



Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Phil Hotschilt	Suzuki GSXR1300
Simon Wastney	Honda VFR800	Glenn Aspden (lead)	Suzuki GSXR1000
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Steve Mudford	Suzuki GSXR1000
Jesvin George	Honda CBR600	Tony Stegmar	Suzuki GSXR1000
Garry Boucher	Kawasaki ZX14	Chris Pointon	Suzuki GSXR1000
Quinn Myers	Kawasaki ZX14	Ken King	Suzuki GSXR1000
Cliff Peters	Kawasaki ZX10	Travis Condon (1 st ride)	Yamaha R1
John Willis	Kawasaki ZX9	Geoff Jones (rear)	Yamaha R1
Michael Srb	BMW S1000RR	Rob Kolbeck (3 rd ride)	Aprilia RSV1000
Rod Merrett	BMW S1000RR	Stuart Hosking	Aprilia RSV4
Rob Langer	BMW F700	Pierre Ong	Aprilia RSV4
Cindy Lee	Triumph 675	Peter Fisher	KTM 1090

24 bikes, 24people

The day had rolled around for Glenn's first experience as ride leader and I thought the least I could do was show my support by riding the incredible distance from home, (taking all of about six minutes), especially as we had an extra hour's kip last night due to Daylight Savings. Then Glenn produced those magic few words, "Guys, at the end of today's ride we're coming back to Yarra Glen to finish up, not Officer as stated in the magazine, because I live just up the road." Now that's my kind of ride leader. More of the same please Glenn.

There was an excellent turnout: 24 riders including two new guys. It was good to see Geoff Jones who, like Cliffy, really does have a long trip to get to Yarra Glen. Commitment! The weather was looking great with a maximum of 27° forecast. It was warm and sunny already as we headed off.

Over the far side of Melba Highway, I was dawdling along looking off to the left to a 200 acre farm property I know well. There were my mates, pursuing my other hobby at the model flying club, on this calm morning. Shame I can't be in two places at once.

Heading up Chum Creek Road out of Healesville is a bit like waiting for the chequered flag to drop: past the houses, then the primary school, until finally those ripper corners start to get eaten up in ever increasing rapidity, until for me, about two thirds up, I'm caught up at the back of a 10-odd bike freight train with a couple of bikes up the front taking it very easy. Guys, how hard is it to let other riders through and not spoil their fun? Plenty more fun to come throughout the day, so I back off.

Down the other side, I'm taking no prisoners and make up for lost time passing a couple of cars and several "two up" cruiser-type bikes, mere speed humps on the way to biking Nirvana.

There's one little section three quarters of the way down that has always upset my previous bikes when I'm on the pace. You come over an almost invisible rise in the road, then straight into a right/left kink with the bike all unloaded and light. But on the new Kwaka, it feels much less likely to let go on me, which is nice, as there's an Armco barrier on your left at this point.

A quick fuel stop in Healesville feels odd, but is needed by the few thirsty machines amongst us.

Rod said there is a speed camera on the road out to Woori Yallock. He came past it on his way to the start line, oops, I mean Yarra Glen, so we all take it steadily.

In Don Valley the road is wet. Bugger. While I was corner-marking, someone accelerated hard from the intersection and came very close to going home for an early bath. A big handful of throttle on a wet road resulted in fishtailing which is not good for the dry cleaning bill! It was a very close thing.

Launching Place township is not somewhere we usually visit, normally skirting around the back. Today we were treated to the smell of a coal-fired traction engine chugging along in front of us. I wonder what the designers of these lovely old pieces of machinery would make of our bikes and the horses under the bonnets.

It's getting wetter. Time to flick the traction control and power modes down a notch. Switching is done on the move, but only with the throttle completely closed. These features and the ABS, (safety, safety, can't get enough of it) are the reasons I bought the ZX10. Oh yeah, and the awesome everything else.

If I hadn't volunteered for the write-up, I could disappear now, and get some stuff done at home. But nah, don't be a sook. But I've just cleaned and polished my new bike and now it's in the rain for the first time. And I've got no wet weather gear. I know it'll dry up soon ... Look! The roads are drying and there's nothing trickling down my neck. All good!

