

## **Towong, Melbourne Cup Weekend**

**Saturday October 29<sup>th</sup> to Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2011**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Bike</b>	<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Day 2</b>	<b>Day 3</b>	<b>Day 4</b>	<b>Accomm.</b>
1.	Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	X	X	X	X	T
2.	Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	X	X	X	X	T
3.	Ron Johnston	Honda CBF1000	X	X	X	X	T
4.	Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	X	X			T
5.	Kurn Bridgeman	Honda CBR600	X				
6.	Mark Copeland	Kawasaki ZX10	X	X	X	X	C
7.	Marc Marais	Kawasaki ZX10	X	X	X	X	C/T
8.	John Willis	Kawasaki Z1000	X	X	X	X	T
9.	Rod Silver (1 <sup>st</sup> ride)	KTM RC8	X	X	X	X	C
10.	Mark Stephenson	Yamaha FZ1		X			C
11.	Mitar Marescuk	Husqvarna SM610		X			C
12.	Brian "Bubba" Little	Kawasaki ZX1200		X			C
13.	Ben "Beno" Fuller	Suzuki GSXR1300		X	X		C
14.	Craig Davidson	Suzuki GSXR750		X	X		C
15.	Ross McCurdy	Yamaha R1		X			C
16.	Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000		X	X	X	C
17.	Darryn "Bart" Hutchinson	Suzuki GSXR1000		X			C
18.	Dave Hives	Kawasaki ZX10		X			C
19.	Mark Rhodes	Honda CBR1000		X			C
20.	Rob Jones	Suzuki GSXR1000		X	X		C
21.	Dennis Lindemann	Honda CBR1000		X	X		T
22.	Dave Ward	Honda CBR1000		X	X		C
23.	Ian Payne	Honda CBR1000		X	X		C
		<b><i>Totals:</i></b>	<b>9</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	

T = Towong Bed and Breakfast; C= Corryong Pub Motel units

We followed the script as per the web: "The Committee has booked the spectacular "Snowy Mountain Holidays" B&B accommodation package on the Murray River at Towong, 11 km out of Corryong. Typically we make a four day weekend out of the Tuesday public holiday to take advantage of the great location and the time and distance required to get there. The plan is to ride up Saturday, ride around the mountains Sunday and Monday and return to Melbourne on Tuesday. This means three night's accommodation. You'll need to take annual leave for the Monday, so book your leave day now. \$160 buys you 3 nights' accommodation and a home cooked meal and forms your deposit. The first night's meal is a BBQ (steaks, sausages, scallop potato, sauces, ratatouille, and garlic bread). Great value."

**Sat 29<sup>th</sup>:** Melbourne, Yarck, Mansfield, Whitfield, Myrtleford, Mudgegonga, Rosewhite Rd, Happy Valley Rd, Tangambalanga Rd, Eskdale, Mitta Mitta, Dartmouth Dam, Mitta Mitta, Tallangatta, Granya Gap, Walwa, Tintaldra, Towong. **590 km** from Yarck (which is 140 km from Melbourne).

**Sun 30<sup>th</sup>:** Towong, Khancoban, Cabramurra, Elliot Way (Sue City), Tumbarumba, Rosewood Road, Tumut, Bondo, Tumorama, Adjungbilly, near Gundagai, Tumut, Rosewood Road, Tumbarumba, Towong. **560 km**

**Mon 31<sup>st</sup>:** Towong, Khancoban, Alpine Way (Tom Groggin, Dead Horse Gap), Thredbo, Jindabyne, Charlotte's Pass, Jindabyne, Dalgetty, Berridale, Adaminaby, Kiandra, Cabramurra, Khancoban, Towong. **475 km**

**Tue 1<sup>st</sup>:** Towong, Tintaldra (back way), Walwa, Granya Gap, Tallangatta, Omeo Rd to Eskdale, Tangambalanga Rd, Happy Valley Rd, Rosewhite Rd, Myrtleford, Whitfield, Mansfield, Yarck. **490 km.**

**Total: 2120 km**

## Highlights?

As usual the long weekend produced a wide range of extreme highs and extreme lows. Below are a few memories hastily put together the day after the ride, the day of magazine printing.

