

At the November Social Sip, MSR President Ian Payne felt compelled to say a few words in recognition of Ben Warden's 30 years of Club membership. Below are his notes.

Ben Warden 30 years of Club Membership

To start, a very Happy birthday to Julie Warden, but tonight is about her 'other half' Ben.

Ben officially joined the Motorcycle Touring Club of Victoria (MTCV) in December 1982 but had been on rides since October 1982, hence this being the 30th anniversary. His commitment strengthened and in 1985 he was elected to the Committee as Vice Captain.

I met Ben when I joined the Club in 1985 and got to know him when I was elected to the Committee in 1987. For the majority of the next eight years we both served on the Committee and this is where I saw Ben's continuing enthusiasm for the Club. In 1995 we didn't stand for re-election as it was time to sit back and just enjoy the riding.

Unfortunately, the new and future committees were sending the Club in a different direction with more rallies, trail riding and socialising. This Club has always been about the riding so a couple of years later when memberships and attendances were dwindling Ben approached me with his concerns. I agreed wholeheartedly, so we nominated for the Committee in 1999 and subsequently were re-elected and have been there ever since. The enduring nature of the Club and the current high ride attendances attest to the changes that Ben has persuaded the Committee to adopt over the years. The areas of influence are many and varied but here are a few, most of which we now take for granted: [List supplied by Ben]

- Nominated lead riders and destinations for every ride
- Consolidated start times
- Elimination of the City start point (was Kings Bridge Car Park)
- Printing of the Club card itineraries including developing the artwork (stopped now)
- Capture of all riders full names on rides for the magazine articles (no nicknames)
- Focus on road riding and attraction of the Sport Rider class of rider
- Key driver of name Club changes to reflect who we are, not who we were
- Family friendly, non-sexist, non-racist, non-misogynist Club Magazine
- Introduction of full Committee and Club contact details in every magazine
- Introduction of electronic address list
- Introduction of photocopying and the introduction of Word Processed articles
- Introduction, development and maintenance of the web page
- Introduction of electronic banking
- Development of numerous Club documents such as Corner Marking System Explained, Aspects of Leading a Good Ride, Risk Management Policy, Historical area
- Captured Peter Philferan's remarkable life story
- Standardised long weekend ride formats (eg Melb Cup, Jindabyne, Tasmania, Dargo)
- The Club Participation Points system
- Crash statistics and analysis
- Conversion of Club Magazines to electronic format
- Maintenance of electronic email lists which eventually became Google Group and now Facebook
- Magazine coloured photographs back and front
- Group photos on every ride for use in Club Year DVDs
- Introduction of the ICE sheet

The year 2000, especially the latter part was fairly important for Ben:

- In September we helped him celebrate his 40th birthday with a 'Ben Roast'.
- In November he and Julie got married.
- In December Ben was presented with **Life Membership** of the Club in recognition of his 18 years of continuous membership with the majority of that time being on the Committee. He was also averaging 30 plus rides every year. A most deserving recipient, I noted.

Like most motorcyclists, Ben has had his share of crashes, fortunately nothing too serious. Most were just Ben pushing it to the limits and then some. This learning style is not for everyone but for Ben these exploits have been rewarded in making him one of the most accomplished riders in our Club.

Ben, congratulations on your 30 years of Club involvement. The Club and members have benefited enormously.

Ian Payne

Response from Ben:

I have a lot of fabulous memories and hilarious stories which all revolve around the great people I have met over the journey and I have the Club to thank for that opportunity. Thanks.

Clearly the people that went before me did a fantastic job in setting up the Club with its Constitution and Road Rules, but more importantly the underlying ethos of a riding club for all makes and models, with the emphasis on riding as borne out by the "Ride Every Sunday" mantra, which has effectively been in place from Day 1. Those forefathers had great insight into riders' needs and the direction the Club should take, and the Club has basically never deviated from those original guidelines. Sure the bikes have changed from scooters to small motorcycles to large capacity faired sports bikes, but the riding and even the destinations remain pretty much the same.

Now the Club is as strong, resilient, prosperous and inclusive as ever in my time, and probably well before I started. Ride attendances are extraordinarily high, and it doesn't appear to be a spike. Despite the general economic tough conditions, ever increasing police presence and financial penalties and other disincentives to ride, we continue to thrive.

The advent of modern technology has probably worked to our advantage allowing us to advertise our wares without too much effort. And that is something to remember: our Club runs on the sniff of an oily rag and all the work is done by amateurs, usually already in full time work, who give up their time to make the Club work well. Having said that the Club is run by amateurs doesn't mean it is run poorly. Quite the opposite. The emphasis has always to make the Club behave and run in the most professional way possible, and in some ways this is reflected by the high calibre of person we attract to the membership. The Committee is always trying to raise the bar, to improve, to learn from our mistakes. I hope I have plenty more learning to do.

A special thanks to my regular riding buddies over the years, those riders who are there rain, hail and shine. In some ways those riding buddies are more family than family – you get to see them at least once a week and spend nearly all day with them including eating a meal. And you get to share some amazing experiences, see wondrous things, and marvel at the way the world turns. There is a lot to be said for just riding around with your mates. And what a group of highly skilled, professional, passionate and experienced riders they are, always ready to help each other and anyone in need with advice. This is one of the untold benefits of our Club to new riders especially – the sheer depth of talent and experience on tap. Just by association new riders improve fast let alone if they are helped with tips and observations. It is a great Club with great people and I'm proud to to say I belong. I live for the Sunday fix. See you on a ride soon.