

Day 1, Melbourne Cup Weekend

Saturday 29th October, 2011

Ben Warden (<i>Leader</i>)	Honda CBR1000	Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Kurn Bridgeman	Honda CBR600
Ron Johnston	Honda CBF 1000	John Willis	Kawasaki Z1000
Marc Marais	Kawasaki ZX10R	Mark Copeland	Kawasaki ZX10R
Rod Silver (<i>Rear</i>)	KTM RC8		9 bikes, 9 people

Welcome to another day in paradise: liquid sunshine, and plenty of it. I had arranged to meet at John Willis's house at 7 am but it didn't happen. I woke up late and by the time I had breakfast and put my wet weather gear on over my leathers, the time had gone. I asked Julie to text John I was running late. I didn't get to his house until 7.45am. After a few formalities we were on our way.

Since it was raining we just went down the Melba Highway, instead of doing all my usual back roads. We stopped at Yarra Glen so John could get fuel. I had already got fuel on the way to his house. Then we continued down the Melba seeing lots of motorcyclists and 4bees towing caravans and boats.

At Yea, we were behind cars towing caravans when suddenly the van wheels locked up and slewed sideways a couple of feet. I don't know whether the driver was paying much attention to what was happening in front of him, but it was interesting to watch.

Back on the highway, with more vans and boats, to Merton and Yarck, arriving about 9 am. Kurn and Marc followed, and then the others slowly rolled in. Coffee time. New rider Rod Silver joined us riding a KTM RC8. It was a standard black model with an after-market pipe which sounded good.

After Ben tool the ICE numbers, we were on our way. Some of the boys had stopped at Merton to get premium grade fuel, so we regrouped at Mansfield. The usual Cup weekend event forced us to detour around the back streets and rejoin Mansfield Whitfield road just out of town. From now on we encountered BMW riders heading in the same direction as us, rounding a few up as we went. It was a good across the top, eventually stopping in Whitfield for a visor clean. I bought petrol because last year I ran out coming into Myrtleford, although the bike seems more economical this year.

BMW riders were everywhere in Whitfield. Then at Oxley, the locals were having their yearly car event, again with people and cars all over the place, 40 km/h signs slowing us down.

The 80 km between Whitfield and Myrtleford is the most boring part of the trip - straight roads. At Myrtleford we headed around to the bakery for yummy food. The joint was packed, but the wait was worth it. After lunch we took the back road to Mudgegonga, then turned right to Rosewhite to pick up the Happy Valley Road to Running Creek. These roads are top of the list for great roads.

On to Dederang and Tangambalanga for another visor clean before the run down the Lockharts Gap Road to Eskdale and Mitta Mitta. All is going well until I tried to get an insect out of my helmet, partially opening the visor and not watching where I am going. I wandered on to the white line, saw an approaching car, while still trying to get rid of the insect. As we passed each other I saw it was a Police car which gave me a fright. But luckily it didn't follow.

We stopped at Mitta Mitta for a rest before the 60 km loop to Dartmouth Dam and back. Marc, Mark, John and I stayed behind while Pina went pillion with Misho. It was a relaxing time but the others seemed to be taking longer than expected. Ben returned alone and told us than Kurn had crashed at the Dam. He was not injured in the fall, but broke his leg when trying to lift up the bike. Kurn was taken by car back to Dartmouth township and then by ambulance to Albury Hospital. Pina rode his bike back to Mitta Mitta and we left it at the pub because the Police station was shut.

We rode on to Tallangatta for fuel and then across Granya Gap to follow the River Road through Walwa, Tintaldra and finally Towong. Marc, Mark and Rod continued on to the Corryong Motel.

That evening our hosts Ron and Sarah put on a BBQ tea which was terrific. Everyone enjoyed themselves and we were well fed. It was a pleasant way to finish the day. Thanks to Ben for leading and Rod for rear riding duties. I did 650 km for the day.

Ron Johnston