

Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Cliff Peters	Kawasaki ZX10
Ben Warden (leader)	Honda CBR1000	Andrew Newbury	Kawasaki ZX10
Tony Stegmar	Honda CBR1000	Wayne Cartwright (1 st ride)	Suzuki GSXR1300
Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Steve Mudford	Suzuki GSXR750
Ian Payne (rear rider)	Honda CBR1000	Cindy Lee	Triumph 675
Andrew Rijs (1 st ride)	Honda CBR1000	Pierre Ong	Aprilia RSV4
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Stuart Hosking	Aprilia V4 Tuono

The incredible thing about this ride is that so many people turned up. The weather forecast was atrocious – misty rain, freezing cold. We never saw the sun all day. Maximum temperature was 11 degrees according to the ABC News that night. The group that turned up can only be described as fanatics – and I guess that says something about our Club because the next day three people rang up to apologise for not being there. Amazing. And fantastic.

It was a hard ride. And only the “hard cores” (as Pina would say) rolled up. Except there were two new riders! Andrew Rijs was a friend of Andrew Newbury, Andrew Rijs on a CBR1000. I don’t know how he convinced him to come out, though Andrew Newbury kept persuading himself and me that the showers were just passing by, as evidenced by his web-enabled phone displaying the Bureau of Meteorology map. Ever hopeful. Pina just put on more layers.

There hadn’t been enough rain to wash off the tractor wheel mud or cow-crossing manure off the roads, it seemed like every road had a level of slime on it. Consequently, the concentration required to move along at any sort of rate, and catch the occasional slide, was very high. Sometimes I would look at the speedo and laugh – the speed was 20 or 30 km/h lower than it felt. Of course, Misho and Steve were riding as hard as the conditions would let them (about 20 or 30 km/h faster than me, but I figured they were 10 years younger, and I had to be content with that). They attempted to corner mark every corner, a good effort in this crowd. New guy Wayne on the Hayabusa probably didn’t know what hit him with Cliff, Stuart, Steve and Misho and probably everyone else passing him all day. But he seemed happy enough. We’ll see if he comes back!

Misho’s bike’s battery was playing up again and Pina had to push the mighty yellow CBR to bump start it from home that morning. Misho’s not 100% convinced it is the battery, but it is exhibiting all the erratic behaviours of a battery on its last legs. Misho left the bike idling on various occasions, creating that sense of urgency as the motor throbbed away. He had disconnected the lights lessening the load on the charging system, but the bike proved reliable all day.

Pierre turned up on his brand new 500 km old Aprilia RSV4. He still has some stiffness in his crash damaged arm, but was going to ride, rain, hail or (no) shine. A sterling effort. And his mint bike was filthy by the first stop in Korumburra. And his number plate was flapping, the number plate bracket already fatigued and cracked. A couple of cable ties were installed to “catch” the number plate should the bracket give way altogether. I apologised for the extra weight of the cable ties, though I did cut off their ends to comply with EH&S safety requirements under Paul’s professional eye.

By Korumburra new guy Andrew on the blinged CBR1000 was a study in mud, having removed the rear hanger and anything else back there. His leathers (no waterproofs, oops) were covered in rear wheel muddy spray. I’d hate to have to clean them, and of course being pelted with wet and cold misty muck wouldn’t do your spirits much good. But he stuck it out till Mirboo North before pulling the pin.

Cindy was also suffering in the conditions (weren’t we all?) finally screaming, “No more dirt!” At least this time she had plastic overpants and jacket to keep dry.

Pina plodded along at the back, these sorts of conditions a reminder of when she had the nasty aquaplaning crash a couple of years ago. She jumped on the back with Misho for the 60 km loop down

through Hallston and back to Mirboo North instead of sitting it out with a few of the others. But there was no escape – she had to get on her own bike for the final solid rain section all the way back to Drouin. I took the freeway from Trafalgar as the time was marching on and the occasional light shower had turned into a steady heavy drizzle.

I later heard it got a bit exciting at the Drouin exit off the freeway: the guys were planted in the right lane and had to cut across a lane of cars to make the exit. Of course everything was shrouded in a fog of car and truck raised spray, low light and sunset not far away. Pina didn't make the exit. When she didn't arrive in Main Street, Drouin, Misho queried if there was another exit, and then went in search of her. A few minutes later they reappeared. That made nine finishers of the fourteen starters.

By the time I got home the bike had another 525 km on the odometer and it was pitch dark and I was cold, despite three thermals, a new Dainese colour coordinated leather jacket(!) with its own thermal, two throat coats, and waterproof outer garments from top to toe. I was so full of adrenalin I forced myself to go to sleep at 1 o'clock, still buzzing. A day later and no scribe, I'm paying for it.

The bike was so dirty that I had to wash it when I got home – as I guess did everyone else. I know Misho and Pina have a washing ritual after every ride, so they certainly did. Mud was caked everywhere, and I spent 30 minutes (a lot for me) chipping and scraping it off. Next day in the light, riding to work in the misty rain, I could see all the bits I missed. But the bike is all dirty again ...

Thanks Ian for rear riding most of the day. It is good to see Ian out riding much more regularly, despite pain from bike old injuries often intruding. He is getting up in the points with all this rear riding. And thanks to everyone else who came and made the day fun. Hopefully you arrived home safe and sound, ready to watch the Spanish MotoGP preceded by the Moto2 and Moto3. Casey on pole – finished fourth.

Ben Warden