

Licola Sunday 7th November, 2012



Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Ron Johnston	Suzuki GSX1250
Nigel Oman	Honda CBR1000	Mark Rigsby (rear)	Suzuki GSXR1000
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Steve Mudford	Suzuki GSXR750
Tony Stegmar	Honda CBR1000	Geoff Shugg	Suzuki DL650
Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600
Dave Byrne	Honda CBR1000	Jesvin George	Honda CBR600
Damir Djikic	Honda CBR1000	Raman Biaroza	Honda CBR600
Tim Emons	Honda CBR1000	Cliff Peters (leader)	Kawasaki ZX10
Matt Considine	Honda CBR1000	Andrew Newbury	Kawasaki ZX10
Simon Wastney	Honda VFR800	Cindy Lee	Triumph 675

20 bikes, 20 people, 395 kms to Officer South

I remember to put clocks forward an hour before bed. Wake up bright and early to rain and dark clouds. Hmm! Have breakfast and watch Bathurst on the telly. Me thinks I should stay home and watch the big race, which looks more enticing than riding in the rain. Usually, though, after Ferntree Gully the weather pattern changes for the better and it's fine by the time I reach Berwick. The bike it is then.

I wrest myself away from the telly and get my act together, ready for a big day out. If you are a hardcore rider, it's hard to turn down a ride to Licola, even if the weather looks challenging.

They are making some big changes on Clyde Road, Berwick. Once the changes to the road have finished the improvements will be great.

Arriving at Berwick servo, there was already a large number of people. So, I am not the only fruit loop. All these people can't be wrong, can they? Nigel Oman is back on deck, sidelined after hitting the kangaroo in Christmas Hills early on in the year.

Today Cliff is leading the ride. Being an ex-farmer, he gathers his flock around and promises bales of hay if we pay attention and listen to what he has to say. He made a very good speech. First Aid? Three people put their hands up. Rear rider was Mark on the Gixxer 1000. Which one? The black one. But there are lots of black ones! Mainly Hondas. Write up? Damir mumbled something after Ben dobbed him in. Vacant look on his face. I waited to see what the reaction was. Any takers? No. I volunteered. And so it was.

Let's get out of here. From Berwick it was down the Highway to Nar Nar Goon, Garfield and Longwarry with the monthly market in full swing. Across the railway line, and a little further on across the highway.

Labertouche, Jindivick and Neerim South where the roads were a little greasy in places, and care needed to be taken. Crossover, Old Sale Road, Wilkes and Balfours Roads to reach Willow Grove. So far the weather has been cool with some light rain, but it's improving.

I follow Pina into Moe, our first stop. I bought a pie to warm me up, and a chicken and salad roll for lunch because there is not much food at Licola. Fred and Yvette met us there, arriving in their Fairlane, wearing civvies. Yvette reckoned it was too cold to go riding. "You need to toughen up", I said. Eric Makin, who used to be a member up until a couple of years ago, was also there in his Lotus, catching up with Fred. The last time I saw Eric he was recovering from being knocked off his bike at Phillip Island on a track day. It was good to see him. I don't think he does much motorcycle riding these days, the car a little safer, and nearly as much fun. *[We saw him the week before flying around the Reefton in it. ...Ed.]*

I asked Roman how the weather was treating him. "I am from Russia and I am bloody freezing." It's not that cold, I replied. You would be used to sub-zero temperatures anyway. "I have been here four years and I am still getting acclimatized! Brr!"

We must have been in Moe about half hour before the call went out to move on. Back through Yallourn North to Tyers for compulsory fuel. The servo has changed hands since I was last here.

Someone noticed the exhaust bracket on Roman's bike has lost its bolts. The next thing I see it has a couple of cable ties on it, but that is short lived. Ben to rescue, as usual. Side panels off, unbolted the foot peg bracket of the left side and used the bolts for the bracket on the exhaust side. Slight delay. The ride leaves and Ben waves the rear rider off, knowing the route.

Highway to Toongabbie, back roads, Cowwarr, Dawson and Lake Glenmaggie. It appeared to be a regroup at Glenmaggie but the bridge was out and the road closed. We didn't get to do our little sprint around the lake. So back to the Licola turn off. While crossing the causeway I could see what was left of the old bridge. The first six spans were missing. All you could see was the piles and cross beams at water level. Last time I rode across it, it certainly needed some work.

A few of the lads were waiting at the turn off so they could play catch up. Ben and Roman have now rejoined the ride. I had travelled a few kilometres in when a few of the boys caught up. Some passed, and Jason "Attenborough" Wilson nearly had a Walhalla No 2 moment up the outside, passing three of us, on a left hand "U" turn on the up-hill grade.

I punch on at my own pace, the Bandit a bit heavy, but I will get used to it. The road was very clean, making it very pleasant to ride on. There were several cars at the start, going the opposite way. After that I didn't see anymore.

At Licola Tim was corner marking, waving both hands. Take your pick. I disappeared down the road to Wellington River though there appeared to be quite a few riders at Licola. There were a few rock falls and debris to negotiate on the 23 kilometres to the end of the bitumen.

Cliff was the only one there when I arrived at the bridge, followed by Ben and Jesvin. A few happy snaps were taken, and then it was back to Licola. When I arrived everyone had had lunch. I ventured into my bag to retrieve my salad roll, and saw it had been shaken, rattled and rolled. It was still in its plastic container in a bag, but it had gone everywhere. What a mess! But I still ate it.

Lyn Duncan was in Licola to say hello. She had come down to see Peter Hill at Stratford.

The trip out was uneventful. I followed Jason to the turn off, did some corner marking. I saw a law enforcement officer in a Nissan Patrol, and that was it. Back to Tyers for fuel. Andrew, on the ZX10, was in economy mode on the last leg to conserve fuel. We all passed him.

At Tyers some people departed. The main group continued on to Yallourn North, then a bit of hard charging up to Willow Grove before taking a left onto the Wilkes Road. All is good until I get to the Balfours Wilkes Road intersection which is unmarked though someone on a Fireblade was parked on the Balfours Road. I pointed left and they nodded. We don't usually go this way. Five or six other riders followed. Get to the end and no corner markers. Turn back. I should have known better... this side trip just made the ride last a little longer.

I went tail end Charlie for a while to make sure we didn't have any more mishaps. Old Sale Road, Neerim South, Jindivick to Labertouche. Somewhere along here I came up behind a Nissan Patrol towing a trailer with a couple of dirt bikes. I wasn't able to pass him because he drove in the middle of the road through the twisty bits, but I managed to pass him when the road straightened out. On to Longwarry North and a bum-numbing ride along the Princes Highway to the Roadhouse at Officer.

Everyone enjoyed the day. Thanks to Cliff for a great ride. The weather wasn't too flash to start with, but it ended up warm and sunny. A great day out. Thanks to Mark for rear rider duties.

I did 450 kms for the day, door to door. Until we meet again, may your lid never skid.

Ron Johnston