

Diary off a Fly In Fly Out (FIFO) rider MSR Xmas Camp 2012



Back in August I entertained the idea of coming over for the annual Club Xmas Camp and boy I'm glad I made it across. My partner Bron had to work during that period while my work shuts down, so I came alone. Ian Payne and Paul Southwell offered to help with transport and gave me a room to stay. Finally, the *Club Princess* (Pina) insisted I ride her CBR600 and after much arm twisting, I agreed. Many thanks to my second family for helping out and allowing me far more riding time than I first thought possible. Love ya heaps!

I flew into Melbourne on Boxing Day to be greeted by Paul and we drove back to his place to wait for Ian before we set off in convoy. Our first stop was at Mansfield for a bite to eat and then on to camp. Pina and Bel were already there along with Ben and Julie Warden, Ron and Julie Johnston, Cliffy Peters, Peter Feistl and Kurn Bridgeman. Gear unpacked and a coin toss on where to sleep? (I lost!) The top bunk for me.

The nightly trip up Mt Buffalo saw me on the mighty 600 being chased by Misho with Pina on the back. A great run but it has been a little while since I was last up here, not to mention riding someone else's 600, so I was cautious. Paul put on a great BBQ and then I had an early night after getting up at 4am that morning.

Next day saw a trip over Mt Hotham with a quick stop at Danny's Lookout and a cuppa at Dinner Plain. The weather was perfect and road surface was not melting just yet. We took a detour via Cassilis Road down to Swifts Creek and then back for fuel/lunch at Omeo. Omeo Bakery has changed hands and is not as good, so I ordered lunch down the road.

Next stop Falls Creek via a lookout for the usual picture taking. Pina, on the back of Misho, and I carved up the road to Anglers Rest at a great pace. I heard something about checking out the road to Mitta Mitta but when I saw John and Lou at the Falls Creek turnoff, around I went. After realising my mistake I couldn't be bothered turning around so ate an ice cream and waited for the crew at Falls Creek. When they arrived, we rode up to the back of town to the local bar for the usual cuppa and bullshit session with the main topic of conversation Peter Pan's (Panigale) hairbrush fetish.

Down Falls Creek mountain we go except I'm now on the 1000 with the Princess on the back. It's great to have a little more power I must say! I did see a Lotus sportscar on its roof in the ditch! Makes a change from seeing a crashed bike. [*Turns out it was Club member Eric Makin's car club and the crasher was right behind Eric at the time. ...Ed.*] We stopped for a breather at Bogong Village and later at the top of Tawonga Gap before finally heading back to camp.

For dinner we went to a local Indian/Italian restaurant which was okay, and then on to the Bright Brewery for a couple of drinks. Ian, Paul, Pete, Kurn and I were present.

Next morning I was up early for a walk to the roundabout and back followed by the traditional tent shaking to wake Bel and Pina. I'm a bastard, I know.

Today's ride was to Mitta Mitta via Tawonga Gap and Dartmouth Dam. After lunch at Mitta we retraced our steps. I took Ian's new Blade for a spin to check out his new Ohlin suspension mods and gave him my thoughts. After fitting an Ohlin's shock to the rear of my Blade a few weeks later back in Tassy, it was great to take the setting changes I made to Ian's bike and apply them to mine, though I haven't ridden it yet!

It was a great run over Tawonga Gap with Cliffy, Misho, Pina and I. I love this road and it's even better when the cars get off the road for us to pass. Isn't that right Cliffy?

Dinner that night was in Myrtleford which was entertaining to say the least...

Next day I had Pina on the back for the trip to Mt Beauty. Just out of town I suggested that she should take her bike up to Falls Creek with the rest of the riders while I had coffee and cake at the bakery. I was happy to rest and she was happy to get a ride on her bike. Paul, Ian and John joined me and after a little while they left me to head over to Myrtleford.