The break at Noojee sees the ones in the know chowing down on the now-famous chicken, avocado, cheese and salad rolls, and not too bad a coffee. Rear rider Geoff and I talk about the benefits of the clear plastic protective bike coatings, and running over fallen rider's ankles - see previous write-up. There's one of those three-wheel CanAm trikes parked across the road, side on to us. I hadn't realised how huge they are compared to a standard bike. We had surrounded him. The owners came out and saddled up, looking as though they were not at all comfortable on the beast, yet.

It's not a bad place to be; out in the hills and bush, even when the roads keep fluctuating between bone dry, damp and outright wet. I'm having fun, even taking it easy, and couldn't give a rat's who goes by. I'm enjoying the day, the scenery, the smells, the time of year, never on the pace if it's not completely dry. But wait, the road has dried up again, and we're off up the mountain to Mt Baw Baw. I awaken from my slumber as Rod on the Beemer and Steve on the stealth bomber go by. I pass a couple of riders too, Robby and Tony, and then get caught up behind Garry on the 14 and Phil on the Bussa, until Garry yields. I get by Phil on a very wet corner, and I'm clear ahead, only to be put off by big time pins and needles in my right hand. Note to self: soften up the pre-load on the front a tad more at the next stop. These roads are so much fun, ducking and weaving around the pot

holes, gravel, road works, sticks and leaves, but they take it out on your wrists. A very delicate constitution have I, till I get a crow bar in my hands.

Cool at the top for the re-group. I'm glad I kept the lining in the perforated leathers after all, but even so the fan's doing its job after we're caught at the lights for road works near the top. Pre-load unloaded, and down from whence we came, we went, if you follow my drift.

After corner marking, I find myself between Ben and Cliffy, and much enjoyment was being had. About two thirds of the way down, there's Rod gesticulating profusely, running towards us, so that we didn't run over his pride and joy, which had decided to have a little lie down. It's obvious he's fine, and I think, well the bike's not too bad either; it's still on the bitumen as opposed to having gone gardening. There's heaps of others already stopped, so I keep on keeping on.

The guys already back at Noojee were wondering where everyone was until I told them of Rod's mishap not far back. I wouldn't normally make light of an accident but he was fine and the Beemer had a mere flesh wound. Oggy knobs to the rescue. Rod's main concern was whether he could get the bike's minor damage patched up in time for a track day in two weeks. Apparently, they don't like bikes hurtling about the place with bits flapping in the breeze.

Ken King joined us for the afternoon session here. I've never ridden with Ken before. Oh yeah, I forgot, Tony had new bits on his Suzy, returning it back to its preferred condition: mint!

As we left Noojee again looking for fuel, I found myself leading a few of our team, but following about eight Harleys, the last one with the full-on ape hangers and highway pegs. They always make me think of the Clint Eastwood movie, "Every which way but loose," with Clyde the orangutan. I must watch that film again soon.

At Neerim Junction there's only one fuel bowser, so it's going to take a while to fill all the bikes. That's just another opportunity for a yarn. Ben takes charge of the pump, while the owner writes down each dollar amount on a slip of paper for each of us to pay in the store. Very efficient.

The ride back to Powelltown was its usual blur with the roads dry and the sun ducking in and out from behind the clouds. My '10's steering damper was now set for this faster stuff, just in case the front end got a wee bit light over the undulations.

At Powelltown I get a phone call for work in ... Powelltown. Thanks for the loan of a pen, Pina.

By the time everyone's ready for the last stint back to Yarra Glen, I'm only just ready for an ice cream. So Robby and I sit for 20 minutes on our own, solving the world's problems, and talking over our future-planned dirt bike trips, both local, (well, Dargo's not that far) and possible an overseas trip to the South Island of NZ next Easter to coincide with the International Air Show at Wanaka which is supposed to be excellent. I love a good air show. Robby did a South American bike trip recently which the tour owner is going to repeat in September 2014. It sounds amazing. I would love to do that too, funds allowing. Maybe around \$10 000, but it's the trip of a lifetime, just ask Rob.

Thanks Glenn and all the competitors for a great day. I got home fairly early thankfully, as it gets dark by 6-ish. Winter is on the way which will give me a chance to do some house renovating over the coming months. I bought a great fixer-upper; it was the huge garage that sold me on the joint.

John Willis