



Misho Zrakic

Ben Warden

Tony Stegmar (1/2 rear)

David Lenaghan (1<sup>st</sup> ride)

Simon Wastney (1<sup>st</sup> ride)

Pina Garasi

Rod Merrett (leader)

Tom Armstrong (1<sup>st</sup> ride)

Honda CBR1000

Honda CBR1000

Honda CBR1000

Honda VTR1000

Honda VFR800

Honda CBR600

BMW S1000RR

BMW F800 ST

Mark Copeland

Aiden Baker (1/2 rear)

Jason Wilson

Damian Jones

Mitch Bond (1<sup>st</sup> ride)

Steve Mudford

Cindy Lee

Kawasaki ZX10

Kawasaki ZX10

Kawasaki ZX9

Yamaha R1

Aprilia Tuono

Suzuki GSXR750

Triumph 675

*15 bikes, 15 people*

Overcast, fog, cold and damp from the previous days' rain greeted me on the sprint to Yarra Glen. Not again, I thought. My previous lead was a washout and I didn't want that experience again. However, the gods heard my appeal, the fog lifted, and the roads partially dried out by the time I arrived at the meeting place.

Thirteen riders, including three new guys, Tom on a F800 Beemer, David on a VTR and Simon on his VFR, was a good turnout considering the terribly wet day we had had the day before. Mitch rode all the way up from Geelong on his immaculate Aprilia Tuono, his second ride.

The formalities were completed after Misho and Pina arrived late, having ridden to Whittlesea first, thinking it was a Whittlesea start. Then we made our way down the Old Healesville Road with Aiden volunteering as tail rider, understandably wanting to be discrete and cautious on his brand new ZX10.

The sedate ride around the Black Spur to Marysville was non eventful other than the constant lookout for "cameras", etc.

A coffee and chat at Marysville in glorious sunshine were made even more perfect with the arrival of the lovely Cindy and Steve.

Saddling up, the intrepid crew made its way down the highway to my favourite road, the 60 km long Eildon/Jamieson twisties. I informed everyone at the pre-ride briefing that on this sensational road, it was every man for themselves. Not able to run the pace of guns Ben, Misho, Mark, Steve, Damo, Jason etc, passing the leader was acceptable and encouraged (safely).

True to my word, head down, Beemer on song, pushing the limits on warp factor 10, traction control lighting up like a strobe, ABS chattering, I'm giving Stoner a flogging. Then Mark and Misho pass me like I was stopped! Cripes, this MSR crew can ride! RIGHT! Spitting the dummy, I'm jump on the tail of this freight train. WHOOH BOY! First corner, too hot, nearly ended up in the boonies. Back off, Roddy.

Wait on? Long straight. There they are! Hey, I passed them. Heh! Heh! Heh! That'll teach 'em not to mess with the Beemer. OH SHIT! They slowed right down. Just my luck.

Just up the road was the Torbreck River bridge where the boys had stopped to have a fag/chat. Just as I was removing my helmet, Ben pulled up. "Come on, gents," he says. "Your tyres are hot now, so let's not stop the fun," and blasts off.

On with my helmet as quick as I can. A look in the mirror has the boys still pulling on their fags and talking. Oh great! Now I'm sandwiched between the best of the best. As luck would have it, I was able to hold off everyone till we reached the Jamieson Lookout with Steve ready to pounce just prior to stopping.

I'm just blown away with the skill and talent that this Club has to offer. The time between first arrival and tail rider was negligible with super quick Cindy and Pina right up there with the leaders.

After admiring the view and taking the mandatory group photo at the lookout, we dawdled down to Jamieson for lunch, and straight into the arms of Mr Plod. Two dirt bike officers were pulling over every rider they could find, checking licences/reg etc. There were dozens of bikes including us.

Misho had to remove his "illegal" tinted headlight guards. Why is there always the bad cop, good cop, scenario when you get two together? The grumpy one waited in the servo, adjacent to the café we parked outside, to nab all the dirt bikers, while the good guy checked us out. After chatting to him for 10 minutes, it was reassuring to confirm that motorcycling is a universal interest/love that knows no boundaries.

During the police check Tony saunters over to show us his visor. For the life of me I'm stuffed how he could see out of it. Condensation had penetrated his Pinlock visor and it was totally obscured. Jason had a look at it and repaired/refitted it.

