

Ben Warden (leader)	Honda CBR1000	Marc Marais	Kawasaki ZX10
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Mark Copeland	Kawasaki ZX10
Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Andrew Newbury (3 rd)	Kawasaki ZX10
Ian Payne (rear)	Honda CBR1000	Rob Langer	Kawasaki Z1000
Ron Johnston	Honda CBF1000	Aiden Baker	Kawasaki ER6-N
Matt Considine	Honda CBR600	Gordon Heydon	Kawasaki ZX6R
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Phil Hotschilt	Suzuki GSXR1300
Michael Henriksen (3 rd)	BMW K1200RT	Michael Srb	Suzuki GSXR1000
Tony Ripepi (2 nd ride)	KTM 990	Sam Sirianni	Suzuki TL1000
Jesvin George (3 rd ride)	YamahaFZ6R	Jason Bartrop (1 st ride)	Suzuki SV650
<i>20 bikes, 20 people</i>			

Impressions from a new member

I awoke very early Sunday, eager with anticipation for my third ride with MSR. I'd given the ZX a precise clean the day before, a cathartic ritual which takes several hours. I rechecked and tweaked pressures and a final air dry on my favourite local proving ground; I like her internals to be dry. Top it off with a fresh coat of chain wax and I'm good-to-go for Sunday.

Before leaving home I'd spent some time examining my favourite BoM links, multiple radar views, MSLP chart and forecast explorer for the intended route to confirm my choice of gear and if I'd need wets... more on that later. On the ride down to the meeting point I can feel butterflies in my stomach: an intense feeling of eager anticipation; it's going to be another fantastic day of incredible riding ahead!

"Stick to the limit!" is foremost in my mind. The Monash can be a haven for Vic's Finest early on weekend mornings. I've seen many a disco light along there in the past and I don't want anything to delay my arrival time.

I arrive at the meet point with plenty of time to fill up well past the full mark (you never know when you'll need that extra few mL of fuel...more on that later too), select some appropriately sporty sports drinks, fix up the man, and head over to the multiplying throng of bikes. Ben takes down my particulars and I recount my recent Tassie trip and how it is still heavily imprinted in my mind. I think my mate summed it up best with "God's roads, the Devil's playground".

The ceremony begins with the briefing. We form a circle in the sunshine, and with eager smiles, third timers, second timers and fresh participants are pointed out. Our resident medic proffers his hand and a reminder to disable route mapping phones and GPSs is given. Our rear rider is proclaimed and it's time to gear up. I go through my ritual, as others do too, and we set off. The adventure begins!

One of the things I first noticed riding with MSR is how everyone goes into a staggered formation. Sure, it's what's expected, but having ridden with many, many riders over the few years since I've been back on a bike, it's not always observed. We group up, into a closed squadron, like hunters ready for their prey.

The route out takes us through some exciting straight bits and the sunshine rapidly makes way for ominous dark grey clouds on the horizon. Damn. It's going to get damp. I drop down into a full tuck as drizzle lands on my windscreen, smattering and forming droplets on the fresh coat of wax, gently marching upwards and flicking onto me. Minutes go by and the heavens have decided to retain their offerings, the drizzle recedes and we take our first turn to where the fun begins.

It's a blur. Yes, it really is a blur. Smeared in my memory, freeze frame images of corners approaching, settling the bike, powering out, ready to face the next onslaught of corners, "be smooth" going through my head. Breathe! Green and brown flashing past in the periphery of my vision, assess the surface, smell the freshness! Try not to laugh maniacally! Concentrate! Focus!

I'm hesitant at one point with no bikes in front or behind me, solo on the road. I know we're going to Loch, but shouldn't we be going left now? Stick to the plan. You're in good company. They know what they're doing. Sure enough two corner markers appear and I find myself on one of the many new connecting roads for the day.

We arrive at Loch for a spot of morning tea, 110 kms from the start, having wound our way through Drouin and the Korumburra Warragul Road via Ranceby and Nyora.

