

Reefton Spur Sunday 25th November, 2012



Ben Warden (rear)	Honda CBR1000	Garry Boucher (2 nd ride)	Kawasaki ZX14
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Rob Langer	Kawasaki ZX10
Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Aiden Baker	Kawasaki ZX10
Tony Stegmar	Honda CBR1000	John Willis (leader)	Kawasaki Z1000
Ian Payne	Honda CBR1000	Ron Johnston	Suzuki GSX1250
Matt Ziedin (1 st ride)	Honda CBR1000	Mark Rigsby	Suzuki GSXR1000
Ian Handforth	Honda XL1000	Steve Mudford	Suzuki GSXR750
Scott Bowden (2 nd ride)	Honda CBR929	Sal Arceri (1 st ride)	Suzuki GSXR600
Mirko Strasser	Honda CBR929	Rod Merrett	BMW S1000RR
Simon Wastney	Honda VFR800	Jason Duff	BMW S1000RR
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Geoff Dick	BMW R850R
Dave Williams	Aprilia RSV4	Cindy Lee	Triumph 675
Pierre Ong	Aprilia RSV4	Adam Wood (1 st ride)	Triumph 675
Paul Simonson	Aprilia RSV4	Dan Trewin (1 st ride)	Ducati 749
Ken Goederee	KTM RC8 1190	Dom Campos (1 st ride)	Yamaha FZR1000

What a turnout greeted me at Yarra Glen when I rolled in five minutes before leave time. The numbers were big – as usual. And not overly inflated with new riders – only four first timers and one second time rider. Getting all the names and addresses of the first time riders is always a challenge, let alone checking off all the regular members - and the not so regular ones. I was still going at the first break: 30 riders, 30 bikes, and 9 motorcycle manufacturers represented. Magnificent!

Leader John Willis outlined the day's activities noting the originally planned "short ride" had acquired a few additions – up to Toolangi and back, up and down Mt Donna Buang, up and down Lake Mountain and out the Acheron Way to the dirt and back. This would take the ride length from 166 km out to 256 km. And Cliff, conspicuous by his absence, thought it was going to be a short ride! It may have been short in absolute terms, but you could not have fitted more corners and challenging roads in the allotted time. John also requested the services of a scribe and you would have thought one person in the thirty would volunteer – alas, no. So another one of my long winded fact packed articles ensues. Enjoy!

On the road it soon became apparent that Dom was out of his league. Based on previous experience, and bearing in mind the recent double crash of first time rider Cheeky finishing with broken bones, the tough calls are better done early. Early in this case was 30 km into the ride at the top of Chum Creek road in Toolangi. When finally Dom arrived with rear rider Ian Handforth in tow, I pulled

over Dom for *The Talk*. Eight minutes behind in 30 km is fundamentally unsustainable. I noted that the ride was only going to get harder, his safety is paramount (wearing jeans, missing screen on the now quite old FZR1000T adds colour to the picture), and suggested he retire home to Werribee in one piece, taking the Kinglake scenic route. Resistance was useless. Surprisingly, Ian said he would accompany him.

With yellow terrors and very frequent corner markers, Misho and Steve, long gone, I now found myself the *Unexpected Rear Rider*. At least I would have the full length of Myers Creek Road to play on, and possibly the ride would flow a lot quicker. Two down, 28 to go.

I did pass a few bikes, but they weren't with us. I had the Ohlin's rear shock back in after a couple of weeks running the standard shock which is relatively harsh in comparison. I had previously discovered the hydraulic ride height adjuster not functioning and upon further inspection determined all the oil had leaked out of the connecting tube which had worn through where it rubbed (ever so gently) up against the swingarm. The part had to be ordered from Sweden with took a couple of weeks. While the shock was out I asked Steve Mudford (TechPartners) to re-oil it, ready for all of the upcoming summer's delights – Dargo, Xmas Camp, Australia Day weekend and Tasmania (and another Dargo you don't know about). Re-oiled, re-socked (the previous old Explorer sock really did keep all the tar and grime off the shock and it didn't catch fire despite being so close to the exhaust system) and ride height restored, the ride quality was a marvel to behold, the bike better than new with a new rear tyre to boot, a Pilot Road 3.

Something was going on in Healesville – two bikes were getting fuel, clearly not obeying the road rules – “*No rider shall stop for refreshments or fuel until the lead rider stops.*” Ho-hum. Lucky I was delayed.

The route wound its way through the back roads of Healesville with corner markers every 50 metres. With perfect 20/20 hindsight, John later volunteered that probably he would not go this way again. I just think he likes going past his old “A” shaped house that he built.

Fast collecting the corner markers now, we made steady progress towards Launching Place with one minor hiccup. I had been stopping to inform the corner markers that I was the new rear rider, and with 28 riders, that is in the vicinity of 13 stops (13 pairs, plus leader and rear rider). The last pair included Paul Simonson who faked to take off, rapidly donning gloves and helmet. I waved and slid on by. A couple of minutes later, I was with Misho and Steve again, but no Paul, so I did a U turn and headed back. By this stage Paul had worked it out and was coming through at a rate of knots. He rightly noted that he stayed waiting for the original rear rider to arrive.

