

Rawson Sunday 17th July, 2011

Tim Emons	Honda CBR1000	Graeme Tattersall	Yamaha MT-01
Misho Zrasic/Pina Garasi	Honda CBR1000	Ben Warden	Honda CBR954
Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Marc Marias	Triumph 675
Damir Djikic	Honda CBR1000	Peter Fisher	Triumph 675
John Rousseaux (rear)	Honda CBR1000	Chris Eaton (1 st ride)	Hyosung 650
Ron Johnston (lead)	Honda CB1000F		<i>11 bikes, 12 people</i>

I had just returned from a thoroughly enjoyable couple of weeks exploring around Darwin and Kakadu in a borrowed 4x4 “monster truck”, and couldn’t think of a better way to re-acclimatise to the Melbourne winter chill than to get out on a Club ride. I rolled out of the driveway and headed for Yarra Glen with two thermals and a light merino jumper under my winter jacket. As I rode I told myself “I’m not leading, rear riding, or offering first aid and I’m not doing the article – today I just ride!” And that would’ve been the case if my hand hadn’t been forced by the “first stuff-up” rule.

It looked like we were set for a small, quick group today, until new rider Chris pulled up on his Hyosung 650, sporting what appeared to be hard compound touring tyres and jeans. Ron gave us the spiel, John slipped into his preferred position at the rear, and we commenced the climb up the Christmas Hills Road.

Ben putted along behind Chris, no doubt to evaluate if he possessed the minimum required skills to make it through the day ahead. I also watched from a distance and it was soon evident that it would simply be a matter of time before he crashed.

The climb up the tight twisties to Kinglake was taken gingerly as the wet road had a shiny mirror finish offering very little traction. I corner marked at the top, then waited an eternity for Chris and John to appear with light drizzle slowly seeping down my legs into my boots. Eventually, John arrived alone. Thankfully, he reported that Chris had decided to pull out of the ride (after pulling over on the wrong side of the road across double lines on a blind corner...!).

I needed to dry out, so I administered the high speed air dryer all the way to the next corner markers, and beyond down Chum Creek Road. Ron led us from Healesville to Yarra Junction where we stopped for morning tea at the Gladysdale Bakehouse, an establishment I’d not previously visited. I attacked the sample plate of sourdough olive bread sitting on the counter while I waited for my coffee to be made. Both the coffee and the bread got the thumbs up!

Graeme and Peter departed here, while the rest of us cut across through Powelltown and into the twisties and sweepers to Noojee. A quick blast up the hill led us to the right turn onto Icy Creek Road. I hadn’t been looking forward to this stretch of road, based on how slippery it was last time I ventured down this way. But today it wasn’t too bad, although I still bottomed out my forks on one severe bump I didn’t see coming – luckily I’m not planning on trying for any more kids!

We continued on through Willow Grove and wrung the throttle open on the fast road to Erica. In no time, we were rolling into Rawson. I couldn’t picture ever seeing a pub here and was intrigued as to what Ronnie had planned for us. Where the road hooks right we went straight ahead onto a minor road I had never noticed, and soon we reached a typically rustic old bush pub, known as the “Stockyard Bar & Bistro”.

Idling carefully through the dirt carpark, we re-grouped before heading inside. I made the foolish mistake of looking where I wanted to go instead of directly ahead of my front wheel, and before I knew it, the front shot sideways out from under me on a patch of muddy clay, and I was lying in the mud with my bike resting on my leg. This resulted in waves of laughter from my comrades as I sat there, not bothering to risk a back injury by trying to heave the bike off my leg with so many helping hands close by.

And I sat there...

Eventually, Ron wandered over and gave me a curious look as if to ask “What are you doing sitting down there in the mud with your bike lying on your leg?” I politely requested assistance and we started to lift the bike, but as soon as the side was off the ground, the tyres slid sideways and we

found ourselves chasing the bike sideways across the slippery ground until it reached firmer ground and we were able to get it upright again! I had thick mud all down my right side, as did the bike, much to the delight of the onlookers. The announcement was made, and here I am writing the article, punishment for “first stuff-up”. (Personally, I felt that Ben should’ve been assigned the article as he missed this whole episode on account of having to leave the ride before Powelltown to double back for fuel...:-)

Our stomachs eventually took over from this little distraction and we made our way inside to order lunch. I opted for the burger, and it was fantastic. The sort of burger you don’t even attempt to eat with your hands; tools definitely required. John’s open steak sandwich looked mighty impressive too.

Meals and photo shoot were dispensed with and we took turns to fill up at the one working pump in Rawson; then took turns to pay. Luckily, there were no cameras around to catch Misho assisting me wash the dried mud from my backside with the windscreen cleaning sponge. I took my time preparing to leave for the next leg so that I could play catch-up on the blast down to Tyers before working our way across to the Old Sale Road.

The remainder of the ride barely required corner markers as the whole group were usually within sight of each other with around 500m from leader to tail rider. I thoroughly enjoyed the view ahead of bike after bike tipping into corner after corner. It would’ve been a good spectacle to capture with an onboard video camera, but this one will just have to be filed away in my own volatile memory.

We took it easy on the deteriorating Jindivick road, all now familiar with its current appalling condition. Then wound it up for the final rush of speed through the last leg into Longwarry North.

Thanks Ron for leading an interesting ride, and for revealing the location of that hidden gem of a pub. No incidents (unless you count mine – I don’t think it really counts as my first Club crash...does it? Or is it my second, Pierre? And of course, thanks to John for looking after our rears.

Tim Emons