update

M G Flowers

TSB Statement

Subs payment A Chapman

Newsletter – Wanganui VCC, NOC, Hawkes Bay CMC

Email Beach St Hall Society advising that the door code has changed again

Email from NZ BSA Owners club stating that they have closed their PO Box and asking if we can email our newsletter to them. F Mnacer will add them to our mailing list.

Email from I Cartwright asking if we can email our newsletter to him now that their club has been wo und up

F Mancer will add him to our mailing list.

Correspondence from TSB regarding signing rights for the club's accounts has been updated.

Motion that Outward/Inward Correspondence be accepted,

Moved; D Pullein. Seconded; G Davies Carried.

Monthly Treasures Report up to...30th Sept / 2026 tabled

Matters Arising from current monthly financial report,

L Martin asked about outstanding subs payments. G Voss replied that we had 91 paid up members and 3 unpaid.

Bills presented for payment

Moved Financial Report and Payments approved.

Moved G Davies Seconded C Jamieson Carried.

General Business

M Galvin gave the committee a report on the weekends white bait ride to Mokau and how it was well attend ed

L Martin updated the committee that the first of the care packages had been delivered and were appreciated by the recipients

Membership subscriptions, G Voss update the committee telling them that out of 94 members 91 have paid their subs to date.

The committee discussed the lack of articles being received for our newsletter. It appears that members are happy to get a newsletter but don't wish to contribute to making it more informative for our members. Do we need to look at printing it every 2 months rather than monthly? Feedback from the membership would be appreciated.

Discussion held regarding the club's old printer which is currently in S Hunts garage.

L Martin bought up about club jackets. Question to members. Would you like your committee to look at getting club jackets? Feedback please.

Can members please update the secretary or treasurer with your contact details especially if you have shifted, changed you email or phone as we are required under the Incorporated Societies Act to keep an accurate record of our members contact details.

P Hutton informed the committee that L Hutton will do all the catering for club nights unless otherwise informed.

D Pullein told the committee that he has been in contact with the local NOC members and has invited them to join us on our club rides and has had a positive response from them.

What can we do to encourage members to support their club's events.

There being no more business

The meeting closed at 7:22 p.m.

Sunday ride D Pullein/G Davies to organize

Rostered club member November.....D White....Dec... F Galvin

President.....

Secretary.....

Treasurer.....

As a member of the FoMC's we can get discount Cook Straight Fares.

Contact the Discount Booking Agent;

Tony Hirst

Mob; 021 726 711

sales@cookstraightcrossings.co.nz

www,cookstraitcrossings.co.nz

COMING EVENTS FURTHER AFIELD

Oct-Nov 31st-1st NZCMRR Spring Classic at Manfield

November 8th Joy McKean Bantam Big Day Out 9:30am

Coach House Museum, Feilding

15th WCC Swap Meet Karapiro

December 13th New Plymouth M/C Clubs

Christmas BBQ

January 2027 –

19th New Plymouth CMC Club's

Annual Twilight Trial Ride

2027 2nd - 4th. April.

New Plymouth Classic Club Rally.

To be held at the Top 10 Holiday Park NP.

2027 17th – 19th of September

Hawke's Bay CMCC's

50th Anniversary and National Classic Rally

Stony Creek Ranch, Maraekakaho

High Altitude, High Drama: 14 Days Across the Himalayas on a Royal Enfield

Geoff Davies September 2026



Stepping off the plane into Delhi is an instant, intoxicating shock to the senses, a kaleidoscopic preview of the vibrant chaos that defines everyday India.
We could have spent more than the day we had exploring Delhi, but our destination for this trip lay further north, in the mountainous sanctuary of Manali.

Here, we were welcomed by Ritesh Sood, owner and mastermind behind MotoSaga motorcycle tours, a company that specialises in tours in the Western Himalayas. Ritesh's appointed team were charged with seamlessly guiding our impending journey through the highest motorable terrain on the planet.

At base camp, we were introduced to our trusty steeds: a fleet of rugged Royal Enfield Himalayan 411s. Joining us were our expert expedition guide Rakesh,along with a master mechanic and support driver. These men were tasked with what turned out to be the unenviable challenge of keeping both riders and machines intact across unforgiving landscapes.

