

Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Craig Morley	Honda VTR1000SPII
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Jason Wilson (<i>rear</i>)	Kawasaki ZX9
Damir Djikic	Honda CBR1000	Geoff Jones	Yamaha R1
Tony Stegmar	Honda CBR1000	Robert Langer	KTM 990
Ron Johnston	Honda CBF1000	Mark Marais	Triumph 675
Ben Warden (<i>leader</i>)	Honda CBR954	Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600

Welcome to another day in paradise. Not! I decided to wear my wet weather gear in case the forecast rain eventuated. I left home in good time to arrive at Whittlesea. On the Ringwood/Warrandyte road there was an ambulance attending to an injured cyclist or two. A car driver had knocked them off their bike/s; not a good way to start the day. The rest of the ride to Whittlesea was uneventful.

Upon arrival, I saw a large contingent of bikes. Only those with rocks in their heads go riding in rain, hail or shine, but that's what it's all about, isn't it? Tony was on his replacement Fireblade, a Black one. Even Rob was riding another new KTM 990. Very nice. I did a test ride on one earlier this year. I rode about a hundred yards down the road and worked out it is the bike for doing big trips: easy to ride, comfy, big lazy engine to eat up the miles.

Geoff Jones' R1 looked different. He mentioned later that he had bought a body kit for it. It looks smart. Ben got our attention and gave us the usual pre-ride safety and route spiel. He decided to change the ride route due to weather. I put my hand up for the write up. Jason for rear rider.

So off we go, taking in the Eden twisties first, always a good sprint. Shock, horror, when we get to the top, they have actually started working on the roundabout which has been unsealed for as long as I can remember, and I have been in the Club since 1995. It is good that they are finally fixing it, but the road thins down dangerously to a single lane at the roundabout. It looks like an accident in the making. But it's good that it's finally being made.

On through Wallan and Romsey. The skies started to blacken and the temperature dropped. I'm glad I'm rugged up but I still felt cold. Rain is on the horizon. Then Lancefield, up to Pyalong and Glenaroua through gentle rain. At Seymour, we get fuel first and then head over to the Burger Hut next to the pub for an early lunch which I was looking forward to; the burgers are yummy. Craig left the ride after lunch.

From Seymour we travelled up to Highlands. It started raining just to make life more interesting. On to Caveat and Terip Terip before the pleasant downhill run to Yarck. People and cars everywhere. At the highway and we take the Alexandra turn-off. After a few kilometres people start flashing their headlights at us - a white Captiva camera car is parked on the road side. At Alexandra we turn left and make our way up to Fraser National Park along Skyline.

The rain has well and truly set in: my left boot is full of water and the right one is getting that way. I don't mind cold hands, but wet feet as well is not pleasant. Ben stopped at the roundabout to regroup and reassess, as the fog closes in. Some clean visors, others smoke cigarettes. Paul has already left. A short discussion ensues, and Ben suggests we head back to Yea for the next stop rather than push on to Eildon, due to the miserable weather. All agree.

Back to Alexandra, taking the Molesworth road to finish off. Misho and I corner mark at the highway, leaving our bikes on the corner and walking back to the bus shelter to avoid the rain.

Most of the crew pass through and then there is a long wait. Jason stopped and told us that Marc's Triumph had split the cases near the balancer and had dumped all its oil, and was a non-runner. Pina

arrived shortly after and mentioned that Marc was pillioning with Damir. Eventually they appear and it's back to Yea to get some wet gear off and try to dry out.

Marc was busy on the phone to RACV, and wasn't having much luck. They weren't able to do anything until later that evening, which Marc wasn't happy about. In the end I offered to go pick up his bike and bring it back. So, it was back to my place two up, put the trailer on the car, throw all the tie downs in the boot, and hit the road again. Back up to Yea, then the Molesworth road, travel a few kilometres along and find the bike where Marc had left it.

A lady in a Ford sedan stopped to see what was going on. It was now dark, and she asked if we needed a hand. She was quite interested in what had happened, obviously a local, always willing to lend a hand. Soon we said our goodbyes and we were on our way back home again.

Marc had arranged for his wife to meet him at my house. But Marc's car had a different trailer plug, so we decided to leave the bike on the trailer in the shed for him to pick it up the following night.

The ride was cut short, due to the weather, but we still managed 273 km for the day. For Marc and me the ride was a lot longer. An easy way to kill 4 hours. Picking the bike up was quicker and cheaper than waiting for the RACV, and Marc was a lot happier that his bike was in safe hands.

Thanks to all who ventured out. No incidents except Marc's bike expiring, and the crap weather. Until next time, may your lid never skid.

Ron Johnston