

Steve Mudford	Suzuki GSXR1000	Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000
Glenn Aspden	Suzuki GSXR1000	Misho Zrakic/Pina Garasi	Honda CBR1000
Jody Stalenberg (2 nd ride)	Suzuki GSXR1000	Ian Payne	Honda CBR1000
Ravi Gnanaiah (1 st ride)	Yamaha R1	Alex Nadelyaev	Honda CBR1000
Dave Chisma	BMW F800 ST	Mirko Strasser	Honda CBR600
Rob Langer (lead)	BMW F700 GS	Simon Wastney (rear)	Honda VFR800

I wasn't originally planning to join MSR for a ride on ANZAC day, but with the weather looking so good and no real plans with the family, I decided it was an opportunity too good to miss. And I'm glad I went; it was a great day (for most).

I enjoy starting at Whittlesea as it's not far from my home in Doncaster and the ride starts with some fantastic sweepers all the way to Flowerdale. The road has a coarse texture which gives excellent grip and is almost without potholes, ridges and malformations until you get close to Flowerdale.

I started up the front with Ben (leading) so I was marking the corner with Steve Mudford on the turn off to Strath Creek. The group was fairly small so it didn't take long for everyone to come through. Now that we were off the main road I was able to open the throttle a bit and have some fun, quickly accelerating past the main group. I'm always a bit cautious on that road to Strath Creek though: there are a few bumps that can kick the bike off line when taken at speed. Steve came flying past me, as usual.

There were three corner markers at Strath Creek. Steve had obviously joined Misho (with Pina on board) and someone else I didn't see. I cruised past alone and headed towards Broadford. That was the last time I saw Steve. I was corner marking in Broadford and heard about a slight mishap Steve had losing the front on the first right hand steep uphill 25 km/h corner that we all love to scream up.

After Broadford the roads turn into the single, sealed lane variety. I like these roads out the back of Broadford: the scenery is great and the roads are in good condition. The back roads we took from Pyalong to Lancefield were fantastic but a little bumpy for those of us on standard suspension. I was corner marking with Rob Langer at one point when a car we'd passed earlier went by and waved with a smile. We both had a bit of a chuckle while commenting that the Holden ute was going surprisingly fast out in the middle of nowhere (when we passed him, obviously).

At Lancefield it was still very cold. Pina made no secret in telling us she thought we were a bunch of nutters sitting on the bakery's seats in the shade, so most of us moved up into the sun at the picnic table. It helped a little, but my fingers were still a bit numb when we took off again. I've noticed if I leave my gloves sitting on the mirrors of the bike that the sun alone is enough to make them very warm, even when the wind is very cold, so my hands were fine when we got going. I nearly forgot to mention the pie - the curried mince pie from the bakery in Lancefield is terrific! It's exactly what you need to warm up. I was pleasantly surprised by the good level of chilli - you don't normally get good chilli-heat in that sort of pie. I will definitely get one of those on my next visit.

Rob Langer left us at this point, needing to get home for a dirt bike trip to Dargo. Lucky for some.

After half a day of riding my ability to tell one road from another starts to decline. I definitely remember going over the dam at Lake Eppalock; that was both interesting and a little scenic. As we got closer to Heathcote, being a wine area, the "farm" houses became quite spectacular. You can tell it's a wealthy area because even the rustic barns are well kept and look tidy. No car graveyards with overgrown grass up to the windows.

Our bite to eat in Heathcote was entertaining. Misho was doing his best to ask me about a suspension book I've got but was over-shadowed by Ben and Pina's deeply philosophical recollection of younger years spent at Church. Next time you see them be sure to ask Ben about his experience as an altar boy and ask Pina what she thinks of Priests and their preferences. The suspension book is very good. Misho, next time I pop in to see Andrew in hospital, I'll see if he's finished it yet, and if so I'll bring it along for you. It may be nearly time for Andrew to get out of hospital. I hear the TAC have built a ramp at Tim Emon's house so he can get his bike into his lounge when he gets out of his wheelchair. Who knows; maybe the TAC will do something like that for me sometime. I hope not.

Dave, on the blue BMW, left us at Heathcote as we sped off down the highway to Tooborac, Emu Flat and back to Pyalong. I remember thinking Tooborac was a pretty little town.

Soon after Pyalong I came across a fantastic right-hander with an adjoining road coming from the left and thought, "Hmm, this looks really familiar!" After a few more corners I realised we were definitely on one of those great roads we rode in the morning. I'm not surprised; it was great fun.

My favourite road is West Road linking Emu Flat to Pyalong. It is a sweeping road through open farmland with lots of grip and no potholes. The odd bit of yellow sandy gravel mid-corner gives you a bit of a fright, but apart from that it, is great fun.

One of my favourite parts of the day was following Ben from Romsey to Wallan, with Pina and Misho behind me. We came across a few Harley Davidsons who clearly thought they were going pretty fast. Ben passed them along the straight and I went around the outside of them on a fast left-hander (safely, with plenty of visibility). Apparently, they weren't too happy and one of them kicked out as Misho and Pina flew past them. They didn't stop to "chat" when I was corner marking in Wallan, so they can't have been too upset. When we stopped we commented that they were actually moving pretty fast for a bunch of cruisers.

We had a couple of newish riders with us, Ravi and Jody, who kept up very well, without incident. It was great to have you along and I hope to see you again. It was 340km from Whittlesea to Wallan.

Glenn Aspden