At 2,000 meters above sea level, Manali served as the ideal launching pad for our high-altitude acclimatisation. That afternoon, a three-hour shakedown ride pushed us up to 3,000 meters and through a monumental nine-kilometer tunnel—a thrilling prelude to the 15-day odyssey awaiting us.



Crew: Ageless Adventurers



The five-man expedition party, comprised Pete, Steve, Kev, Mo and myself. This intrepid group of adventurers boasted a collective average age just north of 65. If society expects older men to slow down, clearly none of us received the memo. The team dynamics were fantastic with a perfect balance of Audacity, support, banter and the innate ability to mock each other's physical inadequacies and political views.

Despite a few mid-trip tumbles proving that senior bodies don't bounce quite as well as they used to, we all lived to tell the tale. In a selfless gesture for any who may follow, a few team members can now personally attest to the exceptional quality of Indian medical care.





The Machines: Temperamental Legends

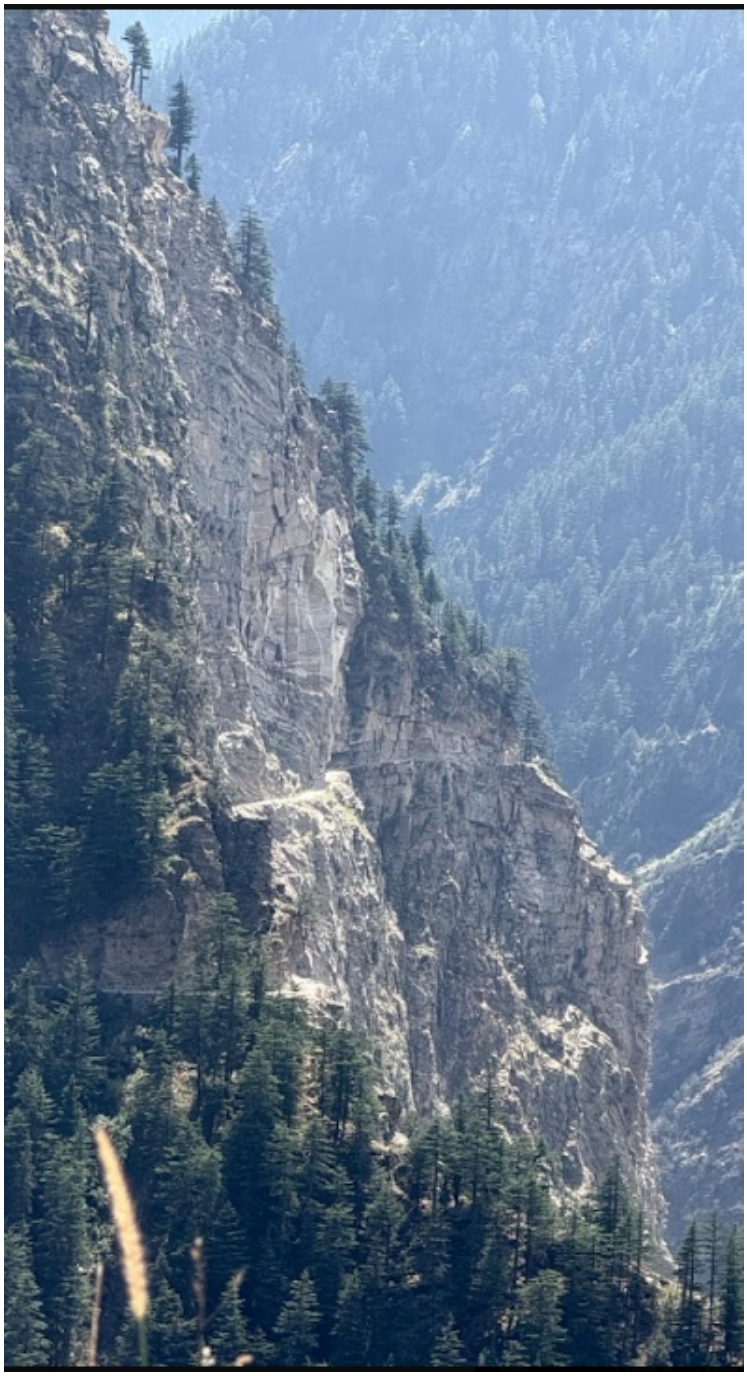


Traveling through India requires shedding all home-country expectations, life in a nation of 1.5 billion moves to a different rhythm. Strict regulations mean motorcycles must be retired after 15 years, but the punishing terrain ensures most never get that far.