Another thing that struck me at Loch was the neat rows of bikes perfectly spaced taking up just the required amount of room. Biological breaks, coffee, hot chocolate, nibbles, conversation. "Ben? Will I be OK for fuel?" I ask noticing some members affording the opportunity to refuel. The reply is affirmative. Time to gear up. I know these roads well; this will be fun.

We set off again, and wend our way through the climbs, ridges, peaks and troughs that make up some of Gippsland's best grazing country. I used to joke, when leading rides down here, to watch out for logging trucks carrying milk. Are they here on Sundays? Hmmm... keep that in the back of your mind, Andrew.

What's this? I never go this way! I've never been down this road! Damn, I love new roads, fresh challenges. Assess the corner. What's around there? Can I crane my neck enough?

Sure enough and, as advertised, it really is loops within loops through Anderson, Almurta, Kernot and Kilcunda. We stop to pose for a group photo on a desolate stretch of road edging down towards the sea on the horizon. Is that really Kilcunda over there? Hey, I got my knee down! When? You bastard! Just now, posing for the photo! Ben asks if anyone is on reserve yet, or did he ask if everyone is on reserve yet? We set off again.

A few corners later and I find myself behind Ben, then a sickening lurch as the bike starts to complain about her craving for fuel. This isn't good. I know we're a long way from fuel. What did Ben say, something about 30 km to K4 (Korumburra)? I'm really missing my GPS at this point.

One of the things I love, and there are a lot of things I love about the '11 ZX-10R, is the dash. I get the standard readouts about average and current fuel consumption, trip meters etc, but the display I really love is how much fuel has passed through the injectors. With a 17L tank, reserve at 13L, I know exactly how much fuel I have left. Coupled with the current consumption figure and my GPS readout of the closest fuel stop and I'm in a good way, or would be.

I stick behind Ben for a few corners marvelling at how the MSR contingent don't hang off or even appear to lean off into corners; time to stop doing those acrobatics I'm so used to. Another lurch, more insistent this time. I now know this road through to K4 and it's a way to go. I'm sitting on 16.8L consumed. Time to take drastic action: slow right down, up through the gears, drop the RPMs. Sacrilege.

At 17L consumed I pass a fellow rider who has likely succumbed to the same fate that is rapidly awaiting me. Time to clutch in on the downhill sections. This is getting desperate. I switch to current fuel consumption, trying to coax her along, not far now I think. Our ever present rear rider sidles up beside me. I point to my tank. We both know what I'm saying. Crawling along I finally see the K4 outskirts sign. I might just make it.

At the Korumburra BP I recount my saga to Rob who is interested to hear that the ZX10 consumed much more fuel than his Z1000 on that leg. We had compared fuel consumption on my last MSR ride and the ZX10 back then had used less. The final readout was 17.6L consumed. I must have been running on vapour. Next time I'm topping up at Loch. I'm thinking that sitting very high in the revs and in low gears (love the -1/+2 sprockets!) perpetrated her powerful thirst; she drinks copiously when opened up.

Off to the Bakery where Ben relieves me of my membership fee and a massive burger is wolfed down ready for the next section. Oh? What about the bike I passed? Some issues with siphoning and getting the tube in low enough, dry retching and not enough suck. It's sorted though. No one is left behind.

We set off for the third leg taking in the Korumburra Warragul Road to Ellinbank, bypassing Warragul through to Darnum, the Old Sale Road, the Crossover twisties to the Neerims, Nayook and the Powelltown sweepers. Yep, that was a bit of a blur too, except when a friendly passing motorist flashed their lights at me conjuring up images of the solo Vic's Finest Rob and I had seen back at the K4 BP...only to find the road ahead clear of impediments.

An incredible day of amazing roads. Looking back as I write this, I have a silly grin on my face. Such FUN!

Andrew Newbury