

Lavers Hill via Great Ocean Road

Sunday 20th November 2011

Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Mark Copeland	Kawasaki ZX10
Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Marc Marais	Kawasaki ZX10
Misho Zrakic/Pina Garasi	Honda CBR1000	Jason Wilson	Kawasaki ZX9
Alex Nadelyaev	Honda CBR1000	Bill Kennedy (3 rd ride)	Kawasaki Z750
Nigel Oman	Honda CBR1000	Richard Baulsen (4 th ride)	Kawasaki Z650
Mitar Marescuk	Honda CBR1000	Matt Considine	Honda CBR600
Tony Stegmar	Honda CBR1000	Rod Silver (rear)	KTM RC8
Mirko Strasser	Honda CBR929	Bill Simpson (leader)	Suzuki GSXR1000

I always get excited in anticipation of experiencing the Great Ocean Road: the sea mist, the damp salty air, the beautifully rugged sea vista... hmmm. But not for long. Alas, due to the heavy presence of speed enforcement officers, the ride along the coast is kept to a minimum. Instead, we mainly do the “forestry” roads through Deans Marsh and Lavers Hill which due to the overnight rainfall, and the fact that the roads are shaded by the greenery, leaves the roads with patches of slippery wetness, at times interspersed with dry patches. This, of course, meant you never quite knew what road condition was around the next corner. In addition, full concentration was required on the shiny strips of bitumen, as some riders realised when they had a “moment” of non-grip and their bike proceeded in an unexpected direction. I was on “high alert” even though I was on-board with Misho. My “off” at Tallangatta has deeply ingrained in me that these ‘shiny’ patches are DANGEROUS.

Pillioning with “the man” means I see different riders than I normally would. I appreciate watching the smooth and swift lines of the three MSR Kawasaki boys – Marc, Mark and Jason. Hmm, now that I think of it, Cliffy would ride past me at jet speed on his Kawasaki but only “whisper” audible. It always fascinated me watching him riding sweetly past in his minimalist style. Something to do with the Kawasakis I wonder? Somehow though, the noise of the ‘hungry for speed’ beast beneath me (and the man riding it), makes all the other bikes sound relatively modest in their endeavour for speed.

Lunchtime is a pleasant time where we relax and pay double the price for anything at the café at Lavers Hill before we head off and do the same roads again, but in reverse. Afternoon yucky coffee at the Deans Marsh cafe and our last chance to hear Billy Simpson tell us his joke for the day in his inimitable style, his blue mirrored sunglasses and army-issued khaki floppy hat complementing his persona beautifully.

Thanks for all the laughs Billy; your humour is priceless and puts a smile on my face when I randomly remember something you’ve said in your very old-style Australian vernacular. You did a great job as ride leader; no incidents or speeding fines either. Well done! See you on the next ride out your way, if not sooner.

Pina Garasi