Although our five-year-old Royal Enfields had each travelled under 30,000 kms, every kilometer had been hard-fought. Mechanical quirks were constant companions, keeping our mechanic ceaselessly occupied while adding an extra layer of peril and raw adventure to every leg.



Day 1 A Trial by Fire – Manali to Dharamshala



Covering 250 kilometers over 10 grueling hours, our maiden day set a dramatic tone. After morning setup tweaks, we made our way through lush, verdant mountain passes, where breathtaking panoramas revealed themselves around every bend.

By afternoon, the peaceful vistas had given way to adrenaline-spiking village traffic. With any resemblance of road order seemingly abandoned by all, navigating the intense chaos tested both skill, and nerve. As dusk approached a tropical deluge reduced visibility to zero amid the surging swathe of commuters, trucks, livestock, and stray dogs.

The final 20 kilometers became a surreal survival exercise, edging along an unlit mountain track through thick fog, dodging pedestrians emerging ghost-like from the mist, all while my headlight had unexpectedly failed. Fortunately, this first day's arduous ordeal was an exception and most subsequent days saw us safely housed by 4:00 PM.

On paper, the daily distances look modest. On the road, an average speed of 30 km/h seemed like furious progress when constantly dodging the aforementioned and always unpredictable hazards.



Day 2: Manali/ Dharamshala (250 kms/ 8 hrs)
Day 3: Dharamshala/ Chamba (190 kms/ 6 – 7 hrs)
Day 4: Chamba/ Sach Pass 4414 m/ Killar (160 kms/ 8 hrs)
Day 5: Killar – explore around
Day 6: Killar/ Keylong/ Jispa (150 kms/ 6 hrs)
Day 7: Jispa/ Shinku La (5091 m)/ Padum (160 kms/ 6 hrs)
Day 8: Padum/ Penzi La,Kargil (230 kms/ 7-8 hrs)
Day 9: Kargil/ Lamayuru/ Leh (215 kms/ 6-7 hrs)
Day 10: In Leh
Day 11: Leh/ Changla/ Pangong (150 kms/ 5 hrs)
Day 12: Pangong/ Hanle (160 kms/ 6 hrs)
Day 13: In Hanle – ride to Umling La (5798 m)
Day 14: Hanle/ Leh (250 kms/ 7 hrs)
Day 15: Depart Leh fly to Delhi

Taming the Passes: Highlights from the Trail



Ascending from Chamba (1,006 m) to the legendary Sach Pass (4,414 m / 14,482 ft) is a pilgrimage into extreme motoring. Renowned as one of India's most dangerous and thrilling road routes, sheer drop-offs and harsh track conditions required absolute focus.

The Keylong to Killar Road is a notoriously treacherous yet thrilling 133km route, widely celebrated as one of the world's most dangerous roads. This unpaved, shelf of single-lane dirt track connects the Lahaul Valley to the remote Pangi Valley; cutting directly through vertical cliff faces with sheer drop-offs plunging hundreds of metres to the roaring Chandrabhaga (Chenab) below.
Traversing this single-lane dirt track meant balancing on narrow ledges with disaster only a lapse of concentration away.

Living in Thin Air



Our ultimate target was Umling La, the world’s highest motorable pass situated at a staggering 19,024 feet (5,798 meters) - exceeding Everest Base Camp!
Conquering such heights required a carefully staged 12-day ascent to prevent severe altitude sickness. While physical exertion left us instantly winded, being well used to wheezing for breath in our normal lives meant the team acclimatised brilliantly, and we didn’t trouble the emergency oxygen tanks kept on hand.



Majestic Vistas & Highway Realities



The scale of Himalayan landscape is impossible to capture on camera, imposing mountains rise with staggering immensity. Taking in the breathtaking views required a delicate balancing act of concentration, a moment's distraction could mean plunging off an unprotected 1,000-foot cliff edge.



