

Tim Emons (leader)	Honda CBR1000	Bill Simpson	Suzuki GSXR1000
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Duane Rafferty	Suzuki GSXR1000
Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Marc Marais	Kawasaki ZX10
John Rousseaux	Honda CBR1000	Mark Copeland	Kawasaki ZX10
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Michael Henriksen	BMW R1200ST
Dennis Lindemann	Honda CBR600	Rod Merrett	BMW S1000RR
Matt Considine	Honda CBR600	Rob Langer	KTM 990
Pierre Ong	Ducati 1098	Tony Ripepi	KTM 990

I have missed a fair few rides this year due to either first birthday parties or other social gatherings. The Dargo weekend is always a highlight on the calendar for me and I booked a spot as soon as the ride was confirmed. The bike and bag were ready on Friday and I just had to load up and go. For some reason I managed to be late and arrived during Tim's briefing which automatically qualified me for the article. Ten minutes later we were on our way.

Down the Monash as usual, but instead of doing the back roads to Longwarry North, we kept on going and exited the freeway at the Longwarry North servo. I liked this better as it's quicker.

I was plodding around at a leisurely pace with most of the guys passing me. No rush, I thought. We rode on the Old Sale Road and made our way towards Tyers for the first stop. The sun was shining beautifully and it was getting hot under my helmet.

I still wasn't awake properly and wandered around looking at the bikes and chatting to a few people until Tim told us to get ready to leave. The next leg took us around Lake Glenmaggie and in to Briagolong. A police car was coming our way, but he wasn't even interested, or couldn't be bothered chasing after us – probably because everyone was behaving.

We stopped in Briagolong for fuel. Ben took over as leader as Tim was in need of a new rear tyre and was off to Bairnsdale to get one.

Bruthen was the next stop for lunch. The usual way was blocked due to road works on one of the bridges. Even on our bikes there was no way around as a two metre section of bridge was missing and excavators were placed strategically to make a safe landing impossible. We back tracked and eventually found the intended road with a few quick sections.

Last time in Bruthen it started to rain heavily and everyone ran for cover. Today was just brilliant weather. A few clouds, but otherwise a clear sky.

Bikes were parked around the food shops or the park. Pina was looking for place to leave her stuff as she was leaving her bike and pillioning with Misho. Tim returned with the only 190 tire they had on offer - a Pirelli Rosso II. After having a feed and a drink we got the signal for the next leg. Bruthen to Omeo and back to Bruthen ☺.

Riding felt a bit strange when I left Bruthen. Then I realized that I had forgotten my backpack so turned around. Luckily John was still there and he had picked it up for me – thanks.

Leaving last now, I was making my way through the twisties. It is a great first section through the trees to warm up, and then a bit faster on the open road. I had John in sight in the first stage, but he soon disappeared and I only saw him again at the end. Just too quick, that man! There were a few other bikes on the way and a whole heap of gravel after we turned left at Swifts Creek towards Omeo. I really enjoyed the bits when the unsigned gravel stopped.

We regrouped at the lookout, took a couple of photos and then went back to Bruthen via Omeo.

The road out of Omeo is usually high rev's in sixth gear, but I didn't want to end up like last time with almost no fuel so I stayed below 10,000 rpm which saved me around two litres compared to last time. Soon I was on my own again – bloody litre bikes – which was fine with me. I like going back to Bruthen more because you're going up instead of down.

Riding in the fun section next to the river, I was flagged down in a left hand sweeper. I just saw the red bike leaning against the rock wall and kept going until I found a place to park. Pierre had crashed his beautiful 1098S. He looked to be in a fair bit of pain as the location of the bike would suggest. After he took his jacket off we could see the wounds he had sustained.

We discussed what to do with his bike, but the only choice was really to leave it behind. Ben took Pierre on his bike back to Bruthen to organise a trip to the hospital from there. Bill took Pierre's belongings. A few pictures were taken and the Ducati was farewelled.

Back in Bruthen I saw Ben and Pierre just about to take off to Bairnsdale Hospital, Bill following. The plan was to meet us in Dargo.

We filled up the bikes and set off to Dargo shortly afterwards taking similar roads to earlier in the day until the road into Dargo. There was a big fire somewhere which was covering the area in smoke. Once we started descending into Dargo the smoke disappeared. I was in a group with Rod and John and soon started to enjoy myself going through the corners. The pace was increasing steadily until we reached a yellow looking road. I didn't realise at this stage that it was actually resurfaced and had sections of gravel still on the road. Well, I found out soon enough.

Going downhill through the right hand corner the bike suddenly slid away under me. The next thing I saw was the bitumen, really closely, and then I stopped next to my bike.

Cursing, I tried to work out what had happened. I walked over to my bike where Rob already had tried to pick it up. We picked up the bike and looked at the damage. Nothing! The Oggy knobs were scratched and so was the clutch case protector. The rest was untouched. The mirror hadn't even moved and indicators or brake lever weren't even touched either. Phew!

The thing that was missing, though, was my visor. The helmet and visor had some nasty scratches at the front. A few more riders arrived and Ben helped me out with re-attaching the visor to my helmet with duct tape. It was hard to see with the scratched visor and the sun in my face, but I slowly made my way in to Dargo.

A few people were already coming out to have look when I arrived. They were also surprised at the lack of damage. Misho got me beer and a cigarette for the blood pressure – thanks for that mate! I went back to my cottage to have shower and pick a bed. Then back to the Pub for a couple more beers and some food.

After Pina finished pampering Tim, we grabbed a few drinks and made our way back to our cottage to enjoy the fire place. Billy entertained us with his repertoire of stories that “really” happened and we watched a couple of videos on Mark's phone. I got to bed by 11pm and sleep soon followed.

Next morning there was confusion due to daylight savings and when we were supposed to be at the General Store for breakfast. Everyone arrived in time for coffee and bacon and egg rolls though.

On the ride out of Dargo to where I crashed, I realized how slippery the road actually was.

We regrouped at the Beverleys Road before making our way back to Briagolong for fuel. Then on to the exciting road into Licola. There was some 4WD traffic going into Licola, but I had no intention of going fast. I skipped the extra 46 km loop up to the bridge as well. We waited until the rest got back from the loop and finished lunch.

We rode the same way back out of Licola and back to Tyres for another splash of fuel. There were lots of bugs and butterflies on the roads.

Next section was up to Rawson which I hadn't done for some time. It is a really nice stretch of road. Tim stopped for a re-group at Hill End, but Rod, Duane, Tony and I took the short trip home through Powelltown. The rest continued on to Jindivick and Longwarry North.

Thanks, Tim, for leading. I'll be back again although the statistics are not in my favour. Thanks to all the rear riders and I hope to see you all soon. All the best to Pierre for a quick recovery.

Dennis Lindemann