

## Jindabyne      Fri. 25<sup>th</sup> to Mon. 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2013



Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Rob Jones	Suzuki GSXR1000
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Bart Hutchinson	Suzuki GSXR1000
Nigel Oman	Honda CBR1000	Geoff Dick	BMW R850
Dave Byrne	Honda CBR1000	Rob Langer	BMW F800GS
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Cliff Peters	Kawasaki ZX10
Peter Feistl	Ducati Panigale		<i>11 bikes, 11 people</i>

**Day 1:** Berwick 133km Tyers (via Jindivick, Hill End) 86 Briagolong 95 Bruthen (via Tambo Upper) 65 Orbost 163 (via Bendoc, Delegate, (6 +12 km of dirt) Bombala 108 Jindabyne.

**Day 2:** Jindabyne 108 Adaminaby (via Dalgety and Berridale) 119 Tumbarumba (via Elliot Way) 53 Tumut 45 Bondo (via Wee Jasper Road) 45 Tumut 73 Tumbarumba 74 Khancoban 115 Jindabyne.

**Day 3:** Jindabyne 108 Bombala 109 Eden 92 Bombala 108 Jindabyne 40 Charlotte Pass 40 Jindabyne

**Day 4:** Jindabyne 108 Bombala 163 Orbost (via Delegate and 3.5 + 9.5 km of dirt) 65 Bruthen 90 Briagolong 86 Tyers 115 Officer South.

Total: approximately 2,500 km.

Jindabyne. Wow! What a weekend! I imagine most of you reading this would have been on this trip before so you will know the places and roads I'm talking about better than I. For those who have not been... if you get the chance ... go!!!

My bike fitness is low. The forecast said rain all weekend at both Jindabyne and Eden while Tumut was to be hot. Melbourne was having one of those hot, hot nights - it was still 29 degrees when I left home for the 9am Berwick start. A cool front was supposed to hit bringing rain. And, as a bonus, the State was on fire again, right where we were planning to ride. But wait, there's more... a tricky cyclone was supposed to bring rain down from the tropics.

Being summer with temperatures in the 25+ range, the question was what to pack and secondly, should I really go on the ride at all with all these natural disasters occurring? But there was one overriding factor: this could be my biggest ride in one day and biggest weekend ride ever.

So, as anyone on the ride will tell you, I packed everything. I saw how little the other rider's arrived with and was surprised. I had two Venture bags on the back of my bike. One held all my bike gear as my wet weather stuff is bulky, but keeps me dry and breathes a bit. The other bag had clothes including jeans, a jumper and boots as I thought we may go out one night. Very shortly someone asked, "What do you say to someone who arrives with only a small tail bag of stuff while you have two 51 litre bags?" We all had a nice laugh at my expense... a good start to a funny, fun weekend.

It was hot, so all I had on was my cow skin. The weather man said it was supposed to be fresh/cold each night.

The start point was at Berwick. I was first there. The traffic around the Eastlink was quiet though those who came out the Citylink noted the traffic was heavy on this work day during peak hour. Ben had frustratingly followed an unmarked police car for 25 kilometres.

I could see a storm approaching as I watched the others roll in. There was to be eight of us staying at the Jindabyne Sport and Recreation Centre, and three people staying in town. A lovely small group. I could see by the crew it was going to be another fast weekend and I hoped I would keep up.

We set off in a light shower. The roads were still quiet and we made good time. I knew some of the roads as they are part of the Licola ride. Narrow roads with a few tricky corners. Unfortunately, one was a bit too tricky.

Just over a narrow wooden bridge on the link road between the Old Sale Road and Hill End is a tight 45 km/h right hand turn. Rob Jones overtook me, as he did a number of times that weekend. He must have been half asleep or pickled from the night before as he did not stick his finger up at me as he passed. He hit the bridge carrying too much speed, locked up the front wheel on the gravel in the middle of the bridge, recovered and speared off into the soft stuff at the side of the road, hitting the fence and snapping the fence post at ground level with, we suspect, his head. We debated later on the thickness of the post. It was thick and looked new. His bike was on the road side of the fence, while he was on the other. Cripes, a crash this early in the trip.