Sharing the road provided equal parts of fascination and terror. While many drivers demonstrate remarkable skill, local driving norms seem to rely heavily on divine providence. With blind-corner overtaking, unannounced roadworks, wandering cattle, and nonchalantly straying dogs the norm, every kilometer delivered an exhilarating exercise in defensive riding.



Remote Passes & Culinary Limits



Snooping along border regions near Pakistan and China, meant smooth military grade tarmac frequently interspersed the gravel tracks. However, this extreme isolation brought modest dining choices. Delicious as authentic Indian flavors are, 15 days of staple dishes tested our culinary and intestinal endurance. Fortunately, the legendary, associated brown-trousers moments, were largely avoided.

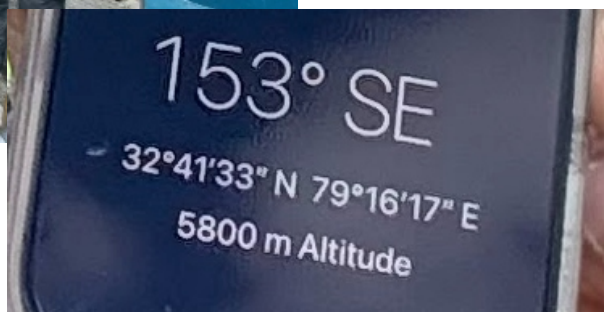
The Verdict

Riding through Northern India is an unforgettable adventure that is thrilling, challenging, and occasionally terrifying. While offering extraordinary value for money, more than anything, it is an experience that will stay with you long after the bike is parked and the dust has settled.

Taken with good companions, it becomes the journey of a lifetime. Spectacular landscapes, extraordinary people, roads that test every ounce of your concentration, provide memories that will be recounted for all the years that follow.

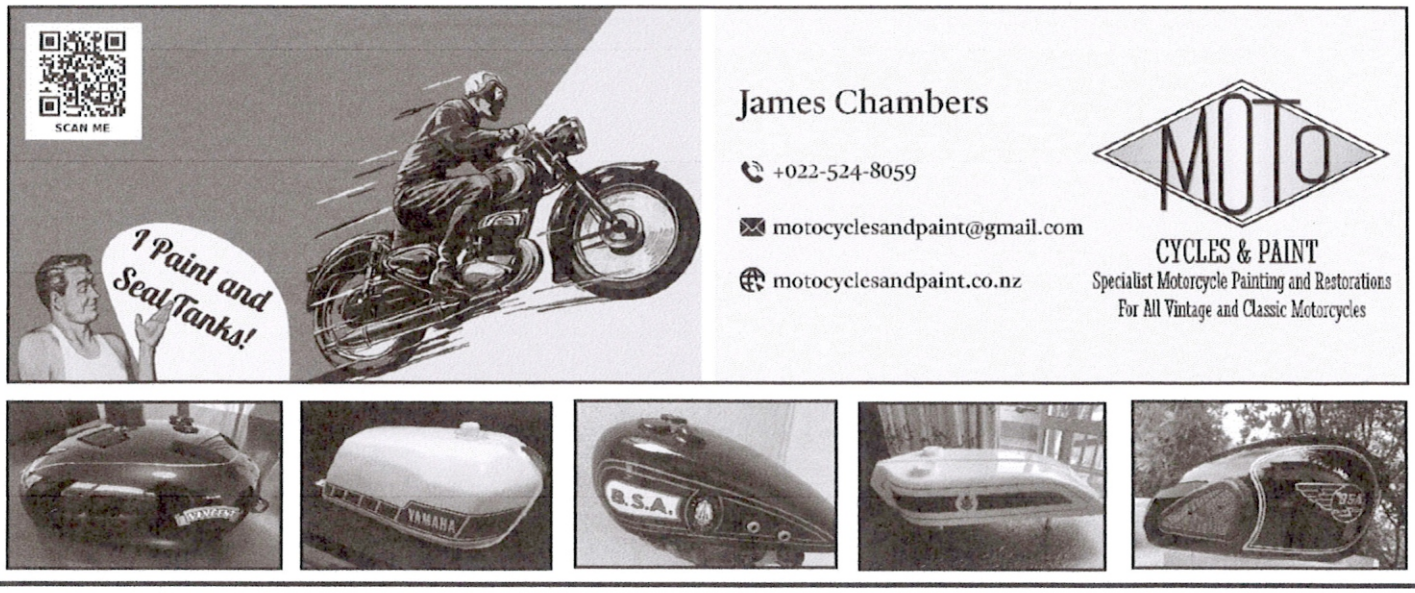
If you ever find yourself with the opportunity to throw a leg over a motorcycle in the Himalayas, don't hesitate. Grab it with both hands, twist the throttle, and go. You will never have an adventure quite like it.





