

Dave Williams	Aprilia RSV4	Richard Paulson	Honda CBR600
Gordon Heydon (leader)	Kawasaki ZX6R	Jesvin George	Honda CBR600
Quinn Myers	Kawasaki ZX14R	Willem Vandeveld	Honda ST1300 (½ rear)
Phillip Hotschilt	Suzuki GSXR1300	Ed Simonis	Moto Guzzi 1200S (½ rear)
Raphael Alikakos	Suzuki SV650	David Chisma	BMW F800ST

Damn you Whittlesea. Damn you and your low octane, ethanol ‘enhanced’ petrol. Damn you and your annual Agricultural Show with the crawling traffic. Ahh! Much better for getting that off my chest.

On the way to the meeting point it appeared that Whittlesea had become the place to be. Traffic slowed. Then crawled. Then stopped. It stayed stopped for some time. More time passed and more traffic budged not an inch. Me? I was hoofing it (responsibly, mind) down the cycle lane on the left, cackling at all the poor souls sweating away in their cars (Oh yeah – damn you air-conditioning.)

The fair had come to town and a sizeable portion of Melbourne seemed to have decided to attend. About one kilometre short of Whittlesea, I see a bike parked on the side of the road. Looks like a top box, or a Ventura rack, or a police bike? Careful now, ride casual, pull back into the traffic from the cycle lane. I get a little closer and spot what has become (to me at least) the unmistakeable rear light configuration of a ZX14 kitted out with touring gear. Aaaaannnd, exhale!

The chap is sitting there wiggling the bike from side to side. I pull up beside and we faff on for a bit congratulating each other on how we both made the right choice in bikes. Shame about the fuel economy though, eh? Yep, he’s run out of go-juice. I ask if he has a siphon hose in his bag of tricks? Nope. Wanna lift to the servo? Nope. Want me to come back with a can of fuel? Nope. OK, suit yourself. Ciao.

I pull into the servo and am surprised to see that we have managed to scrape ten bikes together. (Damn you Towong trip! Not that I’m bitter!) Bit of a natter and I fuel myself up on a can of Monster and a smoke. **Gordon Heydon** pulls us into line to give a briefing: roads are mostly good, went through yesterday, we’ll be going from A to B via the rest of the alphabet. All sounds good.

Just about to leave and the chap with the stranded bike comes strolling in with a jerry can. I resist the urge to point out the hot walk he could have avoided in full leathers if he’d taken my assistance. I’m not that much of a smart arse though... mostly.

On the road and we’re off! Or would be if it wasn’t for the remaining convoy of avid agricultural fans still snaking their way to the show. In fairness, we cleared that in less than ten minutes and almost immediately clear road with many swift, sweeping corners beckoned. Carving through at... some km/h, I spot a red wagon on the side of the road. Creep past at legal speed but it doesn’t look to be one of Victoria’s finest. Open back up and soon we’re at Yea – along, it seems, with every other Victorian on two wheels. I spot a few familiar bikes and a couple of familiar faces. Then I overhear some talk about the cop on the side of the road. ‘Didn’t see it’ I say. **Dave Williams** points out that I slowed down for it. ‘Oh, so that *was* a cop?’ Mongrels and their tinted windows! Quick perv at a showroom sparkly boat that pulled in for an early lunch (yes, it was on a trailer) and we depart, headed for our lunch stop in Lancefield.

Making our way through some tight, tree lined roads, there appears to be a small dog sitting on the road. **Gordon Heydon** masterfully avoids it but I’ve slowed down enough for the thing to decide I’m a new friend and it starts wandering my way. Closer now, and it’s not a dog but a lamb – about three weeks old. Conscious of my Kiwi instincts and already able to hear everyone’s voices of ridicule in my mind (Kiwi’s and sheep – yep, it’s all true), I pull over and put on my hazard lights. Keen to avoid someone collecting Roast at a great rate of knots, I try to round up little Sausage but Lamb-chop has decided I ain’t all that friendly after all and is playing the *I’m-gonna-stay-3-feet-in-front-of-you* game. In the end, I chase Saveloy up a driveway and be done with it.

On the way back to the road I see **Jesvin George** followed by **David Chisma** coming around the bend. They see my bike and slow down, then see me waving them through. Jesvin appears to slow

down slightly more than David who is forced to grab a fistful with the right hand. An impromptu *stoppy* is the result. Thank the Gods for no ABS!

At my next corner-marking stop there is waiting, waiting, quick smoke, more waiting. **Ed Simonis** comes through and halts to mention something about a wombat. Then he's off. Time for another smoke and a chance to briefly ponder if it is possible to mistake a lamb for a wombat. Dammit all! I should have persevered with trying to get Mutton safely over a fence.

Dave Williams then pulls up and mentions that **Raphael Alikakos** has pulled out after running up the back of a stationary car. The car had parked on the road just around a blind bend after hitting a wombat. Apparently, **Richard Paulson** shortly after managed to thread the eye of a needle between said car and limping wombat. A good effort by all accounts. Soon the rest of the group (sans Raphael) comes through and usual service resumes.

I had, of course, taken note of the Hayabusa at the start point. Feeling the need to fly the Kwaka flag, I got it in my head that I could keep in front of **Phillip Hotschilt**. Turns out the Gixer is a bit modified but more importantly, Phillip can ride. After I ran wide on a corner and was scraping my boot to get around it I decided that this game was probably not for me and promptly dropped back to empty out the tweeds. Lesson learnt. Back in ya box, youngster. Catching up with Phil while fuelling up at Lancefield I offer my apologies. 'No worries mate – I just thought you were really keen'. Hmm, not quite the adjective I had in mind.

Lunch consisted of pies and a chat about previous bikes. It turns out Richard and myself had identical LAMS bikes prior – even the same colour.

Ed takes over rear rider duties as **Willem Vandeveld** plans to bale part way through the last leg and Gordon calls for a volunteer to do a write up since this was originally going to be Raphael. Much scanning the skies and checking of boots ensues. I shrug and chuck my hand up.

Off towards Mt Macedon via Woodend. A few patches of loose gravel add a degree of interest to overtaking up the hill with a slight wiggle from the rear (thank you traction control) and then we pull in at the end of Tullamarine airport. The weather is hot enough for me to consider an ice-cream but in the end another smoke seems a better option.

A big thankyou to Gordon for a fun day, his first outing as ride leader I believe. I couldn't fault his efforts. I had a great day and as we departed and said our goodbyes, it was smiles all round. Why is there only one Sunday in a week?

Quinn Myers