

Ian Payne	Honda CBR1000	Chris Rasmussen (1 st)	Kawasaki ZX10
Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Tim Walker	Kawasaki ZX7
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Rod Silver (rear rider)	KTM RC8
Tony Stegmar	Honda CBR1000	Rob Langer	KTM 990
Danir Djikic	Honda CBR1000	Steve Mudford	Suzuki GSXR750
Ron Johnston (leader)	Honda CBF1000	Cindy Lee	Triumph 675
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600		<i>13 bikes, 13 people</i>

Hello, I'm back!

The forecast wasn't looking good, and I was a bit worried when I heard the rain drops against the windows, but after nearly six month's hiatus, none of that mattered. Steve and I were hangin' for a ride. My license suspension was over, and Steve had worked hard to get both our bikes ready.

I got up extra early to make lunches and after a small bite to eat, we started early so we could stop by a café in Berwick for breakfast before the ride.

A dozen or so of us started off from the servo with Rob in the lead. I turned on to the freeway when I realised in my excitement I'd forgotten to zip my plastic rain jacket which was now flapping in the wind batman-like, as Misho described it. After contemplating just riding on, the thought of doing so many kilometres of fast straights before hitting any corners surrounded by this crazy flapping was too much. FLAP FLAP FLAP FLAP FLAP FLAP! I pulled over.

And everyone zoomed past.

Steve and Rod the rear rider on the KTM pulled over. They patiently waited for me to zip the stupid thing blindly, unable to see properly with through my visor, with gloves, and then without gloves. I took off as fast as I could feeling like a dope on my first ride back. I was in peril of spoiling my shiny clean slate with demerit points only a few weeks back on the road when Steve caught up and told me to slow down. I also recalled Rod telling me he'd be sticking to the speed limit because he'd just hit his 12 demerits. Double Doh! He was waaaay back out of site sitting on the speed limit - a bad start for me.

I got over it. By the time we arrived in Drouin, we'd regrouped and it was all good again. Then disaster struck! ... Just out of town, Rob had slowed right down to below the speed limit and then pulled over. I wondered what that was about. He had a problem with his bike. He'd taken it for repairs and had just got it back. 500 dollars later, it seemed the problem hadn't been fixed and Rob's KTM wouldn't go faster than 80 km/h. He was turning back and, after a bit of debate, Ron was given the helm. After a few moments with his head buried in a map, we started off, and, despite a few brief moments of uncertainty, Ron successfully led to our first stop at Korumburra.

Back on the bikes, we apparently missed that dirt road to Arawata, travelling on roads quite unfamiliar to me. At one point I swore in my helmet as I came around a bend to see a surprise dirt road only 50 metres ahead. I slowed down as quickly as I could and released the brakes just before reaching the nasty sharp gravel. I'm even more nervous of doing anything that might mar the beautiful pearly white paint job on my bike. We made it to Mirboo North for a fuel stop and lunch.

Five riders retired at Mirboo North – Paul Southwell, Ian Payne, Tim, Pina and Damir. Ron was feeling the pressure in his impromptu role as ride leader, but the remaining group really didn't seem too worried about where we were going; we just wanted to ride!

Despite it looking like it was about to rain, we barely suffered a few drops. We did a loop somewhere round Dumbalk and back to Mirboo North before proceeding through Thorpdale, Trafalgar and Willow Grove where Chris, a first time rider on a ZX10, asked for the quickest route back to Melbourne and departed complaining about a "weird thing happening with my wrist". He was a long way from Essendon where he was staying so we directed him back to Trafalgar and the freeway home. Good thing to because he wouldn't have coped with Icy Creek Road which was plagued with craters and eruptions at random corners.

Ron, Misho, Tony, Rod, Steve and I made it to Noojee for a last rest stop. We rode through Powelltown and regrouped at Yarra Junction before saying our goodbyes at the nearest servo past Launching Place.

Steve and I decided to ride home via Yarra Glen with Misho. We got home by 7pm with smiles on our faces - a satisfying first ride back with the Club after our break.

Thanks Rob for kicking us off. Good work Ron for accepting the lead at such short notice. Thanks Rod for being such a responsible rear rider. And a huge thank you to my Steve for working so hard to get me back on the road on my beautiful Street Triple.

My Street Triple R (formerly Marc Marais') has Ohlins TTX rear shocks and Ohlins internals in the front forks. The engine was rebuilt by Triumph after the catastrophic engine failure. We went through some drama getting the bike re-registered with VicRoads because Triumph forgot to stamp the engine number. The bike has been re-sprayed pearl white and looks hot! It feels oh so good to ride compared with the GSX-R where I couldn't quite shake the feeling I was going to crash. Steve's adjustments with the suspension and things like having the clutch, brake and gear levers fitted to the most comfortable position makes all the difference. The Pazzo levers are a treat for my little hands. I'm still getting used to the bar end mirrors. I can't see a thing. But that's a minor issue when I'm feeling more like the boss on two wheels.

Have a great Chrissie and New Year. See you out there in 2012!

Cindy Lee