

Peter Jones	Honda CBR1000	Roman Biaroza (rear ride)	Honda CBR600
Ben Warden (leader)	Honda CBR1000	Marc Marais	Kawasaki ZX10
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Steve Mudford	Suzuki GSXR750
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Michael Henriksen (1 st ride)	BMW R1200ST
<i>8 bikes, 8 people</i>			

I was up early for one of my favourite rides: leathers on, bag packed, and out the front gate. The sky was overcast but the weather man said fine day ahead. I arrived at the usual Berwick servo, early as usual, dismounted and waited for everyone else to turn up at five minutes to ten.

As I waited, the misty rain rolled in, the sky grew darker and the rain got heavier. Over the next 15 minutes I was planning my exit back home, thinking this is going to be a shitty day. I wasn't in the mood for a brain-sapping 500 km ride.

While procrastinating, bikes started to turn up. Too late to exit now: I might be considered a wimp. So I stayed and waited for the leader to show.

Five to ten Ben rolls up and advises he is leading for the day, our original leader having attended a wedding the night before and is not capable of riding, so pulled the pin. Probably a good idea, considering the roads and conditions ahead.

We had a good size group of eight riders in all. Roman, rear rider, was riding what looked like Dennis Lindemann's old Honda CBR600, all matt black and well loved.

We did the usual Berwick to Longwarry, Jindivick, Crossover, Old Sale Road up to Willow Grove and then down into Moe. The further we travelled, the better the weather became, until we got clear blue skies. I must be getting slower as more and more bikes seem to fly past me. I lost count how many times Steve flew past followed by Misho followed by Mark. I was working hard to keep up with Michael sliding around the wet roads on his Beemer. I was thinking this guy is crazy, but it was probably me being over cautious.

We arrived in Moe. Some filled up with the good 98 octane; Tyers only has 91 unleaded or E10.

I had a chat with Michael and discussed his cavalier approach to corners in the wet. He advised "ABS mate; no problemo!" I was impressed with his confidence.

Rest break completed, off we went to Tyers for a quick splash of petrol, then on to Licola. We took the usual inward route past Lake Glenmaggie and then on to the Licola road. When I made it to the turn-off I could see Steve, Misho and Mark corner marking. I thought this was my chance to get to Licola without someone flying past like an F18 with afterburners.

I love this road, its flowing corners over the top of the hill through all the pasture. You can see for miles. Sightseeing is tempting, but dangerous, as Tony [*Raditsis*] would testify. Through the open plain at the top of the hills and then in to more tight but very nicely consistent radius corners all rated about 50/60kmh. The corners here aren't as open but you know the way out is exactly the same as the way in, so you can put the power down early to drive hard out of corners.

After this stretch of corners I came on to the first straight and see Ben off in the distance. I don't even bother because I know the next set of corners is tight, twisty, blind and technical. Easy for Ben, but not for me.

As I get into the tight stuff I see remains of rock falls with lots of debris on the road, so extra care is needed. At this point no-one had passed me, so I thought I was doing well; nearly three quarters distance and no sign of ... then Steve flies past like I'm standing still. This is not good for my ego! At least I got to Licola before being passed by Misho and Mark.

Earlier Ben had suggested we go on to the end of the road up the hill after Licola, so we did. This is where Misho flies past, the road very smooth, but very narrow with no lines. As I ascend the hill I notice Steve's bike parked on the side of the road, with Ben and Misho in attendance. It seems the road became too narrow on exit and Steve needed to use the ditch to complete the corner. This was the crash to have if you were going to have a crash. I don't even think the bike fell over; the ditch

just became deeper. Either way, he came out of it very well with just a broken indicator. The globe was ok - I found it!

After checking Steve was okay, we proceeded to the end of the bitumen and stopped. Ben took some photos and when Roman arrived, we headed back down to Licola for lunch.

After a well-deserved rest, we set off via the same route, except this time bypassing Lake Glenmaggie and heading straight to Tyers for fuel. On the way Misho came along side and gestured for a test of acceleration, so I dropped it back to fourth and gently rolled on the throttle. I stuck with him up to about \$1.90, but then he quickly accelerated away. I put this down to less wind resistance and weight on Misho's part. It's pretty hard for me to hide behind the fairing of the Blade. My R1 was capable of better acceleration over 200kmh due to the bigger fairing; I could get most of my mass behind it. But on the Blade no such luck; it's like riding into a cyclone.

We arrived at Tyers, filled up, had a chat, compared tyres, then rode on to the big BP on the freeway at Officer via Old Sale Road, Crossover and Jindivick. It was a good time for a break, Steve starting to suffer the effects of his crash. I handed him some drugs and 15 minutes later he was good to go. Drugs are good; I never travel without them. And you can keep them anywhere; just ask Ben Cousins! *[a footballer recently busted at the airport with amphetamines secreted internally ...Ed.]*

Great ride, thanks for filling the leading breach, Ben, and thanks Roman for rear rider. Till next time.

Peter Jones