

## Euroa                      Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2011

Willem Vandeveld (1/6 rear)	Honda ST1300	Rob Jones	Suzuki GSXR1000
Ben Warden (1/6 rear)	Honda CBR1000	Darryn "Bart" Hutchinson	Suzuki GSXR1000
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Ken Ng (1 <sup>st</sup> ride)	Suzuki GSXR750
Damir Djikic	Honda CBR1000	Marc Marais	Kawasaki ZX10R
Alex Nadelaev (2 <sup>nd</sup> ride)	Honda CBR1000	Jason Wilson	Kawasaki ZX9
Leo Zhang (2 <sup>nd</sup> ride)	Honda CBR600	Richard Baulsen (3 <sup>rd</sup> ride)	Kawasaki Z650
Pina Garasi (1/6 rear)	Honda CBR600	Aiden Baker (2 <sup>nd</sup> ride)	Kawasaki ER-6
Rob Langer (leader)	KTM 990	Peter Fisher	BMW S1000RR
Graeme Tattersall	Yamaha MT-01	Geoff Dick	BMW R850R

I arrived early at Whittlesea – around 9.30 am and fuelled up. Jason was there to keep me company in the beautiful sunny, cloudless day with 29 degrees forecast. Fuelling up is not so remarkable until the power goes off 15 minutes later and all the riders expecting fuel can't fill because the pumps are not operating. As riders kept rolling in on the death, it was decided that they should go back to the other side of Whittlesea and get fuel and the main group would wait. In the interim, various mechanical repairs were undertaken including tightening up Bart's wobbly mirror and adjusting leader Rob's misaligned rear axle, clearly something amiss by the severe droop in the KTM's chain. Better to fix it now than have the chain jump off the sprocket and wreak havoc in the middle of nowhere. Interestingly Rob knew that my Honda rear axle nut (and hence spanner) would fit his KTM rear axle nut.

My new tri-colour CBR1000 continues to attract attention with good and bad comments – it is a work of art and very pretty, and (ii) the white wheels show every spider web of sparingly applied chain lube, and quickly go brown in the lightest of rain. They should be navy blue. I note the similar coloured 2012 model has black wheels.

Time had marched on as the number of riders blew out to 17, with Geoff to meet us en-route, bringing the final tally up to 18. Ruffy, the nominated first morning tea stop was going to be overwhelmed; service is slow at the best of times. So Yea was promoted to the first stop, a pleasant 60 km away.

Leaving near last I found myself behind the string of five new riders ranging from 1<sup>st</sup> to third ride. They were cunningly holding each other up, obeying the speed limits, not crossing double white lines, and generally treating other vehicular traffic with respect. Of course, the Members do all that too, but are just a bit luckier with the traffic.

Heading through Kinglake West I thought I had better ease myself past this lot to enjoy the downhill twisties ahead. I did. And I did. All the way to Yea not seeing another bike. Traffic must have been favourable! Rear rider #1, Willem, mistook some of the newer riders as not being with the Club ride, and overtook them. Luckily they recognised him, and as there was no corner marking opportunities to negotiate, all made it safely to Yea for morning tea.

Geoff managed to find the group in Yea, Rob not notifying him of the proposed route changes – always an issue when trying to second guess where and when the Club might be. It was reported Geoff's entrance was heralded by a squeal of car brakes as it avoided Geoff's sudden darting into a parking spot. At least it was good to see Geoff back riding again after his long stay in hospital.

I spoke to Richard, on his third ride, about paying his membership and we agreed to do the paperwork at the lunch stop. Alas, that is the last we saw of him. And no-one remembers him signalling his intention to leave. I guess we will find out sooner or later what happened.

Willem was on BBQ duties and headed home from Yea, leaving a hole in the rear rider ranks. Surveying the likely candidates it fell to Marc or me. I would take the first stint up through Highlands and back down to Merton. Good roads. But you have to take responsibility now and again, not one of the perks of being on the Committee.

And so it was. Onwards and upwards. Highlands, Caveat, Gobur, Merton. If you know exactly where you are going then there is fun to be had in dropping back a bit and then playing catchup – just before the next intersection so that no time is lost. So I played this game and generally amused myself.

Merton was an early fuel stop at the 150 km mark. Rob suggested that Geoff (R850R) might agree to taking up the rear rider reins – which he mercifully did. But it would be only as far as Seymour, his home exit point.

From Merton the roads deteriorated badly, the rains and lack of maintenance resulting in all manner of obstacles – pot holes, bumps, washouts, corrugations and sand in the corners. The roads are generally skinny and bumpy up until Strathbogie, and then improve all the way to Euroa. I smashed the bike over Polly McQuins Bridge, bottoming both front and back suspension, taking the dip too fast, Misho right behind me also bottoming out. The shock went right through my spine and crunched my skull. My four broken/mending ribs made themselves known, and would continue to do so for the rest of the ride, that evening and well in to the next day! Only 7 days before Melbourne Cup. Gulp!

At Euroa we all filled up. According to the trip meter the bike consumed 11.50 litres over the 211 km between Whittlesea and Euroa at 18.3 km/l. Marvellous economy, particularly compared to the 954.

It was late and the main street coffee shop was closed, the bakery was closed and the second bakery wasn't doing sandwiches. Egg and cheese pie with custard tart to follow washed down with a bottle of Mt Franklin's best. It was hot and sticky, over jacket and pants dispensed with back at Merton. Rob Jones, Peter Fisher, Graeme and Bart headed off to the local for a counter lunch and a few quenching ales.

Conversation turned to tyres and whether various bikes had sufficient rubber to do the Melbourne Cup Weekend. If it was up for debate, then the answer was clearly 'No'. We recommend the American website MotoSport to everyone now, particularly with delivery fixed at \$30 for purchases over \$200. Tyres are generally \$100 less per tyre, landed. Alas, the local Aussie bike shops are waking up and charging up to \$100 a pair to fit. Ouch! My tyre machine has paid for itself already.

We saddled up for the next hop to Seymour – down through Ruffy and more bumps/pain. And then we retraced our steps back through Caveat and down to Seymour. This road is relatively smooth and after a sighting lap earlier in the day, tackled with gusto on the return trip.

Three of the new riders, having survived this far, and with the Hume Freeway an unleaded sniff away, decided enough was enough and departed. We were down to nine – half of the original starting contingent. Marc was going to go rear rider, but Pina figured now was as good a time as any to do it.

On to Glenaroua and down to Broadford. As they had done all day, Misho, Jason, and Damir corner marked together. Not so noticeable with a large number of riders but very obvious now. At the end of the Strath Creek Road at Flowerdale I corner marked and then latched on to the fab three for the final sprint into Kinglake West. The bike is run in now.

As an afterthought we took a few photos of the hot and happy few, first with my camera, and then with Jason's. Marc and Jason had been stopping all day taking action shots, posted to Facebook and the Google group the next day. The pretty bike is clearly the most photogenic. Thanks lads.

And thanks to Rob for putting together a great ride amongst the back blocks – almost no cars, not a police vehicle of any description spotted all day (well, except parked outside the cop shop in Seymour), and lots of fun had by all on challenging roads. And it was sensationally warm for the wettest month of the year. Let's hope the weather stays dry for next weekend!

**Ben Warden**