



Walhalla/Thomson Dam Sunday 16th September, 2012

Ron Johnston	Suzuki GSX1250FA	Ben Warden (1/2 rear)	Honda CBR1000
Chris Pointon	Suzuki GSXR1000	Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000
Steve Mudford	Suzuki GSXR750	Misho Zratic	Honda CBR1000
Geoff Shugg	Suzuki DL650	Tony Stegmar	Honda CBR1000
Andrew Newbury	Kawasaki ZX10	Ian Payne (1/2 rear)	Honda CBR1000
Cliff Peters	Kawasaki ZX10	Dave Byrne	Honda CBR1000
Jason Wilson	Kawasaki ZX9	Peter Jones	Honda CBR1000
Rob Langer	BMW R1150R	Damir Djikic	Honda CBR1000
Dave Chisma	BMW F800ST	Tim Emons (leader)	Honda CBR1000
Yvette Stolk (4 th ride)	Yamaha R1	Michael MacRae	Honda CBR600
Fred Stolk (4 th ride)	Yamaha R1	Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600
Cindy Lee	Triumph 675	Jesvin George	Honda CBR600
Pierre Ong	Aprilia RSV4R		<i>25 bikes, 25 people</i>

A huge turnout for today's ride with the green Kwakas starting to challenge the Hondas (well nearly - twelve to three). Ian was on his new 2012 Blade making nine Blades on ride.

Lots of new faces and exotic bikes. I felt like I was the new member needing an introduction and special treatment, though it was great to see some familiar faces: Cliff, Misho, Pina, Paul etc. and have the opportunity to catch up, and talk about everything bike.

Tim was leading today and I always enjoy his rides as they seem to last longer and be more challenging. He's a great asset and contributor; long may he be with us.

We started our ride from Berwick, as usual for a Gippsland trek. There seemed to be a lot more new riders, although from the list above, they are all members except for a couple of fourth time riders on two R1's we met up with at Trafalgar, Yvette and Fred. They looked ready for a track day with matching bikes and leathers.

The first leg was down the highway to the regular turn off to Longwarry North, then back roads through Jindivick until we reached Crossover and on to more familiar roads. It was a good run and helped warm me up for the middle leg from Trafalgar to Walhalla.

The stop at Trafalgar was compulsory for fuel, as the next leg would be 186 km before fuel.

The run up to Walhalla was great with lots of good high speed sweepers, clean roads and not too many cars coming the other way. Obviously, I was passed by the regular fangers, with their pace and skill well beyond my ability.

I sat behind Rob on his BMW for a while, enjoying watching his all-purpose tyres squirm under the pressure of high speed sweepers. He took it all in his stride. I can't wait to follow him on his new ZX10, or at least try to.

I arrived at the turn off to Walhalla in fourth position allowing me to follow Tim without corner marking. The roads turned tight and twisty with bark strewn all over the road. Picking the right lines proved to be a challenge: you think you've got it right then there's crap all over the road so you need to adjust.

We all eventually made it to Walhalla for lunch, taking over the local milk bar, ordering coffee and burgers.

Jason "Attenborough" Wilson was a highlight, doing his parrot dance, coaxing the wild King Parrots into his hand and on to the bikes. They were flocking over him like he was the parrot god of Walhalla. Everyone else was relaxing, soaking up the sun and enjoying the company.

I sat next to Steve and Fred who were reminiscing about their racing days many years ago, the work they did and where they lived, and what has happened since. It's amazing what they have fitted in, in those last twenty years.

Tim yells out "5 minutes". It's time to move. We all start to slowly get up and back into our riding gear, and then off to Melbourne's main water storage, Thomson Dam. I ride at a comfortable pace, slowly getting into the groove, enjoying the scenery. Out of nowhere, Geoff flies past on the DL, again making those all-purpose tyres squirm for their life.

I eventually reached the end of the twisty road and stopped to corner mark. Ben arrives, advising that Jason "Bird Man" Wilson has expected too much from the brakes of the ZX9, trying to out-brake Ben on a corner and gone straight on, dropping his bike at low speed in the mud, with only a few scratches to the belly pan. Trying to out-brake Ben on any bike on any corner is foolhardy. Not only is he like a rat down a drain pipe when it comes to the twisty stuff, he weighs about 40kg, so he can pull up a bike like Danny Pedrossa. So, Jason, "We's got to know our limitations!" Though, I must admit, I've never seen anyone ride a ZX9 as quickly as Jason!

We got to the dam and we were all happy to see Jason was okay. No damage could be seen and no pain or injury was being admitted. As we were at the dam we took the opportunity to take photos as it was around 80% full, the highest it's been since Captain Cook's landing. Personally, I think it's a very unattractive dam; I much prefer Eildon or the Hume.

We're off again, heading home via Moe. I rode along the dam wall, one of the first to leave, giving everyone the opportunity to pass me as I navigate my way down the long beautiful sweepers.

It wasn't long before the first bike passed, I think it was Cliff, then Ben, and then Fred on his R1 at pace, hanging off like he was at the Island. Maybe this was his track day! Then came the other R1. Yvette flies past me at a greater pace than the preceding three; she is the fastest woman I've seen on a bike. She then proceeds to round up Ben then Cliff. Cliff wasn't having any of this, so he passes back. Yvette, not to be out done, passing back again. This is all going on at \$1.60 to \$2.00 on some very nice sweeping roads.

We all eventually get to Moe, fuel up and emotionally unload after a brilliant ride down from the Dam. We are all pumped. Here I find out there was another casualty: Michael MacRae had come off at a hairpin bend. He ran wide and dropped it on a corner, maybe one kilometre after Thomson Dam – a left hander that tightens up. Cindy also went very wide on the same corner, although was able to hold it without incident.

I decided to leave the ride at Moe and head home down the Highway. I said my goodbyes and thanked Tim for putting on a great ride again. Can't wait for the Dargo ride in December; Tim's epic!

I'm told there were no dramas on the last leg – Moe, Old Sale Road, Neerim Junction, Jindivick, Longwarry, down the freeway to Officer South.

Peter Jones