



Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Cliff Peters	Kawasaki ZX10
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Andrew Newbury	Kawasaki ZX10
Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Marc Marais	Kawasaki ZX10
Martin Govett (1 <sup>st</sup> ride)	Honda CBR1000	John Willis	Kawasaki ZX1000
Scott Bowden	Honda CBR929	Ronny	Kawasaki ZX6
Simon Wastney	Honda VFR800	Ray Weston	KTM 990
Kurn Bridgeman	Honda CBR600	Paul Robinson (2 <sup>nd</sup> ride)	KTM 990
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Robert Langer	BMW F700 GS
Tony Stegmar	Suzuki GSXR1000	Pierre Ong (leader)	Aprilia RSV4
Geoff Shugg (rear rider)	Suzuki DL650	Cindy Lee	Triumph 675
Neville Hoare (2 <sup>nd</sup> ride)	BMW R1200 GS		21 bikes, 21 people

One of my favourite trips: Eildon-Jamieson or EJ as it's now often known. The usual pre-flight checks complete and I set off early from home for the ~60 odd minute "commute" to Yarra Glen. A rather idyllic commute as I take the Christmas Hills and Kangaroo Ground bypass (aka Pidgeon Bank Lane etc) route. I met Cliffy on his way too and he made a most effective radar cover, just in case! No, seriously, it's great to watch how he takes corners with smooth lines and near constant momentum.

Arriving early at the "non sugar" [*ie non-ethanol laced petrol; ethanol is derived from sugar cane ...Ed.*] fuel station, smiling faces greet Cliffy and I as we cram bug juice [*crude oil original source is microscopic organisms called phytoplankton ie bugs ...Ed.*] into our missiles. Just up the road and the meet point is looking crowded and we're still about 15 minutes away from a launch.

After the group pre-flight checks are complete (read: briefing) we don our kit and are almost ready to depart when a friendly car driver yells out from across the street that Vic's Finest are pulling up bikes just up the road on our intended flight path. A hasty conversation ensues between leader and compatriots and we take an alternate route: initially a round trip of the more untrodden parts of Yarra Glen and then on to the route proper, bypassing the offending area.

What ride report would be complete without an assessment of the weather and the road surface conditions? Indeed. Most important stuff. Cool, cloudy and with the chance of rain. A big band of rain though is ominously moving east to south east on the radar. EJ could be right in the thick of it.

I'm reminded of Ben's catch cry a few weeks previously as we kit up on a trip down to Gippy "Time to get wet!" Indeed. It could be again. The chance of a cleansing shower or three doesn't put off the crew as we've got a good turnout. More on surface conditions as we progress.

Heading towards Healesville we take familiar roads to Toolangi via Chum Creek Road. The road surface is in surprisingly good condition and the speed restriction signs remarkably untouched by the controllers who try to arrest our velocity by reducing the maximum permissible flight speed.

Now we've settled into a well-spaced flock of bikes with the "faster" riders taking the lead and the less rapid opening up some navigating room. I do love riding through forest, especially on cloudy days. The cloud enables an excellent view of the runway surface conditions without harsh shards of sunlight spearing through the trees dappling and obscuring road debris. Oh, I quickly gain on a fellow traveller decelerating into and around a corner. He's pulling over. Damn! That's early for issues to develop. Looks OK though, nothing mechanical. I later find there's been some movement of his rear seat cowl.

Up Chum, down Myers and back through Healesville and in to threatening territory. The Black Spur is such a short but great bit of road. The initial corners are some of my most favourite. Shame they're so few in number but such a great surface. A good place to scrub in fresh rubber (I'm loving the Bridgestone S20Rs!). I'm constantly reminded of the need to pay close attention to my speedo as I near the "straight" replete with its far too short dotted line. As I descend, I cheekily wave my hand in greeting to the watchers in the forest only to find that yes, they were there, as comfortably slipstreaming a 4WD, I espy a blue uniformed *maintainer of the peace* having just pulled in one of our crew. Bugger! They got someone. Doesn't everyone know they sit under a camouflage net on that straight and radio ahead to their denizens? Apparently not.

Unperturbed, I encounter a log jam of boat trailers up the road and decide to play it safe on overtaking until I'm reasonably certain that we're safe from harassment. Trees blur as we pull away from the roadhouse and onto the sweepers heading into Marysville where I pay a visit to the newly rebuilt sweet shop – a tax I pay to my (far) better half whenever I'm in the area. Laden down with food of the gods I strike up a conversation with the proprietors remarking about the Ever Vigilant on the Black Spur. It goes something like this: "How many injuries do you think that's avoided?" I retort: "None at all". They're bemused. I explain. They listen. I'm surprised that they're actually listening. I thought Newspeak had taken such a steely grip that they'd be immune to my arguments. Noting that I rarely venture here during the peak season, I feel that perhaps their loss of commerce could be a persuader. Maybe. Time to go.

