



Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Steve Mudford	Suzuki GSXR1000
Ian Payne	Honda CBR1000	Cliff Peters (leader)	Suzuki GSXR1000
Nigel Oman	Honda CBR1000	Chris Kioseoglou (2 nd ride)	Suzuki TL1000S
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Ed Simonis	BMW K1200R
Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Geoff Dick	BMW 850R
Damir Djikic	Honda CBR1000	Rob Langer	KTM 990
Scott Bowden	Honda CBR1000	Geoff Jones (rear)	Yamaha R1
Jesvin George	Honda CBR600	Marc Marais	Kawasaki ZX10
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Andre Dreszga (1 st ride)	Ducati 900
Paul Gilmartin	Honda CBR600		
Michael MacRae	Honda CBR600		<i>20 bikes, 20 people</i>

It was a cloudy, wet morning. There was a message on my phone saying free tyres... well that's the part I saw. Is that enough words? Do I get my ticket now? Oh the ride, hmm... as I was saying, a cloudy wet morning. The forecast was for a dry day so I thought to pack light and leave the wet gear behind. I sent the word to Ben to bring my sexy MSR T-shirts, a black and a white one.

We met at Whittlesea. I was one of the first there, but very quickly the place was buzzing with bikes. Lots of the usual crew were there, well those with licences, not recovering from oopses, and who's bikes were on the road. There were 20 riders, and as usual, some I didn't know. One great thing about the Sunday rides is that there are always lots of happy testosterone faces (besides Pina's, obviously) wanting to talk about bikes. It sets the energy level for the ride.

Cliffy called us all together and described the route for the day. President Ian Payne talked about how I can get some free tyres by doing the ride report and going into a raffle which I would certainly win... what a great idea. Unfortunately, others were listening and someone even volunteered to write an article - a rare sight indeed. I was a bit scared about this sudden change in attitude, and I'm sure I heard someone say they did a small wee.... Warning: I foresee a flurry of words flying to the Editor just before the due date, racing for the tyres. Oh, and there was some pre-ride talk about leader, tail person, first aid, and tyres. Did I mention the tyres?

The sun had chased most clouds away and we were set to go. It was the usual blast out of the servo, through and around the locals and tourists, and into the hills. The roads into Kinglake West have these optional signs advising cars to slow to a constant pace for us to carve our way into warp speed as the tyres warm... oh that clever State Government.

The roads to Flowerdale, Strath Creek, and Highlands to Seymour were in great condition. They were mostly dry, clear of cars and Mr Plod and friends. I was having trouble with this section, despite knowing these roads. I recently upgraded my helmet with a new visor. I was used to riding with sun glasses. Not sure what was going on, but anything shiny on the road looked like oil. When the road surface changed it looked wet, oily and dangerous. I would feel my survival reactions kicking in fast and I would jump on the brakes. Poor Geoff was probably wondering what was going on. I assumed there was some reaction occurring between whatever coating was on my visor and my Polaroid glasses. Thankfully, the riders I was following set a nice pace on the main roads - showing me that the path ahead was clear!

I'm getting close to joining those who lose their licences in the wonderful bonus points system... get enough points and... I don't need to finish the sentence.

At the break my glasses went into the bag. Everything was now much brighter - almost too bright. But the sun was high in the sky, and it was time to put up or shut up. The roads now looked normal and I was finally not slowing Geoff and the ride down. However, from Seymour till Trentham East I had no idea where I was. I'm sure we went through Pyalong, there was some dirt - oh yeah, Cliff mentioned that when we were talking about the tyres in the tyre/pre-ride briefing... On MSR rides, we have to suffer 1-5 minutes of dirt to reach the best, deserted, road/race tracks around. Nice one boys.

Lunch at Kyneton was great. The MSR knows the best places to stop in these one horse towns. There were lots of conversations going on; one was about how Ducatis make fuel. Someone added that Ben claims Honda's make fuel as well. Being a fellow Honda owner, and noticing how far I get when my out-of-fuel countdown starts, I am inclined to agree with him. But maybe that's a discussion for Cup Weekend. Are you going? You should. It is a race track set in the Lord of the Rings environment... the best. And to those going... sweet! I can't wait! See you there! *[29 starters at last count ...Ed.]*

After leaving Kyneton some roads seemed familiar. Then I saw it, the *Pig and Whistle*. Hey, now I know where I am! I've been this way once before. I remembered the great winding 80 km/h road and long straights and I opened the throttle that bit more and started to chase down my fellow riders, rather than just being the prey. Feeling more comfortable, and with the assistance of fast riders having to corner mark, I was racing my way along the back roads.

We stopped at Woodend. Most of the breaks were long, this one a bit longer. One of the steel horses wanted to rest more than the ride allowed. A team of keen helpers could not get things going in time, so the ride continued, leaving a comrade behind, but not alone. I'm sure Ben stayed but unsure who else. By the next break a few bikes had left the ride.

The roads from Woodend to Clarkefield are great. Unfortunately, I just don't know them well enough. Fatigue was setting in, more sunlight than I was use to was adding to the problem. So I was keen to get to the finish at Bulla.

From Clarkefield the traffic really picked up. I slowed down because where there are lots of cars on sunny days, Mr Plod visits... but in true MSR style, a stallion blasted past and I accepted the invitation that the coast "might be clear". I joined the pursuit of the main pack in the distance, catching the tail before turning off to weave through back roads with narrow straights, the occasional bend and roundabout until noticing low flying planes very close. Arrived Bulla and the airport viewing carpark.

Another fantastic ride. Thanks Cliffy for leading, and Geoff for his outstanding tail rider duties. I hope your bike is run in soon. And thanks to all who were on the ride, - it's great riding with you all. See you on a ride soon. Travel safe and hard, in true MSR style...

Nigel Oman

Steve Mudford and I caught up to the gang at the finish, only five minutes after they had arrived, following the same route – Straws Lane, Bolinda, Wild Dog Road. ...Ed.