Rob's helmet had a 10 cm crack along the top but he seemed okay, even after discovering the fence was electrified - the hard way. As I'm the designated First Aider, I started questioning him. His witty answers showed me he was fine but I kept me eye on him most of the day. Pina gave him some Rescue Remedy - homeopathy with alcohol - which seemed to help. He said his head, shoulder, and back were sore but he was going to push on.

A new helmet was in order, so after Briagolong, Bart and Rob left the ride to find a suitable bike shop, rejoining us at lunch in Bruthen. I'm getting ahead.

The sky was dark and threatening so at Tyers most people decided to put on their wet weather gear. We had got wet on and off from Berwick, and we still had a very long way to go. Then, maybe five minutes down the road, the rain started clearing, and I warmed up quickly, wishing I had started with wet gear and taken it off at Tyers! Oh well, what do you do? Go faster and keep cooler?

We headed towards the area where the fires were - Seaton. The earlier than expected cool change had blown the fires away from our route so Ben's plan was to 'see how we go'. We were passing some burntout paddocks, and up ahead was a yellow *Road Closed* sign blocking half the road which we ignored. As we traveled further I could see lights flashing off to the left. Yes, Mr Plod was charging across the paddocks from what looked like a farm house towards our road with all the bells and whistles. He seemed unhappy with our choice to ignore the sign.

We spun around and proceeded to exit the area by a quick first turn left. Not sure what Plod thought but we were out of there... Ben said later he had never been down that particular road. Amazingly,

before long his internal GPS recognized that we were now on the outskirts of Heyfield. Another turn or so and we were back on track as if nothing had happened. Great to have you leading Ben ☺

In Heyfield proper I caught Ben... yes I was surprised too. Soon he turned right up a road and I stopped to corner mark. Just before the main group arrived, two police 4WD vehicles arrived from the opposite direction. I think they were as disappointed as us. They were in a fire region and obviously not busy. They pulled over just around the corner, seemingly allowing us to continue. We took advantage of the 'window of opportunity and grace' and departed the area leaving them to do their important work.

Briagolong, Beverley's Road, Fingerboards, Bruthen, Orbost – just a blur. In general, the roads were amazing all the way to Jindabyne. The twisties are my favorite and man there were lots. Can't tell you where we went. I would know a road, and then we turn left onto some small road that turns out to be a fantastic gem with no cars, cops, and heaps of turns. The Bonang Highway from Orbost to the NSW border was fantastic though I didn't like the dirt sections with my heavy load; the back end of the bike swung around a few times, making my heart race. By the time we stopped to re-group after I think the third lot of dirt, I was spent, finished, kaput. Where is home? Bed? We still had a long way to go.

The road from Bombala through Delegate to Jindabyne has some fast sweepers and we were heading into a low summer sun. It was glary. I was so tired at times I only had one eye open. I kept doing different things to keep my mind from drifting off, concerned I may get like Homer on the Simpsons when he dreamt he was flying on a bed, when in fact he was driving a car.

I had the visor open, moving my feet, stretching my legs. I have a Bluetooth headset that allows me to listen to music, answer the phone, etc. I had some rocking blues and heavy metal on in the background. Keeping that steady fast beat helps me. By the time I saw the last corner marker to turn into the Sports Centre I was about to throw up. I peeled myself off the bike, after waiting five minutes while Ben discovered where the keys to the family units were – back at Reception.

Most of the riders had been before so they knew the drill. There was a fantastic meal waiting for us; all we had to do was cook it. Ben and Cliff went to work on the BBQ. Others found salads, etc in our fridges. After some food and chat about the trip up, the conversation went to old war stories of crashes and near misses. No wonder we are called the Crash Club. Peter was funny with his story of losing his brake pedal on his new Ducati. Great bike, with an amazing sound. He loves his new toy, polishing it after every drop of rain, and checking his nuts as he goes... I think it was not much after 9pm when I jumped into bed, so, so tired...

