

Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Dennis Lindemann	Honda CBR600
Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Ian McPherson (1 <sup>st</sup> ride)	Honda CBR600
Tim Emons	Honda CBR1000	Chris Pointon	Suzuki GSXR1000
Ian Payne (rear)	Honda CBR1000	Michael Srb	Suzuki GSXR1000
Damir Djikic	Honda CBR1000	Dean Bonthorne (2 <sup>nd</sup> ride)	Suzuki GSXR750
Ron Johnston	Honda CBF1000	Marc Marais (leader)	Kawasaki ZX10
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Aiden Baker	Kawasaki ER-6N
Roman Berjoza	Honda CBR600	Rob Langer	KTM 990
Matt Considine	Honda CBR600	Tony Ripepi	KTM 990

This was a really good ride in perfect conditions with a pretty sizeable group of riders (18 in all). I have only been on about eight MSR rides but they all seem to begin and end in much the same way: you roll up at the Berwick servo (for most of the rides, it seems), fill up, stand around and chat for a bit, or just kick a few tyres and try and keep count of the number of Fireblades that show up. Ben wanders around and gets names and emergency contacts, which is always reassuring.

Marc Marais was leading this ride so he did the spiel about corner marking, turning off GPSs and leaving the ego at home etc. This is all good and proper and sets the scene for the ordered chaos that's sure to ensue as soon as we enter the first set of twisties. I had been on this particular ride before and have been out to Thomson Dam on a few occasions on my own, so I knew we were in for some good roads.

Marc threw in a curve ball at the start by taking us around the block and back to the starting point. This was due to roadworks. Or, possibly, it was a new strategy for warming up the rubber before we hit the roads proper? Marc could no doubt clarify this point.

The first leg was out to Noojee via Yarra Junction and Gembrook. I'm never 100% sure where I am during most Club rides but I know this stretch reasonably well now. It's a beaut route that is well surfaced and has a heap of corners, mostly of the tighter variety, that quickly get you up to speed.

I find I end up riding on my own for most of the Club rides. I'm not right at the back, but I'm definitely nowhere near the front either. I end up in a sort of no-man's land, which is not necessarily a bad thing. You have plenty of space, for a start. On the other hand, it can be easier to follow someone because you get to see how the road flows and get advance notice of any gravel or other dodgy stuff. I also feel more exposed to getting done by the coppers in this situation. I think one of the best reasons for riding in a group is the "safety in numbers" factor. There's far less chance of getting booked when riding with 15-20 other riders, I think, than if you're out there on your own. Not that anyone does anything illegal, of course.

We arrived at Noojee, in good time I'm sure, and sat around in the sun. It's a very relaxing place. The only complication was a whole stack of pushbike riders participating in a race, with all their support vehicles in tow. They are a real hazard as the speed differential is massive. If they are on the other side of a corner, you have very little time to react to a whole heap of them taking up half the road. Tricky. Still, you've got to share the road. And they're kind of close cousins to (proper) bike riders; just missing an engine.

As an aside, I am going to repair some left-hand side fairing damage to my CBR600 – the result of a nasty little low-side at a track day back in November 2011 after another rider lost the front coming on to the front straight out at Broadford and brought me down as well. The outcome was a broken collar bone and a scratched-up bike (being a track day, it was not covered by insurance). I'm pricing repairs at the moment – either a respray or replacement OEM fairings or a new set of after-market

fairings through the interweb. There are a lot of options out there, so it's looking good for getting the damage repaired without spending a fortune.

While at Noojee, Dennis Lindemann described his experience after an incident he had on his CBR600. Seems it was a pretty good one. I was unaware that you could actually come out in front (in financial terms) after a crash but Dennis managed this feat. He even had a recent (minor) off with basically zero damage to the bike. He has done well.

After Noojee we did a run through the three Neerims (Junction, East and South) and then on to Moe, the first fuel stop. I got lost somewhere along the way when I sailed through an intersection where I was meant to turn left. I saw riders by the side of the road all in a bunch so I figured they were having a chat and kept going. The Corner Marking System is not foolproof after all. Mike Srb had the misfortune to be behind me at the time so he followed me and we both ended up back on the freeway not too far down the road. Mike was low on fuel so we switched to autopilot and rolled down the freeway to Moe to meet up with the rest of the group for lunch.

Moe is a sad and strange place on a Sunday afternoon – maybe it's like that all the time; I'm not sure – but they have a Subway and a bakery and decent fuel so it gets the job done.

There was some strange old dude who was very keen to talk to as many riders as possible. He loved the bikes, so you have to respect that. [*Roger Holt, ex Club member, 1975! ...Ed*]

Ian McPherson, who was out for his first ride, called it quits at Moe. He was an Essendon supporter and had gotten stuck into the beers on Saturday night watching the game. I can't imagine anything worse than taking on one of these rides with a hangover.

After Moe it was on to Thomson Dam which was pretty grouse. The road to the dam after Erica is exceptional, with plenty of open sweepers to begin with, and then the smooth and tight and twisty section down to the dam itself. There was more wandering around and chit chat and other relaxed Sunday arvo sort of stuff at the dam which looked pretty full. There are never many people here, though. I guess it's a bit out of the way.

I remember a man and a woman (!) came past on bikes on the way out to the dam. They were going at a fair clip, so I didn't try to keep up. ('Course I could have, if I had wanted to...maybe.) I would have liked to have seen the duel between the usual group of riders at the front of our group (e.g. Ben, Tim and Marc, of course). I can't imagine anyone going any quicker on the road than the front guys without crashing, so that one would have been interesting.

It's unusual to see females out on bikes. The Club is fortunate to have Pina, of course, but she is the only female rider I've seen on Club rides. You very rarely see female riders riding and even more rarely see them going quickly. No doubt there are ladies out there who can ride – Pina's an obvious example – but clearly most choose not to. This woman was very fast although she did tend to brake into sweepers which is something her leader and other fast guys don't do. She was clearly following her partner, so I wonder if she'd be out there on her own. Nice to see, either way.

Leg 5 was back to Moe and then back to the servo at Officer via Willow Grove, Old Sale Road, the Crossover high speed sweepers, Neerim South and Jindivick. A pretty good way to finish the ride.

The sun was getting low as we finished and it was tricky heading back into Melbourne with the sun right in your eyes. We did about 500km for the day, or just shy of that. All up, perfect conditions and a great ride. Thanks Marc for leading and Ian for bringing up the rear.

**Matt Considine**