We continued along all the good back roads avoiding the highway to finally reach the Old Warburton Highway with its challenging tight corners, and lots of opportunities to meet oncoming 4WDs taking all of the road. Pina had already had quite a scary experience on the Chum Creek Road with a 4WD seeming to take aim at her, requiring her to take dramatic evasive action, and quite upsetting her. Two theories spring to mind: the previous riders had upset the 4WD by cutting the corners; or secondly, it was a local driver driving fast and used to cutting the corners with limited view of the oncoming usually slow moving car traffic. But when confronted with an oncoming bike (Pina) travelling at faster rate than a typical car, he found himself on the wrong side of the road. And I guess we'll never know. To eliminate the first theory would be to treat car drivers with respect and consideration because it is not you that will wear their anger, but the third or fourth bike behind you.

John had suggested that we all fill up at Warburton before repairing to the Bakery for morning tea due to the 130km of fuel consuming twisties before the next fuel stop. It was the usual organised chaos with bikes and people everywhere.

We enjoyed a long and refreshing stay in Warburton which allowed me to catch up with a few people and complete the paperwork. I put Scott in touch with Mirko, fellow 929 riders. Ken was out for his first ride in a long time and it was impressive to see three RSV4s on the one ride. Garry Boucher, would be Dargo participant, was out on his second MSR ride, looking to complete the membership criteria. Ronny was out riding, quieter than normal, the six month enforced sabbatical only a few rides away. Conversely, Jason Duff was back, enjoying his all conquering BMW S1000RR.

Ian offered to go rear rider but he has done plenty of rear riding in the last few years and rides less these days, so deserves a free go every now and again. Besides, I had a plan...

John set off and it was as if no-one wanted to leave. I jollied them along. That is another Club Road rule: *"Prepare to move off behind the leader when asked to do so."* Mt Donna Buang here we come.

The road surface was very clean and dry and it was a pleasure to climb out of the 26 deg humidity into the cooler, dryer air. Misho and Steve were corner marking at the Acheron Way turnoff 10 km from the summit. I waved them on while I waited for the six bikes I had accidentally passed on the way up. I carefully counted and mentally ticked them off as they came through.

At the summit a few of us climbed the new tower while the rest saved their heartbeats – you've only got a finite number you know – or sucked on a gasper or two. We seem to have quite a few smokers these days. Of course I looked for a shady spot for the group photo, a struggle in this blinding midday sun. I cropped and sent the photo around to 6 or 7 regulars on Monday. Rod reckons it was going straight to the poolroom, a line out of The Castle. Thanks Rod.

Next stop the top of the Reefton which we all managed to survive without mishap or glimpse of the Victoria's finest. So far so good. Again the surfaces were in great clean and dry condition. Not so Lake Mountain.

I rounded a corner a few kilometres before the summit to be confronted by a large group of stationary bikes congregated around a wet slick in the middle of the road – where the bitumen was melting or sweating. Not being unfamiliar with these conditions (think Mt Hotham or Falls Creek in years gone by) I continued on barely slowing to find myself right behind leader John at the summit.

The rest of the riders soon arrived, seeking shade from the blistering sun under the relatively new complex that has sprung up. Coincidentally that night the 7 pm ABC News noted that the State Government had sold the management rights to the mountain to private industry in the hope of staunching the financial haemorrhaging. We'll see what the snow prices are next year.

The fires have decimated the trees and they have not recovered. An eerie forest of white or grey leafless trunks offers no respite from the sun or heat. I take a few photographs and we are away.

Lunch beckoned and even I was feeling the hunger pangs as the time approached 2 pm. So back down to leafy Marysville, parking a relative breeze as we missed the lunch peak. We find ourselves spread up and down the length of the street sharing the outdoor tables. Another small group is near us and it was lucky we didn't eat their food orders as they were delivered as the shops accounting methods are open to abuse by cheeky motorcyclists calling out "Mine!"

I had a chat to Simon working hard on his VFR, conscientiously trying to do all the right things. Some track training may be the next step.

John took up the option of heading the 14 km down the Acheron way till the dirt started. It is even harder to ride now, now that the grass stands a metre high right up to the bitumen, severely limiting the rider's ability to see through or around the next corner. It was potentially difficult to pass but that critical riding element best described as "faith" came to the fore. Faith is some secret and

magical combination of experience, trust in your and the bike's ability to deal with whatever arises, and plain good luck. Very handy to have on roads like this.

We regrouped at the end of the dirt, our numbers having dwindled to 17 for the final fling across the Black Spur and its blue light hazards. Luckily, we were able to push past the few clumps of cars and enjoy the road, careful in the hot spots. Again we all reached Healesville unscathed.

A single plantation tree outside the servo didn't offer much respite from the beating sun, as we clustered under it. The ride was over, the day but young. We lingered, maybe longer than usual. It had been a great day and the evidence was there for all to see – if you can read tyres. Steve was discussing all things suspension for those searching for the handling cure, his latest Ohlin's factory offer of \$1350 for a rear TTX sprung and valved to suit your road riding requirements creating quite the conversation, especially as it depended on members cooperating to buy the shocks in pairs.

Home by 5.30 pm, garden chores to attend to. Another great ride. Thanks John.

Ben Warden