END

MOTO – your specialist motorcycle painter. All enquiries welcome



Interislander ferry discounts

Our club belongs to the NZ Federation of Motoring Clubs Inc. This enables club members to access to cheap, cheap, cheap , discounted ferry fares between the South and North Islands - better than the AA discount or the Gold Card discount. Here's the deal (and it does not matter what type of vehicle you take):

The special fare discounts apply to only the Interislander. To make a booking, click here: **https://www.cookstraitcrossings.co.nz/**

The deal includes the following:

- All bookings are fully flexible discount rated and payment is not required until one week prior to departure.
- All bookings are fully refundable providing cancellation is made 24 hours prior to departure.
- All rates are the best available at the point of booking.

Do Club members have any suggestions or ideas of club rides/club nights, places of interest, speakers or shed visits that the club could do or organize. If so, please contact your committee.

Square motorcycle registration plates are now available.

You go to the LTSA web site and find absolutely nothing.

However, ring this number and a very helpful lady will take your motorcycle details and see to it all for you.
Your bike needs to be licensed and warranted.
You can have a new square profile plate with same letters and numbers, (replacement).

The Cost is $17.00

080073625.

Suzuki Snapshots

Joe Eastmure

and the 1972 Castrol Six Hour Production Race at Amaroo, New South Wales, Australia.

The giant-killing Suzuki 315 and the controversy that dogged the finish.

The 1972 Castrol 6 Hour Race

Recollections by Joe Eastmure



Joe Eastmure receiving line honours before the "sh.. hit the fan"

These are my recollections of the 1972 Castrol 6 Hour Race; but to do justice to the story I need to set the scene for the race first.

The late 1960's and 1970's were good times for motorcyclists keen on riding road bikes fast. The bikes of the era were comparatively simple compared with 1990's roadbikes but they went reasonably fast and handled well enough. My road bikes routinely cruised at 100 MPH without incident.

The best thing about the era for a motorcyclist was the relative freedom of the roads in terms of traffic volume, the absence of boring freeways, unrestricted speed limits outside built up areas and the fact that police radar hadn't been developed yet. Road racing to me was always an extension of my road riding and it's no coincidence that the hard core of touring riders in Willoughby Club, of which I was a member, were riders of the calibre of Paul Giles, Tony Hatton, Dave Burgess and Blair Harley, so it was natural that the 6 Hour concept was revived by Willoughby Club in 1970. In the inaugural race I not only partnered the winning 250 class Suzuki with Dave Burgess but as honorary Treasurer of the Club went home with about $20,000 in gate takings! Not to keep of course.

I had drifted into road racing using first my R60 and later my R75/5 BMW's as well as a 250 Suzuki specially bought for production racing. As a junior Customs officer production racing suited both my limited pocket and interest.

Leading up to the 1972 6 Hour I had the experience gained from some hundreds of thousands of road riding miles, a few years production racing and the lessons of the 2 preceding 6 Hours. Following the 1970 win Dave Burgess and I shared a 315 Suzuki for the 1971 race and this race was important for my subsequent 6 Hour rides.

In the 1971 race I was riding the bike at about the 3 hour mark and leading the 500 class, when the chain broke (luckily) at the pit entrance. Chains were a problem for the 315 as it ran a 525 size and we were unable to obtain a racing quality chain for the 1971 race. Compounding the problem was the fact that we used a 31 tooth countershaft sprocket which, while giving absolutely perfect gearing for Amaroo, meant that the standard chain had a very hard time. By the time the chain broke it was very loose and breakage came as no surprise.

