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|---------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Honda CBR1000 | Ben Warden (leader)                  | Ewan Haig (1 <sup>st</sup> ride)        | Suzuki GSXR1300 |
| Honda CBR1000 | Dave Byrne                           | Ron Johnston                            | Suzuki GSX1250  |
| Honda CBR1000 | Misho Zrakic                         | Jeff Beaton (1 <sup>st</sup> ride)      | Suzuki GSXR1000 |
| Honda CBR1000 | Tony Stegmar                         | Dean Bonthorne                          | Suzuki GSXR750  |
| Honda CBR1000 | Paul Southwell                       | Raphael Alikakos (1 <sup>st</sup> ride) | Suzuki SV650    |
| Honda VTR1000 | Alistair Sobotker (1 <sup>st</sup> ) | Quinn Myers                             | Kawasaki ZX14   |
| Honda CBR929  | Scott Bowden (1 <sup>st</sup> ride)  | Aiden Baker                             | Kawasaki ZX10   |
| Honda CBR600  | Roman Biaroza                        | John Willis                             | Kawasaki Z1000  |
| Honda CBR600  | Pina Garasi                          | Rod Merrett                             | BMW S1000RR     |
| Honda CBR600  | Jesvin George                        | John Innes (1 <sup>st</sup> ride)       | Yamaha FZ600    |
| Aprilia RSV4  | Dave Williams                        | Tom McKenzie (1 <sup>st</sup> ride)     | Aprilia 750     |
| Honda CBR600  | Dennis Lindemann                     | Rod Silver (rear)                       | KTM RC8         |
| Honda CBR250  | Luke Innes (1 <sup>st</sup> ride)    | Peter Jones                             | MV Augusta F4   |

I usually don't write these articles because I am always concentrating on the road and don't remember much of the ride, or anyone on it for that matter. It is like step by step, or should I say, corner by corner, where I just focus on what is coming next. I have to forget about how much that last corner scared the crap out of me in order to make the next one. Since having the Aprilia I always seem to have my brown undies on. So did Misho, which you will read about later in this article. It was moment in time when I felt many emotions.

I arrived in Yarra Glen around 9:30am and headed up to the petrol station at the other end of town to get 98 octane premium petrol and then back to the florist. I was a little cold though I knew it was going to be a great day and it wouldn't be long before the sun started to work its magic making the past cold winter months a distant memory.

Rod arrived next and then they all came rolling in over the next 20 minutes making 23 bikes in total, including five first time riders. Honda was the manufacture of choice. Considering my 2008

CBR600RR was recently stolen, it made me sad. Then I looked over at my new Aprilia RSV4 and the pain just faded away. Very quickly, I might add.

We picked up another three first time riders at Warburton, making a total of 26 riders for the day. These three only stayed with us across the Reefton and up to Eildon, heading home after lunch.

On your bike! The time had come to head off as the day started to warm up. In usual style, bike after bike peeled on to the road, leaving the Florist behind, heading to Healesville and Warburton.

It was great to be back out on the road riding again in a large pack, especially after finally getting my suspension sorted. It was time to finally test this new Aprilia, or for it to test me!

As the day got older, it got warmer, then hot. Ah, how I've missed the sun. At Marysville I started to wish I had brought a bag as I needed to take some clothes off. Things were really heating up!

For the first part of the ride I seemed to feel as if I was totally alone, just me and my bike on these great Victorian roads, the reason I moved back down here. I know this article is just about me but that is all I remember of the ride, me and my bike, and the great roads.

We stopped at Eildon for lunch and a splash of petrol. Steamed dim sims, a Coke and a smoke later we were on our way again, heading up to Fraser National Park and on to Alexandra and Yarck. As the rear rider and I were leaving I noticed Jes still putting on his helmet. I let the rear rider know as I don't think he had seen Jes. Then we were off again!

The next part of the ride was the best part of the ride for me – Gobur, Caveat, Highlands – with wide open corners you could see around. Down to Seymour, across to Trawool and on to Tallarook was a blur.

Just before the reshaped T-junction at the Seymour Pyalong Road, I saw Misho on his yellow CBR in my mirrors. I kept going, giving him every opportunity to pass. Up came the 25km left hand corner on to the bridge. I slowed down and motioned for Misho to overtake me, which he duly did, lofting the front wheel skywards. The CBR's mirrors seemed to be facing downwards and the headlight searching for clouds, of which there were none, for a tad too long.

The road kinks right at the top of the hill, immediately followed by dead-stop T-intersection, just over the crest. It is a blind corner and very dangerous. Even more so on one wheel, one would imagine. Misho recognised imminent disaster – too late! He managed to get the front back down but with no room or chance to steer or brake ...

The CBR's back wheel kicked out, motocross style. Under panic braking conditions, obstacles to be avoided included the two corner markers with a deer-in-a-headlight look in their eyes, a mint ZX10 motorcycle strategically parked pointing in the direction of the ride, a Give Way sign mounted on a steel post, and a grassy knoll (aka, a jump!).

One corner marker, moving like a thousand startled gazelles, managed a step to the left, allowing Misho to split the gap between the ZX10 and the Give Way sign allowing a straight shot at the grassy knoll. Next, both bike and rider were airborne, the main road T-intersection still to be negotiated, followed by a barb wire fence, and any inconveniently placed motor vehicles ... Misho noted later that he did look for oncoming vehicles mid-air (none), and then identified various crash end points, now fighting the corner and severe banking and miscellaneous gravel. And then it was over.

Misho successfully negotiated the corner, pulled up and turned around. All was well. He jumped off the bike holding his behind, the grassy knoll compressing the suspension, smashing the bike into his bum with great force and resulting pain. I was crying with laughter, the two corner markers and Misho in hysterics over the great outcome of commitment and sheer luck. Excellent comedic value. For the next ten minutes I took it easy, still laughing, tears unrelenting.

It just goes to show you never know what is around the next corner. The learning for me was that I must always ride within my limits and not other rider's limits.

Soon after we arrived at Broadford and the ride was over. Another great day with good weather and excellent roads! Special thanks to Ben for leading the ride. And to Misho: I haven't laughed like that in a quite while. Thanks mate!

## **Dave Williams**

Email from first time rider **Raphael Alikakos** after Sunday's ride (14/10/2012, Broadford via Reefton: *"Hey Ben, it's Raphael from earlier on today. I hope everyone got home safe and sound. I just wanted to thank you for today; it was an amazing experience and it was the first time I had ridden for that long and on crazy steep windy roads and I absolutely loved it. First off the group is very friendly and welcoming, I felt comfortable even though I did not know anyone previously. They were very helpful with tips about riding better and safer and also full of information about parts modifications and improvements on our machines. The corner marking system is really smart. I quite liked how it worked as a system where everybody took turns being at the front and at the back of the group. It was really easy to follow the route and it would take a blind person to get lost. Overall it was a great experience, the group, the roads and the system used, exceeded my expectations. I am looking forward to joining the group for plenty more Sunday rides."*