**Day 2.** I'm still tired from yesterday's massive ride. I find being relatively new to the Club, most of the roads are new to me. Today was different. We did a similar route last Melbourne Cup weekend. The plan was to go Jindabyne, Adaminaby (via Dalgety and Berridale), Tumbarumba (via Elliot Way), Tumut, Bondo (via Wee Jasper Road), Tumut, Tumbarumba, Khancoban, and Jindabyne. I knew if I did this whole day I probably would not be able to ride the next day. Lucky for me there was another club with us on the ride, the famous Jones Club. They had a small turn out this weekend with only two members and a possible new recruit, Dave Byrne. Only joking boys☺ We know they're not a club, just a group of like minded enthusiasts. They were planning to bail at Tumbarumba and have a leisurely ride of 400+ kms, where the rest were heading for 670+km. It was cool in the hills while Tumut was going to be hot. I think Ben said it was 37 degrees. Wow...

We met at the Caltex in town after passing by Mr Plod with his radar on the steep hill entering town. There was a very large group of Indian motorcycles camped up the road, bikes everywhere, so we were well informed of his presence.

Fuelled up, we headed out of town towards Dalgety. I'm starting to get to know this road. We seemed to cover the distance much quicker than (was it only?) last night. This time, however, there were bikes to pass: lots of Indians. I felt like a cowboy rounding them up. They were mostly in groups of three, which made them easy to pass on straights, and leap frog in the corners. They

helped the trip, giving me someone to chase and catch, all the way to just before Sue City where they turned left and we went right down onto the Cabramurra and Khancoban.

Anyway, when we reached the bridge at Dalgety heading for Berridale it was blocked just like on the Cup weekend. At least they have built a completely new wide concrete bridge in the intervening three months over Christmas and seemed to be putting the final touches – a sealing coat on the concrete. Rob Langer tries his negotiation skills on the local road workers, hoping they will allow us to pass. Alas, no. The surface is still wet. The boys tell me it is a fantastic road, but it will have to wait till next trip as we turn around and head for the detour and the 16 km of dirt. I knew this patch of dirt from last time. I hate dirt... but it got us back on track. We didn't have much choice.

The roads to Adaminaby, Kiandra, Sue City and Tumbarumba were perfect. Ben said he had gone out and swept them whilst we slept last night. He did a great job. No cops, no leaf litter, no gravel on the road, and no rain nor any sign of it. The weather man had said rain, but we had beautiful sunny skies, and the temperature was pleasantly cool.

As planned at Tumbarumba, the ride split. I joined the Jones' Club as a novice member. Beer 'o'clock had been called so we headed off to a great pub in Jingellic, right on the Murray, with a camping site next door. When we pulled up I heard a band playing. Excellent! We dismounted our steel horses and entered the beer garden. There were lots of people enjoying the Australia Day festivities. As we sat to enjoy the surroundings it started to spit. As we planned to eat, we headed inside. Before long it rained, hailed, rained harder, and hailed harder. Very quickly the pub was packed with wet and drunk people.

After a feed we ventured outside as the rain slowed, then stopped. There were a few bikes outside and girls hanging around. We started chatting with a group of three that had blown in from Albury. They were well into their champagne. Rob dropped a lovely innuendo that got us all going; one of them was talking about wet tee shirt comps... why were we leaving? Oh yes, that's right, we were still miles from home, it was getting dark, and we still had to ride over the top of the world, then down through Thredbo, in rain and possibly hail. The wind had already picked up a lot, scattering piles of leaves over the road. You can't say the rides aren't varied and exciting with the MSR...

We rode over the border, through Corryong, Khancoban and into the mountains along the Alpine Way. A short stop at Khancoban for fuel, hoping the rain might blow over, but the sky and a mobile app said it was only going to get worse. We set off as the rain got heavier. The road got slimy at times, not good when all you wanna do is get home. I saw Rob Jones at the side of the road and slowed but he waved me on. He was sweating like a fat pig in his plastics and had stopped to take them off. It was so humid my visor was fogging up and I was getting damp from sweat, but not wet from the rain... I kept going, focusing on getting home.