For some reason fitting a new chain took forever and as the chance of winning the 500 class slipped away I grew steadily more upset so that by the time I got going again I was very angry. The spur of that anger seemed to tip me into a new approach to determination and calculated aggression which completely changed my approach to riding in the 6 Hour race. The 315 was blessed with virtually unlimited ground clearance and I simply threw the Suzuki past other bikes at every opportunity. In the following 2 odd hours I found that as my anger cooled off I could maintain the pace as a calculated tactic and while other riders seemed to be tiring or their bikes went off I could thread the Suzuki past most of them.

After reflecting on my experience in the latter part of the 71 race, for 1972 I elected to ride the whole six hours myself on a new (but now superseded) J model 315 Suzuki provided by NSW distributors Hazell & Moore. Dave Burgess had taken the 315 we raced in 1971 and converted it to a racing machine and had teamed up with Mike Steele on a 750 H2 Kawasaki for the 1972 race.

I was having trouble finding enough time to run in the Suzuki properly so I lent it to a mate who promptly ran it short of oil and lightly seized the pistons. Bob Burgess from Pittwater Motorcycles was preparing the bike and after boring the barrels had the bottom skirts of the new pistons chamfered by 1mm to bring the port timing up to full standard specification because of barrel liner/port misalignment. This turned out to be a disastrous move because it was the real reason why I was subsequently disqualified from the race results.

The 1972 race started with me in mid field as bikes were lined up according to capacity. The Suzuki was away quickly and I settled down with my only ambition to win the 500 class. Despite lapping in practice within 1 second of the unlimited bikes I had given no thought to an outright win.

After about half an hour the Suzuki began to settle into its racing stride characterised by a peculiar whining yowl which developed as the induction and exhaust harmonics stabilised at racing temperature. For a mere 315 cc the Suzuki really did go well at Amaroo Park when settled into racing pace because the gearing options allowed every bit of power to be used to the full. It was nowhere near as quick as the

750s or the full 500s in a straight line but as a total package of power, handling and braking it was perfect for Amaroo where the emphasis was on cornering.

Starting from the hairpin exiting in second gear I would go up to fourth for the right hander onto the straight, changing to fifth at the control tower and sixth at the kink going up the hill. At the left hander over the top of the hill the bike was absolutely screaming at around 8000 - 8500 RPM and if I had a clear run and set up the apex right I could just get through without having to feather the throttle. Coming out of the loop in 5th gear I would go to 6th and if everything was right I could get through the next fast right hand bend with only a faint easing of the throttle. Down a few gears at the tight left hander against the inside concrete wall and after a short sprint beside the lake, late braking for the hairpin again.

My technique for the race was simple - head down, throttle against the stop and never get slowed down by traffic. I think the secret of riding the Suzuki fast was to avoid delay as much as possible to maximise the bike's high cornering speed potential. No other bike in the race could stay with the Suzuki around corners and I simply rushed inside or outside other bikes to maintain corner speed on every possible occasion. Any check to follow another rider through a corner, especially a larger capacity bike with better acceleration, meant that the Suzuki's comparatively poor acceleration trapped me until they either went away up the straight or I got past at the next corner.

After the race settled into a pattern I tried to offset the Suzuki's straight line speed disadvantage by trying to slipstream the bigger bikes at every opportunity and slipping past at the next corner. If they went past again I would repeat the tactic until either I cleared away or they did. Then I would wait for another big bike and repeat the process.

Because I did not do a lot of road racing during the year it took an hour or so to really get into the groove and in that first hour I was racing for the 500 class lead with Les Kenny (H1 Kawasaki) and Peter Stronach (RD350 Yamaha). The outright lead was being fought over by H2 Kawasaki riders Geoff Lucas, Gregg Hansford and Mike Steele and Yamaha 750 riders like Ron Toombs and Brian Hindle.

The H2 Kawasaki's were handicapped by having to stop 5 times for fuel while all the serious 750 Yamahas had time bombs ticking away in their engines which would put all of the serious contenders out of the race.