Heading past the golf course, which I must have ridden past for two years before noticing it (concentrating on the grey ribbon ahead of me) – and further ahead I round a corner to see a Jabberwocky dressed as a dark tinted 4WD parked parallel and close to the edge of the road. Not today! I ensure I'm at the permissible cruise speed (and I must have surprised that bloke right behind me with a rapid adjustment in altitude) and trundle onwards to the flatlands heading into Eildon.

I see the sign. I hear the road. I feel my heart beating. I put my game face on. It's EJ time!

Surprisingly, I'm close to the front on the pack, perhaps two or three riders in front of me and then our leader for today. This will be good. I fleetingly wonder how long I'll have them in sight? Nothing behind me. This will be fun.

I assume the attack position, feet up, perched on the balls of my feet, thighs pressed against the tank, leaning forward, trying not to laugh maniacally. Concentrate. Flow. Become one with my machine. Make it an extension of me, of my thoughts, of my being. Flying through the forest I remember how much I love this road. The surface is good to excellent, some tree debris, a

smattering of light gravel on some of the hairier corners... but what's that? Behind me I feel the presence of other bikes. I steal a very quick glance and note that it's probably Misho's yellow CBR. Yep, that makes sense. I'm not holding him or them up yet so I own my sector of the road, comfortable in the knowledge that Misho and I have talked a lot about this. I refocus on the task. Flying on air, defying gravity, working with the physics of riding a sportsbike. Soon I'm passed and they take off around the corners, incredible how adept they are. The "new" section of EJ starts and surprisingly I shortly find myself behind our leader Pierre. Should I pass him? Could I pass him? I think he can feel me behind him. The pace quickens. I'm in heaven.

Three years after the first metalling of this section the surface has finally settled down. It tears at my tyres but it's mostly secure now, seldom the sound of barrages of stones pelting my bike's most intimate parts. I love how the entire section has a dotted line even around hairpins; maybe the makers were economising on paint? It's a great ride. Rounding the final sweeping corner towards the brewery I accelerate to attack speed. Crossing the bridge I note that Misho and crew have had sufficient time to unburden themselves of gloves and lids, light smokes as necessary, and man the corner.

I mark the final corner into the Jamieson township and for a giggle start my lap timer, smoke a cigarette, eat two muesli bars, sip half a litre of water and clean my visor. An undisclosed duration later and the rear rider comes through. I'm still feeling like I'm on fire. Adrenaline must still be pumping through me. It's a good thing that we take breaks even after such a relatively short distance.

A brief respite swapping stories and we're off again to repeat EJ, this time heading back through Skyline, Alexandra, through Whanregaren, and finally Yea and Kinglake West. It's been an awesome day riding with the Club. I always look forward to riding with MSR, and despite being spent when I get home, I can think back now to the day's ride and still smile. Until the next one!

## **Andrew Newbury**

**Footnote:** Unbeknownst to most, we learnt from Rob Langer at the breakup point at Kinglake West that second time rider Neville had crashed at the end of the Whanregaren Road at the 45 km/h sharp left hand corner just before the highway intersection at Molesworth. He went straight through the corner after his front tyre deflated and he was unable to wash off sufficient speed. He was okay, though the bike was unrideable (due to the tyre) and was retrieved the next day.

Why did the tyre deflate? A very scary prospect. The most likely cause is that the tyre was not suitable for road use; it was a rear motocross tube tyre fitted without a tube to the front wheel. Tubeless tyres have a different bead construction and are not designed to be used without tubes and have a much lower speed rating than road tyres. Add in 350+ kilograms of bike and rider and heavy braking with a bumpy entry and the outcome seems quite obvious.

Suffice to say that the Committee had a serious discussion about this event and what, if anything, could be done to prevent it in future. Clearly the tyre was illegally fitted. The consequences of this type of failure occurring are potentially life threatening, not only to Neville, but to other riders and/or other road users. Yes, the Captain had discretely checked all bikes before the ride for general roadworthiness but this one was near impossible to detect. Be assured that if discovered, the rider would not have been allowed on the ride. The Club takes this sort of safety breach very seriously.

## **Ben Warden** for the Committee