At the top of the Alpine Way at Dead Horse Gap it was cold and the slight sweat from my body made me even colder. Ben said Rob Langer's BMW ambient temperature gauge indicated 13 degrees when their group came over about an hour after us.

Getting home I was cold but remembered Ben had said there may be drying rooms as it is a ski area, so I checked for a heater and found it. The rooms were very hot when we arrived on the first night. The fan in the heater in the drying room was off but heat was still coming from the unit, thus heating the room. So tonight I stripped in the drying room. I was not wet, just damp from sweat.

After a shower I felt alive. When the rest of the crew arrived I told Misho and Pina and Peter to use the drying room and have a hot shower too, as they were soaked. I think some people expected a dry, hot day and did not take wet weather gear with them. Or is was just that wet.

We had another quiet night in. There was so much salad left over from the night before we decided to buy meat and have another BBQ. Ben brought the meat in Jindabyne on his way home... he is so organised he really makes these trips and Sunday rides so much easier. I found he looked after Geoff and I all weekend, letting us new guys to these roads and towns know what was going on: toilets, food, etc. Thanks Ben. ☺

**Day 3.** Still tired, maybe more than yesterday. I spoke with Misho a lot the night before about tyre pressures and decided to try for myself to see the difference. It is probably a controversial subject, but I joined the front 33/34 rear 36/37 crew.

We planned to ride to Eden, a nice 400+ km day. I considered having a rest day, but Bart told me we would rest at Eden, visit the lookout and have fish and chips for lunch. The Imlay Road down to Eden was supposed to be twisty with bumps. The bumps were there. Ben also told me of a road where every corner was like the last and they just don't tighten up. Well, that's what I thought he said. This was not the case. These were tight, wide, varied corners. Oh well.

Eden was lovely. It was my first visit. The weather was very humid though luckily it felt less clammy on the waterfront. A tropical storm was heading for the area the next day and a local said they were going to take the boats off the harbour to prevent them crashing into the docks, a first according to him. Glad we came today, not the next.

You could see the early signs of the tropical storm already. The hail yesterday was part of it. The roads today had shredded leaves in places as a result of a severe hail storm. It looked like mowed grass all over the roads. There were some patches of thick gravel where the heavy rain had washed it right over the road.

As we were leaving Eden, it started to rain, though it cleared as soon as we left the coast. As usual we turned off the main road just out of town up some smaller road and into the twisties. I thought we were going the same way as we had come but after a left turn, the road changed dramatically for the better. It took me a while to realise this must have been the road Ben was talking about earlier, where every corner was like the last with constant radius turns where none of the corners tighten up. The Wyndham Cathcart Road. I took a leap of faith that this fantastic road would continue and was rewarded for my trust. I was now used to the change in tyre pressure as I felt the tyres sticking to the road. I was gliding like I was on rails. Woohoo! I think this was the best road I have ever been on. Towards the end the twisties open up. No surprises. Nice tip, Ben.

We stopped at Bombala where some riders enjoyed a coffee. The sky turned very dark just as we were leaving. Some put on their wet weather gear while I just put on my jacket and better gloves. It was 5km or less later that the heavens opened, like a bucket of water thrown over us. Within seconds I felt water running into my boots and a splashing sensation around my toes. I knew if I did not stop I would get really cold on the way home. The rain was so heavy I could hardly see. Then I noticed Misho suiting-up under a tree and a spot where I could stop safely on the road. I ran to join him only to notice the dry area was much smaller than I first thought, not even protecting Misho.

The side of the road quickly became a mud quicksand danger. New plan: just change on the road side and get out of here. I dropped my glove and saw it instantly fill with water. Not happy.

Misho had given up and helps me with my pants. We laugh at the craziness of it all and get going, only to see Ben just down the road corner marking and also trying to get into his lightweight waterproof jacket which is almost impossible single handedly once the leathers are wet. Misho had the same jacket and same issue so they dressed each other.

Ten kilometres later and the rain has stopped, blue skies and dry roads. When we got home it was back to the drying room with our gear. That thing was so handy, I would love to have one at home.