After a couple of hours I was in the groove and started to lap consistently in the low 62 second mark which was right on the Unlimited bike's pace. My fastest lap when everything must have clicked was 61.4 which was within a fraction of the outright production lap record.

My favourite passing spots were:
The loop at the top of the circuit which as a double apex corner allowed me to pass up the inside under brakes leading into the first apex or, entering the first apex faster than a bike I was about to pass, I could come inside and block out the other bike as I would be first to the second apex. It's true that I must have given quite a few riders the horrors here as, just as they were about to line up for the second apex, my Suzuki would come up on the inside at a rate of knots, taking them by surprise.

I never made contact during the race but sometimes the speed difference at this point was so great I worried about the rider in front making a sudden change of line, unaware that I was fully committed to passing. I was left with fleeting impressions a number of times of riders wrestling with a bike trying to tie itself in knots because I had forced them to make a sudden direction change or braking manoeuvre.

Exiting the back loop became a personal test to progressively nail the throttle earlier and harder on leaving the second apex and still just stay on the road as the track curved right around to the fast loop at the back of the circuit. It took about 1 hour of racing to gradually increase my confidence to the point where I could exit the second apex at my own limit.

The fast curve around the back of the circuit was another good spot for me to pass because with a good run out of the loop and up the short back straight I could just about take this corner flat out. I found that riders of H2 Kawasaki's and similar bikes ridden by good riders could out accelerate me in the short connecting straight but because they would have to brake and I didn't, I could achieve a higher apex speed and pass them coming out of the corner on the run down to the tight left hander. The Suzuki had quite good drum brakes (provided green Ferodo racing linings were used) and I could outbrake the bigger bikes leading into the tight left hander before the run along the dam to the hairpin.

The mental and physical effort of keeping at this race pace was substantial and I had to do a lot of physical conditioning in the previous months including road running, weights and using a spring loaded hand squeezer at every opportunity. I spent many hours at work using the squeezer while working on Customs import entries.

The ability to never fall off the pace was essential for a good six hour place and showed up after about 2 hours when many riders began to tire. I had the capacity to keep my concentration pretty well focussed for the whole 6 hours whereas I noted that many riders would begin to visibly slow after an hour or so. Riders like Kenny Blake and Tony Hatton had the same approach as me but there were not too many others who could keep up full race pace from start to finish. Strangely, keeping focussed was difficult despite the high level of risk and I would have to constantly tell myself to keep alert and concentrate on the race. However, I often found my mind kept drifting away onto other matters and it would show on your lap times.

To keep alert I would note each lap time displayed by my crew and if it showed I had slowed and I could not blame slower riders or an error, I would screw up my concentration to attack each corner as best I could until the lap time came down to the low 62's.

At around 1.30pm I was presented with some very unexpected news when my pit signalled I was in the lead outright! Now I knew I was going pretty well from the race pattern because so few bikes were passing me, but to be in the lead was not in the race plan. I can remember doing a double take and wondering if my pit was playing a joke after reading this news, but as I had also been given my best lap speed of 61.4 around this time I realised I must be doing OK.

The news certainly gave me plenty to think about and I began to redo fuel consumption figures in my head as this would be very important from here on. The 315 had a big 3.7 gallon tank and could just last one and a half hours at full race speed, but with the reserve tap set on there was no second chance if we misjudged things. I had made the first stop at 11.30, the next stop at 1 pm and was scheduled to make my last stop at 2.30pm. Having to make only 3 pit stops obviously helped me keep up with the Kawasakis while the top 750 Yamahas were steadily destroying themselves.

With the race some 23 years in the past I find it hard to remember the ebb and flow of the whole race but the memory of the sheer effort of the thing is still clear. At 3pm I was looking forward to the race ending and at the 3.30pm mark when I was quite tired, I really needed the pit signals telling me I was in the lead again to spur me on as Mike Steele on the H2 Kawasaki closed in with about 10 minutes or so to go.

When Mike caught me I was determined to fight it out by slipstreaming as much as possible up the straights and retake him around the corners so that we changed positions a number of times. With about 5 minutes to go I finally pressured him into a mistake and he dropped the H2 around the loop. While Mike was on the deck I lapped him about 3 times and was happy to finish the race absolutely knackered but feeling pretty pleased with the effort.