I waited on the grass under a tree in the median strip on the main road for the others to return from Falls Creek. I had a pleasant snooze before Ben came by, spotted me, and stopped to regroup the troops. While waiting for the others to arrive, a local guy by on a ZX10 went past, in no rush for a chat as the local 4WD copper was after him. Mr Plod pulled over and asked if we knew him, what sort of bike, what colour bike. Of course we didn't know anything to which the copper replied "Typical!" I wonder what he meant by that?

I'm now back on a bike for the run over to the Myrtleford Bakery with Pina pillion passenger. At the Bakery we were met by the one and only Rob Jones!! On not the type off bike that he should be riding but at least he had a bike, unlike me. Pina took her bike for the last leg to Lake Buffalo and the long way back to camp avoiding the highway while I managed a spin on the back of John Willis returning directly to camp. The weather was too warm for me and besides, I had done more riding this trip than all year back in Hobart!

Back in Bright it was great to see my KTM buddy Peter Hill and Lyn Duncan. It's been a long time since I have seen them. Also Muddy [*Steve Mudford ...Ed.*] arrived too.

Next day was a rest day for me. Ian thought it would be a great idea too as his usual body pains were causing him grief. The plan was to head into town on the push bikes (thanks Robbie for the loan) via the first cafe in Porepunkah. While I was there I booked a table at the pub for the New Years dinner. Lou joined us too while John and Robbie were off on their dirt bikes for the day.

We engaged in plenty of chat and coffee before the next leg over to a cafe in Bright which I have been to before. After that Lou headed to the shops for supplies and both Ian and I had a sweet spot to fill, so off to another cafe for dessert. Tough life, these holidays! We regrouped for a leisurely ride back to camp. Lou made comment that Ian and I had a Mothers' Club meeting all the way home! Gossip to catch up on, I say.

A few months ago I was in contact with Peter Feistl because he wanted info on Ducatis because I have owned a few in the past. He planned to buy the new Panigale and after getting the info he was after he promised me a ride on the Melbourne Cup trip. But as usual with a bike on order from Italy it was a no-show. But now at the Xmas Camp and with the right miles clocked up, he stuck to his word and off I go up Mt Buffalo on the Panigale. Mmm! I want but can't have. Peter, thanks heaps!

My last day of riding and we were in for a treat: Tawonga Gap, Tallangatta, Granya Gap, and new roads (for me) over to the Lake Hume. We even had Ern Reeders along for part of the ride.

I had a great run with Steve Mudford over Granya where I had the little 600 on the boil. (Sorry Pina!) After working our way along brilliant roads to Bethanga Bridge and nearly Old Tallangatta, it was back across Granya Gap for a break at Tallangatta before heading down the Omeo Highway. We turned off before Eskdale onto the brilliant Lockart Gap Road and then over to Happy Valley to the Myrtleford Bakery. Highway back to camp to finish. A fantastic ride.

I spent New Years evening at the Pub with the gang and then back to camp for laughs. As usual, I was in bed before the New Year kicked in.

New Years Day did not start well as I had picked up the "Sydney2012" gastro bug and I was quite ill. Paul was keen to get away early so a quick goodbye to everyone and then the long trip down the freeway including a few chucks on the side off the road!

I tried to get on an earlier flight but no go, so I had a sleep at Paul and Jo's house which helped. I couldn't wait to get back home but I didn't think the airline was going to let me on when I asked to be near the toilets! Plenty of questions followed about why I wasn't well. I bluffed them as not only did I get near the dunny but I had the full three seats to myself for a sleep!

Home at last. I took two days off work and another week to get over the gastro. Did I mention I lost 5kg?

Apart from the last bit I had a great time with MSR and can't thank everybody enough for their help, bikes, food etc. Special thanks to my new sister Pina for her bike and laughs.

Thanks to Ben for the leading and to the many rear riders that made the days progress well with no incidents.

For those that are coming over to Tassie in March I look forward to seeing you in my backyard and this time I will have my own bike!

Tassie Dave Ward