Tony took over rear rider duties, giving Aiden a chance to stretch the legs of the ten. I suppose Tony thought he'd better keep a clear eye on everyone. The Pinlock visor is the best thing since sliced bread in cold and wet conditions (when fitted correctly).

After an expensive sandwich and coffee (I'll be having a take away pie from the milkbar next time) our talented crew headed back the way we had come, less new guy Simon. He was taking the highway route via Mansfield due to a puncture that he and Ben spent some considerable time in the servo trying unsuccessfully to locate. Hopefully, he made it home safely.

Now, due to the small lead I had from the second rider, the return blast along the Torbreck River road had to be tackled differently to the first encounter. I was dictating the terms this time, I thought. Smoothness and consistency was the answer, look for a late apex, drive off hard with more speed in to and out of the corners instead of my previous blast, hard on the brakes, throw it down, then blast out again method which got me into trouble. This approach worked! Once a rhythm was established, the kays just flew by and in no time at all the twisties ended and the houses appeared with Mark, Misho and Steve looming up behind me with no more road to pass. What a sensational road. Carefully follow the wheel tracks to avoid the bark and rubbish and it's a hoot.

Meandering into Eildon for fuel, we regrouped for the run over Skyline, more twisties, more fun - after my tyres warmed up. On the third corner I had a bit too much speed for cold tyres, the front

end ploughing straight ahead. By the grace of god it gripped again and I sailed around the corner on the very, very edge of the asphalt. Don't you just love those sphincter puckering moments after you escape with your life! Adrenalin coursing through your head, heart pumping so much you think it's going to burst, and what do you do? Scream out a "YAHOO!" And push harder.

Crawling into Alexandra like a freight train, we encounter half the population of Melbourne walking around what looked like a Truck show. Police, dogs, prams, traffic, people. Bloody hell, get me out of here. Suck it in, Roddy, the all time great Whrangaren road to Molesworth is two or three kays up the road: full on high speed sweepers, no traffic, on smooth asphalt. I can sense Damo starting to salivate. He pushes his R1 very quickly through this one.

We turn into the corner and discover a police four-wheel drive across the road, turning everyone around. It's one time when the bike exhaust noise wasn't loud enough to drown out my profanities. Why me? Shit! Can't go back through Alexandra. Only one option, the Maroondah *boring* Highway.

Off we go. Grrrr! Ten kays down the road I think surely Ben knows a secret way across to the Yea or Melba roads. I stop and ask the question, but he confirms my suspicions. Keep going, guys and gals.

Then the rot set in: bumper to bumper holiday and day trippers, the other half of Melbourne's population, heading home across the Spur. Miles of them. Patience is a virtue, Roddy. Just cop it sweet and go with the flow. Listen to the music in my Ipod and relax. Well, that lasted for roughly five minutes. First it was Mark that "cracked it", then Ben, then Misho, Steve. Me too! A look in the mirror finds everyone else jumping on the bandwagon. We'll all just blame it on Mark; he said we could! So we're just following him.

Unscathed, we finally reach the Chum Creek Road where Ben is off his bike and jumping on any of our crew that might decide to go straight ahead, like a cowboy tackling a steer. This greasy, slippery track is not one of my favourites with moss on the road, overhanging vegetation, dark. Even mid-summer it's a challenge. Back off, Roddy! Nearly home. Don't be a hero. All the guns flash past at a great rate of knots.

Young Mitch sails past on the lovely Aprilia, so I jumped on his tail to assess him and his bike: a very smooth, quick and competent rider. He'll slot in very nicely with the talented MSR crew, especially if he's riding with the likes of Clifffy.

We finally extract ourselves from the jungle at Toolangi with everyone waiting for me. Don't ya luv it when the system works! Okay, pick up the pace, guys. It's getting dark, patches of fog, starting to get cold. Let's get to Kinglake, our finishing point. Made it! Ben directs everyone to the Bakery.

Sucking on our coffee and chatting about the day's activities, it's very hard not to notice the bond and the complete ease we have in everyone's company, all due to bikes. It's unfortunate we were caught up in the road blockage at Alexandra. My calculations would suggest the detour added roughly forty-five minutes to our ride which would have had us home earlier with better roads to boot. I apologise for that.

My very special thanks to you guys and gals for letting me be a part of this great Club, and whether you like it or not, I'm going to do this again.

**Rod Merrett**