

As I'd been socialising the previous two Sundays, I was keen to get out for a ride. Saturday had been very wet and Sunday's prediction was much the same, but I was going on the Lake Eppalock ride rain, hail or shine!

I headed out my usual back roads to Whittlesea but just after Warrandyte the abundance of mud and gravel on the roads indicated this area had had much more rain than at home. I pressed on to Kangaroo Ground and Cottles Bridge seeing plenty of 'Water over Road' signs, but as most of the water had dispersed, no problems were encountered.

As I approached Arthurs Creek an oncoming motorbike flagged me down to alert me that "If I was going to Whittlesea, better find another way as all the roads are under water." Bugger! It was just after 9.30am so there was still a chance of making the start at 10am. Not knowing this area well, I thought maybe the Strathewen road was worth a try! Nice section of road with some evidence of recent floods but so far so good. Then I came across another 'Water over Road' sign but ignored it as the previous areas had been dry! On rounding the bend there was 'Water ALL OVER the road'. Though not deep, it was vast!

I stayed calm (as one can in these situations) and, without braking, coasted into the water with a steady throttle. The spray of water from the front wheel was quite impressive; had it not been for my wet-weather gear I would have been drenched. We were nearly through this great puddle - when the motor stopped! Damn!

I dismounted into about 10-15cm of water and pushed the bike to the dry road ahead. Thumbed the starter and, although spinning, the motor wouldn't fire. I waited a while and repeated but still no go. And the battery was starting to fade. I began to think that maybe the plugs were wet and, as the bike is too heavy to push-start, my best option was to ring the missus to come and get me!

It was now 10:20am and after explaining where I was and how to get there, I pushed the bike back towards the Arthurs Creek turnoff. Bloody heavy to push these 'light' sports bikes. But I persevered, back across the big puddle and inched my way along the road to a pleasant spot to wait.

A few locals and the SES came and stopped for a chat: "We've had 90mm of rain here", "Whittlesea Showground is under water", and the "Plenty River has covered some of the roads by nearly 0.8 metres!" I had an offer of a tow but declined, saying help was on the way.

At 11:30am the call came from Kerrie, "I'm in Doctors Gully, how do I find you?" DOCTORS GULLY! I tried to stay calm and explain how to get here. Another call, "I'm in Doreen", then "I'm in Mernda". Give me strength! Eventually she found me and we arrived home at 1:30pm. I had left the bike at a farm and headed back, after some lunch, in the van to bring it home.

While home I rang Steve Hunt at Southeast Motorcycles in Moorabbin for some advice/options on the best way to fix the bike. If it had ingested water, Steve advised not leaving it sit for long before removing the plugs and drying things out. He offered to have a look as soon as I got the bike home!

I eventually got the bike back home at just after 5pm. Later that evening I went down to Steve's workshop where he proceeded to remove the airbox - man what a fiddly job! Although quite dry inside, the air filter was still damp which confirmed that some of the spray had been sucked into the airbox, then the engine and fouled the plugs. Although the Honda has vacuum controlled flapper valves inside the air ducts they never close tightly and with a light throttle would have been open and let in a deluge of water!

Finally at 9:00 pm (nearly 12 hours later) the bike was running and ready to go. Instead, we decided to change the oil and filter as a precaution.

I picked the bike up on Monday and am looking forward to next Sunday's ride. The moral of this story? Be prepared. (?) Obey signs. (?) Always look on the bright side. (?) No moral - shit happens!

Ian Payne

P.S. A big thanks to Steve Hunt for his help.