

Chris Bouwmeester	Honda CBR1000	Cliff Peters (leader)	Kawasaki ZX10
Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Gordon Heydon	Kawasaki ZX6
Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Rob Jones	Suzuki GSXR1000
Tony Stegmar	Honda CBR1000	Darryn "Bart" Hutchinson	Suzuki GSXR1000
Ian Payne (rear)	Honda CBR1000	Ken King	Suzuki GSXR1000
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Chris Pointon	Suzuki GSXR1000
Fred Stolk (1 st ride)	Yamaha R1	Mark Edmonds (2 nd ride)	Suzuki GSX600 Bandit
Yvette Stolk (1 st ride)	Yamaha R1	Peter Fisher	MV Augusta Brutale 1090
Ian Baird	KTM 990	Mike Henriksen	Triumph Speed Triple 1050
Craig (1 st ride)	Kawasaki ZX9		<i>19 bikes, 19 people</i>

Mike Henriksen put his hand up to write the article but rang a couple of days ago to say that he had been too ill to put pen to paper. Get well soon, Mike. Luckily, I sent him a few reminder notes at the time because a month later, and another 3000 km through the brain, it is all a bit vague. I'll have a stab because it is important that a record is kept of our rides. I really feel the sense of history with our Club, particularly after reading and formatting Barb Peters' type up of old 1970's magazines prior to putting them up on the web.

We had struggled all week via the Google Group and MSR itinerary page to get a leader for this ride when the original leader bailed. So when Cliff rang me up Thursday from Docklands riding his push bike with Ian Payne and Tony Stegmar and asked, "Who's leading Sunday?" I said, "You are!" And so it came to pass.

At Berwick, there were lots of bikes including Rob Jones' clan of friends, riding almost as many Suzukis as there were Hondas. Almost! There was wide spectrum of bike manufacturers present and even more riders – 19 bikes, 7 manufacturers and 19 riders by the end of the day, a fantastic turnout considering the forecast of 13 degrees. But the weather was predicted to stay fine, the first fine day of the week. Excellent good fortune. It was now or never, winter closing in fast.

Ken King, a work colleague of mine, also on a Gixxer, was lost in downtown Berwick, he informed me via text as we were preparing to leave. So I scurried off to look for Ken and he found me riding up and down the main street. We made it back in time as the group was just moving off.

Alas, Ken had battery issues and his bike wouldn't start. I learnt this while corner marking at the Freeway entrance after an inordinate delay. Rear rider Ian explained that Ken and another new rider Ian Baird were trying to bump start Ken's beast, and wearing themselves out. I suggested Ian continue on as Cliff would soon run out of corner markers and we would have people scattered all over the country. I knew the route and figured I would catch the group in Moe, all going well.

Back at the servo, another new rider Craig on a Kawasaki ZX9 arrived. He was Ian Baird's mate and optimistically 30 minutes late. Ken sensed the only problem was a flat battery, not something more sinister like a stator failure, particularly as the bike only has low kilometres. He had sat idling in Berwick with the headlights blazing for some time – probably enough to take the edge of the battery. Ken set about tracking down a set of jumper leads from likely looking four wheel drive and older car owners as they arrived to buy petrol. About the fifth ask came good. We had the bike going in a few minutes, seat and tools restored to their rightful homes, and we were away.

I lead the now four bikes and riders in pursuit of the Club. It was soon very clear that Craig was of the *slow and steady* breed, and of course that dictates how the whole of the group behaves if we are to remain in sight of each other, corner marking with three new riders at best fraught with exciting possibilities.

Straight down the Freeway to Longwarry North bought us some time, and then around to Jindivick and the first corners. At Neerim South Craig never arrived. The three of us waited for a while and then Ian

suggested he would go and look for his mate, and all being well, he would catch us in Moe, or even Licola. I suspected the worst but wasn't keen to explore the possibility and so was happy for Ian to take responsibility for his mate. We never saw either of them again, or since. Hmm.

Ben and Ken continued along the "normal" route via Crossover, Old Sale Road, and Hill End to catch the Club in Moe having morning tea. Yvette and Fred in matching leathers and on matching R1s were convinced to ride with us. I didn't see Chris Pointon leave but I understood he left from here.

In the main street Chris Bouwmeester was struggling with his leathers which had popped open en-route. We find a set of pliers and screwdriver and crush the zip to get it functioning again. It was a bit of a struggle as Chris had to remove his leathers, boots etc to facilitate easy access. He gets it all together and is happy with his work. Ken and I get to eat half a Subway meat and salad roll each, the 12" on special.

Next stop Tyers where Ken puts air in his tyres just we are leaving. Again Ken and I play catch-up, rejoining the group after Toongabbie. We notice Fred is stopped and having a heated argument with woman driving a commodore wagon, cause unknown. Ian waited at the next corner for the altercation to resolve.

I find myself chasing Cliff along the Licola Road, after eventually squeezing past Paul under brakes into a corner. I didn't want Cliff to get away! Cliff reckons he is riding slower since the crash. I'd hate to see him at full pace if that is the case. He looked as smooth and fast as ever to me.

We get to the Licola bridge and keep going straight up the hill as agreed at the start of the ride. Cliff likes going up the 14 km to the dirt rather than out to the Wellington River which has a lot of blind corners, particularly now that the regrowth is rampaging right up to the road's edge and more, making visibility through the corners near impossible. Six "hard cores": Bart, Cliff, Ken, Mark Tony and I shared the views and I take a couple of photos. Then we head back to Licola for lunch and bad news.

Chris Bouwmeester has fallen off on the Licola Road early on at a right hand, tight, damp corner. It was a scary corner as the road had been dry up until this point and Cliff felt both front and rear tyres slide, he recalled later. This particular corner never sees the sun in winter, tucked into a gully on the south side of the hill. Chris had gassed it up on the exit and lost the rear end, suffering a low-side. Damage to his bike included a broken left hand footpeg and rear brake assembly. He retired hurt and went home. Rob Jones dropped his GSXR1000 in sympathy doing a U turn on the grass – and snapped his right hand mirror off.

Back to Tyers for fuel where Ben put in 11.66 litres to Cliffs 13.0 litres for the 205 km Licola Tyres loop, travelling nose to tail for the majority of time. Honda more economical! (The 954 would have used 2 more litres than Cliff's ZX10 in days gone by. Now the tables (technology?) has turned!

We did the Jindivick route again and then we got mixed up with Harleys on the Freeway from Longwarry North to Officer. We ended up following a very speedy L-plater along the freeway, lane splitting at speed. It suited us having a bunny out front with a big target on his chest.

The day done, Cliff and I compared odometers in Officer and amazingly had exactly the same 476 km ride length for the day.

It was quite an unusual ride for me with lots of extracurricular activities mixed in with the great Licola Road, which is fast becoming the most dangerous ride on our calendar. Till next time.

Ben Warden