**Weather:** cold and windy and intermittently wet on the first day but 100% dry between Tallangatta and Towong via Granya Gap and the River Road to finish off the day. The next three days provided spectacularly good weather with cloudless blue skies and temperatures in the 20s; brilliant riding weather with a few sunburnt faces as proof. But there was a massive cloud burst just before Tumbarumba on Day 2 – hail in Tumbarumba – which caught a few out - and then back to dry and sunshine.

**Kurn.** Crashed on Day 1 at Dartmouth Dam, on the last right hand corner before the Dam wall, on the skinny, bumpy, poorly maintained section. Lost the front, slid into a ditch, jumping the spoon drain, bike upside down on the steep embankment, Kurn relatively unscathed. Then his leg snapped when he tried to lift the bike. He was ferried by a passing car driver, back to Dartmouth and from there via ambulance to Albury Hospital. A steel rod was inserted between his knee and ankle on Monday and he was released on crutches on Tuesday. We wish him a full and speedy recovery.

**Kurn's bike:** Misho, Rod and car driver (Ben's ribs not up to the task) managed to right the bike and lift it across the spoon drain. It was completely rideable with minimal cosmetic damage, all controls intact. Pina, who had been pillioning with Misho on the Dartmouth Dam 60 km loop, rode Kurn's CBR back to Mitta Mitta, but not before we searched in vain to find Kurn in Dartmouth town. He was cunningly holed up in the Caravan Park. There is no medical centre in Dartmouth.

The Mitta Mitta publican came looking for "Ben" with a message from "Cathy at the caravan park" noting Kurn's movements. We parked his bike behind the Mitta Mitta pub, undercover, for later retrieval by Peter Feistl who picked up Kurn as well.

**Pina:** crashed into (and over) a closed gate after spearing up a dirt road, missing the sharp "invisible" left hand corner after the bridge. (Rob Jones had an issue on the same bridge last year. Something to do with a mono.) It was not long after our first photo shoot at Cabramurra lookout where we usually stop, on Day 2. John and Misho, corner marking at the end of Elliot Way, became suspicious due to the delay, Misho going back and John rejoining the main pack, now in Tumbarumba. Again, a good Samaritan motorist drove Pina to Tumbarumba Regional Hospital while the ride continued as planned, returning to Tumbarumba late afternoon. It looked like Pina was going to be released once her blood pressure returned to normal. She was required to stay for 'observation'. Her body was a bit battered and bruised but otherwise okay.

**Pina's bike:** Once the ride had finished, Ben pillioned Ron back to Sue City later that evening, a round trip of 150 km. Ben rode the mirrorless 600 and Ron rode Ben's new CBR1000 back to Corryong Pub where a lift back to Melbourne for Pina's bike on Mitars' (Mitch) trailer was organised. The bike was loaded that night and was back in Meadow Heights the next day.

**Pina:** Dennis and Misho headed back in Dennis's car to collect Pina from Tumbarumba only to discover that she had been transported to Wagga Wagga (170 km away from Corryong, according to Misho's GPS plot) for more checks as her low blood pressure was concerning. She was released the next day and managed to negotiate a hospital minivan lift all the way back to Towong around 5 pm. Despite her protestations, it was a unanimous vote (at the pub) that she should travel in the car with Dennis for the return trip. Though disagreeing at the time, that is what eventually happened.

**Blue Van:** On the first night it was planned that everyone meet for a BBQ at Towong, except Ian, Paul and Dave W who visited after the BBQ. As previously agreed with our hosts Ron and Sarah Vise, Ben did a couple of trips into Corryong to ferry people back to Towong, picking up 10 people making 16 for the BBQ with magnificent views of the Murray River 200 feet below and Mt Kosciusko off in the distance across the valleys. On the return trip later at night in the pitch dark, Ben dipped the high beams as an oncoming car approached, glanced in the mirrors to see the familiar red and blue disco pattern start up. Turns out only one headlight and no tail lights aroused their interest. "Got your licence on you? No. "Is this your van?" No. (Not going well so far.) Name? Address? Date of birth? Blow in the bag. And who are the helpful yobbos in the back? Some quick talking saw me let off with a warning and another flash of lights on the return trip 20 minutes later as they cruised up and down the highway, like sharks in the depths.