Tonight's agenda was to join Rob and Bart for tea at a pub. We rode into town and I wore my dress boots. Some locals just had thongs with socks, a horrible look. The Jones' club were in shorts and tee-shirts. Looks like over packing paid off. ☺

Tea at the pub was fun. There was a fantastic balcony overlooking the lake and we all sat together at a long wooden table. Bart and Rob were there when I arrived. Those guys are so funny. Stories, jokes, we laughed and laughed. It was nice with us all sitting outside on the balcony; I did not want to go back to base but the rain was coming, already a light shower that got heavier as I flew through town.



Home to watch the men's Australian tennis final, and see what a pleasant night it was in Melbourne.

**Day 4, Last Day.** Are we home yet? Still tired. Packed and ready to go early. We were on the road just before 9am, Ben already having topped up with 1.7 litres of oil (!) and fixed an ominous puddle of green under his bike at the servo – a loose radiator hose clamp.

The sky was overcast and dark and the temperature cool. There were lots of very low clouds around and, as we were so high up, we were bound to ride through some. We did, right where the road turns sharply to the right and plummets steeply downwards. Just when you need maximum visibility. Throw in speed and some of the lads received quite a surprise.

After all the rain we had been through, I rugged up with my wet gear on. It stayed dry, but was fresh, so the heavy clothing helped. My wet gear is loose, making it easy and quick to get on, but it flaps crazily once the speed increases. At \$150 the bike vibrates, at \$164 *Scotty* is screaming to the captain, 'She can't take any more'. So as those who know the area, from base camp to Bombala, *Scotty* was talking to me most of the way.

Rob Jones had warned me that Bombala was a cop trap. Peter and Rob Langer were corner marking the Dalgety turnoff 20 km from town. Just as I hit second gear Peter's hand started flapping. The local 4WD cop was coming around the bend. He had earlier "waved" at Ben. In town we saw a TOG pursuit car cop pull over a ute. Within minutes another guy was pulled over, laser speed detection clearly the weapon of choice. So whilst they was busy Ben called "time". So we left at 50 km/h and then whoosh, out of there.

We planned to regroup after the second patch of dirt after Delegate. The sun was out, we had dropped in altitude, and it was getting warmer. I was still rugged up as it was cold in Bombala. Now I was hot and sweaty. In the first patch of dirt I should have stopped as the heat was getting to me and I was sliding a bit on the dirt. On the second patch I almost lost it on a corner, the back end trying to catch the front. I slowed. When I reached the pack I could tell I had been a while. I had a quick drink and visor clean, stripped off my gear leaving the cow skin on and then we were off towards Orbost, along another 85 km of twisty bitumen.

I know I have said this before, but wow, I love this road. I thought I was flying. I had a new burst of energy and spirit. But after the 85 km of twisties, I was done. Lunch at the Orbost bakery, then 65 km of highway to Bruthen, Misho occasionally taking the lead.

At Bruthen I looked to the hills to see dark clouds; not rain but definitely wet. We had just done a fair bit of highway and my body seemed to enjoy that riding position better. I was basically lying on the tank, occasionally stretching my legs and wrists. I was not sure if I could handle any more twisties, so I spoke with some of the boys about heading straight down the highway and home. My brain had stopped working and I needed others to assist me with my thoughts. I spoke with Ben and he wished me luck. We had seen a few patrol cars on the freeway, and it was the Monday of the long weekend so they would be out in force.

After good-byes I set off realising I had to keep my eyes peeled. I took advantage of the fact that I was a sole bike and cut through the traffic. Groups stand out more when they do this. Most cars played the game well, but you always have those who don't. I saw three radar traps on my side of the road, and two on the other, and passed all one km/h under the limit. Despite that, I got home in good time.

Thanks to all for another fantastic weekend away. You're a great crew to ride and hang with. I feel safe and looked after. I thank you all for waiting for me when I'm slow; it's comforting to know eventually I will see a familiar helmet and bike pointing the way. There were so, so many jokes and other stories that happened on the trip.

Special thanks to Ben for all the work he did; it makes the trip so much easier. They really are fantastic roads and it was a great weekend away. I'll be back...

**Nigel Oman**