

Heathcote Sunday 12th February 2012

Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Rob Langer	Kawasaki ZX1000
Paul Southwell (leader)	Honda CBR1000	Marc Marais	Kawasaki ZX10
Chris Bouwmeester	Honda CBR1000	Phil Hotschilt	Suzuki GSXR1300
Ron Johnston	Honda CBF1000	Andrew Newbury	Kawasaki ZX10
Willem Vandeveld (rear)	Honda ST1300	Darryl Mills	Suzuki TLR1000
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Damian Jones	Yamaha R1
Steve Mudford	Suzuki GSXR750	Bill Kennedy	Kawasaki Z750
Cindy Lee	Triumph 675	Aiden Baker	Kawasaki ER6N
Geoff Jones	Yamaha R1		<i>17 bikes, 17 people</i>

Whittlesea around 10am and quite a turn up for Paul's ride to Heathcote. Not the usual CBR1000 domination but some variations on the sports bike theme. Darryl providing some fine twin music and Phil bringing a blue blur to the ride via the 'Busa.

Paul does the pre-ride spiel and then we move off up the mountain, heading for Yea. Fine dry weather and plenty of grip; things look good on the grin factor for the day. Up the smooth sweepers, through Kinglake West and Flowerdale and on to Yea where we turn left and trundle along the highway to the Highlands Road. Then back on the gas for the blast up to Highland before turning left down towards Seymour. Surface not as smooth but great compared to what was to come later.

I had done some shed time with the R1: rear shock rebuild at Slipstream Motorcycles in Sunbury now had me thinking about what to do with the front end. The cost of the work on the rear shock prompted a bit of EBay trawling and noting the cost of a pair of later model forks seemed doable. Yamaha had changed the fork offset from 35mm to 25mm in 2002 to calm the head shaking when a steering damper is not fitted. It slows the steering a touch but improves stability. So new forks and lower and upper triple clamps would deliver the complete change.

I received the forks, so I swapped them as delivered for today's outing with the clamps still to arrive. The ride would be a good test of the fork change but things should not feel too much different. The forks have less travel than the 98 units but unfortunately have different mounting lugs for the front mudguard. Back on to EBay and a carbon fibre unit from the States completed the change.

Highlands to Seymour, part of Ern's Ohlins test track, and the first of many occurrences of the blue blur factor as Phil blasts past. What to do? Let him go or try to keep up? It's head down, bum up and wind it on. Sunday with the Club.

In to Seymour central shopping centre for the first break. Food and talk the talk, shade now at a premium as the day heats up.

Extended break taken and then it's off towards Puckapunyal but instead heading south at Hilldene for the road through Glenarua to Pyalong. Then across to Emu Flat and the Burke and Wills Track via a smidge of dirt and then north on what must be one of the roughest bits of road around, suspension testing indeed.

Noted at a corner mark the lilting sound of the TLR. It makes a nice change to the wail of the fours. Cindy's triple and Aiden's twin were the only other signatures on the day.

Up the Track to Mia Mia and off to lunch at Heathcote. Pastie and iced tea for me but some splashed over Paul as I tried to emulate Pina's hand motions, sorry Paul. Not too sticky for the rest of the day, I hope.

Steve, the Ohlins man, spoke of things suspension. He's the go-to man if you need some handling improvements.

After lunch we headed up the McIvor Highway to Knowsley for the twisty run across the Eppalock Dam wall. Back through Redesdale and its fancy bridge to pick up the dreaded Burke and Wills Track for the return run to Lancefield and third break. More suspension testing bumps are never enough it seems. All into Lancefield OK except Ben's right side headlight which was comprehensively pierced by an oncoming 4WD throwing up a rock. Ben then took the lead down through Romsey to pick up the Wildwood Road at Clarkefield for the run to the ride end at the Bulla Tullamarine Airport viewing area. The roads that get you to the Wildwood Road are no better than the Burke and Wills track on the bump front.

The only rain of the day did its best to drown us here.

Thanks to Willem for the rear rider job and to Paul for leading and to all who turned up. It's the group dynamic that makes for a great day methinks.

Geoff Jones