Of course it was all for nothing in the end because of my disqualification.

Why was I disqualified? The missing horn became the accepted reason but it really was because the scrutineers considered the barrels and pistons had been doctored beyond acceptable limits.

However, remember that for 1972 Willoughby adopted more stringent standards than in previous years, perhaps spurred on by the outrageous oversized Ducati that was also disqualified, but I think marketing reasons had a big role in the decision. The previous year's Chief Scrutineer, Blair Harley, stated he would have passed the Suzuki and my belief is that a win by a discontinued 315 Suzuki did not fit the new marketing image for the 6 Hour race as a race for "superbikes".

I later learned that one of the placing bikes also did not have a horn and Dave Burgess,

who was my best mate, later confided to me that because of chronic pinging on the winning H2 Kawasaki, his crew took a punt the evening before the race and put in extra head gaskets to try and control it. The vigilant scrutineers somehow failed to notice this.

One of the scrutineers later earnestly told me he had conducted tests on a 315 and had found that the horn interfered with cooling air and caused a noticeable drop in power. What bunkum as proved in the following year's 6 Hour race.

In the 1973 6 Hour race I rode the same 315 Suzuki after taking over engine preparation myself to avoid any further trouble. After a precautionary crankshaft rebuild, new barrels and pistons AND a horn, I won the 500 class completing 234 laps - the same lap total that won the 1972 race!

The 1973 win came despite race regulation changes which required using the Suzuki's standard 3.00 size front tyre and the fitting of new footrests and rubbers for the start of the race. In the 1972 race I used a 3.50 front tyre for extra ground clearance and the footrests for the race were mere pegs after practice wear.

The 1973 changes meant I lost time in the first hour grinding the footrests away to achieve reasonable racing clearance plus I had an unscheduled pit stop in the first quarter hour to let off a rear brake which began to bind because the cable had not been properly secured. Despite these extra handicaps, especially the reduction of ground clearance caused by the smaller front tyre, I still did the same number of laps as in 1972 when the bike was supposed to be illegal.

It's all ancient history now but you can see that the episode still irritates me. Hazell & Moore gave me the bike and I continued to use it as my road bike until 1984 when I bought my Honda CX500EC.

I've always ridden a bike to work every day and the old 315 had notched up about 150,000 km by the time I retired it. The Suzuki sits in my garage today in very good condition just waiting for the dollars to restore it to concourse condition. I must dust it off one day and give it a fling on a club run.

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Classicbikes Australia
Muzza - 2001

NEW PLYMOUTH CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE CLUB

Inc.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP/GENERAL INFORMATION

THE AIM OF THE CLUB:

The aim of the club shall be the encouragement of Classic Motorcycling and Motorcycling Generally, and such other purposes connected with motorcycling, and the welfare and development of the club as the members shall, from time to time, deem necessary or expedient.

We use the Beach St Hall as our clubrooms on Beach St, New Plymouth, where we meet on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:30pm.

We would welcome casual visitors to our meetings and events. (Try before you buy!) Monthly runs and events are organised for the enjoyment of members.

If you require further information, please contact the following:

President: Lew Martin (ph. 022 691 8530)

Secretary: Mike Galvin (ph. 021 144 3533)

If you wish to become a member, please complete the tear off slip. On acceptance of your application a fee of $40.00 is payable for the first annual fee, which includes the cost of a name badge, payment thereafter is $30.00 per year payable to NPCMC Inc. Please forward the completed form to;

The Treasurer, PO Box 5092, Westown, NEW PLYMOUTH 4343.

or Email: graham.voss48@gmail.com

Surname: _____ First Name(s): _____

Preferred Name: _____ Date Applying _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ (Work) _____

Email: _____

What make(s) of motorcycle are you most interested in? _____

How did you become aware of the NPMCC? _____

Please state who is proposing you for membership: _____

Please indicate your preference newsletter -----email-------postal

Information containing personal details on this application form will not be made available or shared with any third party without initially obtaining the express permission of the applicant.

Any approved club member will abide by the Club Constitution and Rules.

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If you are interested please contact The Secretary –

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