**Mark Copeland** scored a slow leak near Berridale. He carries a compressor so pumped up the tyre and then we plugged it at Adaminaby. Good as new for the rest of the weekend. On the last night he managed to sweet talk the barmaid into letting us watch his video footage of each day's ride on the bar big screen TV. It was hypnotically mesmerising.

**Tyres.** By the look of some of Rob Jones' crew, they would be lucky to make it home without canvas showing. All the MSR boys were good, for once!

**Misho** took one for the team, just outside of Mansfield. Once again an angry car driver had radioed TOG Mansfield and a reception party lay in wait. Cresting the final hill and we were done – in almost the exact spot as last time! The radar, mounted in her pretty yellow TOG car, indicated 119 km/h and she wasn't budging. And her minder in a silver Forrester, who arrived shortly afterwards, was very supportive. We were identified as yellow (Misho), white (Ben), orange (Mark) and black (Ron). A fairly unique colour pattern. Licence, blow in the bag and rego check, a lot of tyre fondling, and knowing glances. Pleasantries exchanged, I headed off to Yarck where we all eventually regrouped for our final farewells.

**The roads:** were in remarkably good condition. They were generally very clean – I even saw a street sweeper on the Cabramurra Road, maybe in preparation for next week's charity ride with thousands of bikes on the road. Granya Gap was excellent, Charlotte's Pass smooth, clean and cloudless; Rosewood pine forest road well maintained (bumps removed) and the Bondo road had worn down to be not as coarse – without forming potholes or ridges. And they have extended the bitumen another couple of kilometres.

**Wildlife.** The drought has broken and the dams are full. The grass is tall and the wildlife plentiful. Granya was alive with rabbits, coming and going. Heading for Tumut on the Rosewood Road I came around a corner at speed to be confronted by an emu in the middle of the road. He scampered to the left and my eyes followed him. Suddenly I instinctively swerved to avoid his mate, whom I just caught out of the corner of eye, dashing across to join his partner. We bent out of each other's way. Distracted, and adrenalin pumping I just noticed the kangaroo 50 metres up the road, also in kamikaze mode.

Heading back with Ron to retrieve Pina's bike in the evening we encountered a veritable menagerie. Apart from the usual flocks of cockatoos and galahs, the family groups of magpies and crows, and the pairs of rosellas and smaller seed eating sparrows and finches, we surprised a white goat scrabbling unsuccessfully to jump the Armco, threatening to rebound in front of us, with no chance to brake. Further along the Elliot Way three brumbies were eating the new green grass shoots with various kangaroos and black wallabies. Most just watched as we glid past. But later riding Pina's noise machine, every creature within half a kilometre was spooked. Two small deer tried desperately to climb up a roadside embankment, again threatening to bounce in front me. Another horse, this time prancing. A kamikaze rabbit shot straight up into the air, possibly trying to jump over me. My eyes were big by day's end.

Dennis hit a calf a glancing blow in the car and wiped out a mirror. One of Rob's crew lost a mirror to an errant bird. And I removed feathers from my fairing, donor unknown. Did I mention the bugs? On the lowlands the air was thick with aphids. We didn't stop so much to regroup, more to clean our visors, coated in thick black/brown bug soup – when mixed with Mr Sheen.

**The bike:** the new CBR continues to impress with its effortless cruising and planted road holding. I fitted new front and rear Michelins on the Friday before the trip, two front tyres from America delivered that afternoon - cutting it fine. Tyres, new oil and oil filter consisted of the first service at 2,278 km. Other changes include the fitting of the TTX shock (c/o Steve Mudford), a tank protector and a rack. A hugger is on its way down from Queensland. Economy continues to impress, a single 326 km tank (17.19 litres) between Myrtleford and Fawkner. After the 2,500km trip, the odometer now reads 4,850 after one month.

**Overall:** the event was very successful (for most) with lots of great roads, mainly perfect weather, with excellent company providing often hilarious entertainment every night. Thanks to Rob Jones for organising his crew to meet up with us on the second day (only three survived to the third day, the rest totally knackered and needing a day to recover!). If only Cliff and Tony had been well enough to join us, then the picture would have been perfect.

Till next year then. In the interim, count down the sleeps to Dargo and then Jindabyne with the Christmas Camp in between.

**Ben Warden**