



## Mt Baw Baw      Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2013

Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Geoff Jones	Yamaha R1
Ian Payne	Honda CBR1000	Fred Stolk	Yamaha R1
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Bek Harper (1 <sup>st</sup> ride)	Yamaha R6
Tim Emons	Honda CBR1000	Cliff Peters	Kawasaki ZX10
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	John Willis	Kawasaki Z1000
Adrian MacGeraghty (2 <sup>nd</sup> ride)	Honda CBR600	Jason Wilson	Kawasaki ZX9
Paul Milo (1 <sup>st</sup> ride)	BMW K1200RS	Glenn Aspden	Suzuki GSXR1000
Dave Chisma	BMW F800ST	Eric Makin (1 <sup>st</sup> ride)	Suzuki GSXR750
Rob Langer (rear)	BMW F700GS	Cindy Lee	Triumph 675
Paul Robinson	KTM RC8R	Max McGrath (1 <sup>st</sup> ride)	Triumph 675

This was my first trip up Mt Baw Baw. The forecast was for morning cloud clearing to a bright and sunny 28 degrees so the choice of clothing was obvious: perforated! Perforated leather one-piece suit, perforated summer boots and perforated summer gloves. I've also managed to figure out how to squeeze a mobile phone and wallet in the tiny tail section with the visor spray and cloth: a neoprene (wet suit material) "digicase" from the Katmandu outdoor adventure shop. Fits perfectly.

I left home a bit earlier than planned, so I arrived near the meeting point at Yarra Glen an hour before the start. I decided I had enough time for a lap around the block, so I took the direct route to Healesville and went for a quick spurt up the tight stuff through Toolangi and back down the Melba Highway to Yarra Glen. That took about 40 minutes so I was back in time to get some fuel and have a chat with some new guys before the start at 10am.

One of the new guys, Adrian MacGeraghty, I recognised from a ride with another club about year ago. And there was Paul Robinson on a new KTM RC8 with "Air Asia" race-style fairing markings. Paul purchased the KTM as his first road bike. "What?! Your first bike is a 1200cc V-Twin!? Are you crazy?!" I was relieved to discover he used to race motocross, so he wasn't exactly a learner, just a newbie on a sportsbike. Paul's riding proved he is well capable of handling a sportsbike.

Ben gave his usual pre-ride spiel about where we were going, fuel stops, food stops and other formalities, including the usual "Who will write the ride report?" question, to which I don't think I've ever seen anyone volunteer. Everyone quickly looks away, avoiding eye contact with Ben and thinking "Don't pick me, I'm not looking, don't pick me". Just then a fly flew past my face and I made the mistake of swatting it. Ben shouted "That'll do me! Your hand's up! Glenn's writing the article!" And before I could protest there was a roar of laughter as everyone quickly rushed to their bikes before the decision changed.

The trip to Yarra Junction, through Healesville, was fairly quick. The weather was still cool and refreshing. The ride got more fun from Yarra Junction to Noojee: it's a very pleasing road in great condition with some tight corners and some long, fast sweepers. When we stopped at Noojee for a quick drink and snack I had a chat to new guy Paul Milo on a BMW K1200RS who had come all the way from Kilmore. He was clearly having lots of fun already because he said he would normally travel quite a bit slower.

We were joined at Noojee by Fred who was usually with Yvonne but Yvonne decided the Icy Creek Road was too dangerous.

One of the new guys, Max McGrath, on a Triumph 675 Daytona had done a great job keeping up with us until then, but he left us at Noojee, as agreed with Ben the night before, for the same reason – the Mt Baw Baw Road is dangerous and not suitable for first time Club riders.. And Ben was right. The next part of the road going up Mt Baw Baw was in a shocking state of disrepair. Potholes all over the place. I remember thinking to myself "Why on earth would we ride on this road?" But it all became clear soon after. Once we were all safely through a few kilometres of the worst stuff it settled back into a reasonably good road again.

Ben had warned us in the beginning to watch out because it gets tighter and steeper as we head up the mountain. And some of the corners were a bit unexpected. At one place, in my peripheral vision, I thought I saw the road straighten out, so I started opening the throttle to accelerate only to find what I thought was the road was a gravel side-road going straight up a bank! The tar sealed road went sharp right! I think only a motorcyclist knows what I mean by "slamming on the brakes as gently as possible". You can't grab full brakes or you'll lock the front wheel and slide off the road. You have to be patient - but at lightning pace. Grab gently for the initial bite, front drops loading the tyre, squeeze as hard as you dare, rear wheel starts moving around, then ease the brake off gently as you increase your lean angle at the same rate. All in under 2.5 seconds. Thank goodness for Brembo brakes. It's certainly not a road for inexperienced riders.

At the top we stopped for a bit of a chat and a group photo before we were off again down the same road. It was a little easier on the way down. I had Misho on the yellow CBR pointing out potholes and branches with his feet. Left foot comes out, there's a branch. Right foot comes out, there's a pothole. I was doing the same for the guy behind me too. This went on for a while and the potholes got bigger as we descended, Misho's feet still coming out left, right, right, left. Then Misho lifted BOTH feet at once! I was so busy laughing at Misho with his legs in the air that I nearly went into one of the crater-sized pot-holes on either side of his bike. Hilarious.

Back to lunch at Noojee, our group spread across both coffee shops on opposite sides of the road. Cindy, Eric and Bek left us here because the Berwick ride finish was too far from home. The rest of us got back on our bikes for the home stretch. A quick fuel stop at Neerim Junction for those who needed it before we were off through Neerim East, Neerim South and Jindivick to Longwarry North.

Just before Longwarry North there's a great bit of road with some tight turns mixed in with long, fast straights. Unfortunately, there were road works in a couple of places. At one stage I was screaming along one of the straights and I saw the rider a fair way ahead of me slow down for some gravel and dirt the width of the road. I chopped the throttle and started applying the brakes. Paul Robinson on the KTM and another rider hadn't seen the gravel and went screaming past me before realising and slamming on their brakes. As we all approached together I saw a large mound in the gravel, right in their path! It was too late for brakes; both bikes went over the mound and flew a foot into the air! That KTM sure can fly; Air Asia would be proud! Both riders controlled their bikes well so there were a few laughs when we got to Officer South.

There's something quite satisfying about having your bike covered in insects from a good day on the road. The official ride was 270km to Officer South. Thanks again, MSR. I had a blast.

**Glenn Aspden**