

Mirboo North Sunday 11th September, 2011

Tim Emons (leader)	Honda CBR1000	Rob Langer (rear)	KTM 990
Misho Zrasic/Pina Garasi	Honda CBR1000	Steve Mudford/Cindy Lee	Suzuki GSXR750
Tony Stegmar	Honda CBR1000		<i>5 bikes, 7 people</i>

A slow moving cold front had swept over Victoria during the week, plunging us once again into a grim, wintery chill. Lashings of rain and hail would arrive, blasted in on strong winds. Then, as quickly as they appeared, would be blown away before the next round was ready to dump.

The forecast for Sunday was not much better than the rest, and the roar of heavy rain on the roof greeted me over breakfast. I prepared myself with layers of warm clothing, wet weather gear, and a pair of fresh Safeway bags inside my boots. I stopped to fit my helmet and gloves before heading outside to get the bike out of the garage, to avoid the struggle of trying to get wet hands into my winter gloves.

The rain eased a little as I took the freeway towards Berwick, and I wondered if this would be my first MSR ride with no other participants. I'd already started to mentally dissect my original route according to the conditions, trimming out several loops and diversions, opting more for smooth sweepers than tight twisties.

Tony was waiting as I pulled in, and we tried to flatten ourselves up against the tyre shop roller door to reduce the direct impact of the rain, eventually opting for more comfortable conditions inside the service station.

Rob arrived explaining that he'd recommended the Club to a friend who was intent on joining us today. So he felt that he should brave the elements and come along too. The friend didn't show up... Not to worry. Rob clearly enjoyed the day, blasting the KTM along, doing his duty at the rear.

Full points have to go to Pina and Cindy for being game enough to venture out as pillions in these conditions. Clearly both were in very good hands with Misho and Steve at the controls. I either had one, the other, or both yellow bikes in my mirrors any time I glanced.

Ben had scored an offer for a seat in the Members area at the Essendon Carlton game, and was tempted to try and cram in the first leg with us, but decided to keep Julie happy and carry out some tiling and plumbing duties instead.

We left Berwick for a short stint on the freeway, exiting at the Cardinia turnoff, and headed south under clearing skies. I'd opted for the straight roads through Bayles as an alternative to the usual straight roads through Longwarry. These roads are no better, they just offer different scenery and much less freeway. The sun had come out now, shining across the wet, green fields either side of the road, lifting spirits somewhat. The pace quickened accordingly as we climbed up off the flats and into the Gippsland hills.

The small group barrelled along through Poowong, Loch and Almurta, accompanied by a howling crosswind that would knock us about on the ridges, then disappear as we dipped between hills. We crossed the highway at Grantville for a few photos in the sunshine on the edge of Westernport Bay. A quick splash of fuel for the Gixxer, then a leisurely morning tea outside the Grantville Bakery.

After the break, we backtracked into the hills and ventured down through Glen Forbes and Archies Creek, then came back up the Loch road, detouring through Bena to pick up the Korumburra Warragul Road. Just a short stint up here before taking the Arawata Road and its 3km of gravel. We regrouped at the crossroads where Cindy made clear her hatred for that particular stretch of road. Misho conducted a sat-nav workshop here, answering all of Rob's questions, as they are both running Garmin units.

The roads were almost 100% dry now, and we quickly dispensed with a sensational run to Mirboo North via Hallston. This was our intended lunch stop. (Those who had lunch at morning tea elected it "second" lunch...). Steve and Cindy headed home from here, and the remaining five of us relaxed in the sunshine while being entertained by Pina's tales of life in the Zrasic household, including techniques for sharing a single bed.

I led the quintet up through the “Thorpdale esses” which were dry and grippy, then took a left at Thorpdale taking us up to Childers, and down the 1km of dirt on to Sunny Creek Road. We crossed the highway and wound up the fun dial on the Old Sale Road and the Crossover sweepers, then passed through Neerim South, Neerim East en-route to Neerim Junction for a break.

I was shocked to see an oncoming police car, followed by an unmarked wagon in the 80km/h section of the back road to Neerim East, but they didn’t seem to be interested in us. Some of the others had noticed an ambulance at a house down a side road, so they must have been attending a call rather than trying to catch a bunch of hoons to make an example of. Lucky...

The final leg of the ride took us down through Nayook onto the Powelltown Road where we made good time along the fast sweepers and into the twisties. The road here was still damp in patches, so due caution was exercised. We continued on through Powelltown and cut across to the Gembrook Launching Place Road. Tony gave us a parting wave as we passed through Gembrook, not far from his home. The final four made the most of the remaining corners for the day, following in reverse an often used twisty route out of town via Pakenham Upper, Paternoster Road and Beaconsfield Upper to finish at the Shell servo on Heatherton Road in Narre Warren North after a total of 416 km.

Thanks to Rob for rear riding, and to all for ignoring the weather forecast and coming out anyway.

Tim Emons