



The forecast for the weekend was 37 degrees for Saturday and it was spot-on. It wasn't too hot when we left Melbourne but by the time we'd gone up the highway and through some fantastic farmland corners we were cooking inside our leather motorcycling apparel.

I'd never been on any of the roads around Lake Glenmaggie, so it was quite a treat coming out beside the Lake. Being a hot day, the lakeside was littered with people in jet-skis and other watercraft taking advantage of the cool water on a scorching hot day. The roads near the lake were single-car width, so it was a technically challenging ride. I lost count of how many lovely bridges we crossed with scenic streams or rivers running below. It was very beautiful.

At the fuel-up in Briagalong we picked up another rider, Lyn Duncan, who was a member of MSR quite a few years ago.

By the time we got to Bruthen it was so hot John Willis and some others grabbed the water hose from the petrol station and put some running water inside their leathers – one way to keep yourself cool on the road.

The road from Bruthen to Omeo was absolutely fantastic. Not only is it one of the most scenic roads in Australia but the never ending corners make it motorcycling heaven. And when we got to the top lookout, we got to come all the way back to Bruthen again. Sensational ride. I found it astounding to see the incredible lean-angle of Misho and Pina two-up on a sportsbike disappearing into the corners ahead of me, going faster than I could go alone! Incredible skill (and trust).

The next leg into Dargo is a really great road but at the end of a tiring day, at least a few of us knew we weren't enjoying it as much as we could. My wrists were sore since my bike's suspension was set up for the Phillip Island racetrack. I learnt this weekend I need to learn a lot more about suspension to get the best out of my bike. My first learning step is to soften it up a bit for the road.

There isn't much in Dargo, just a pub, a shop and a few old houses, some now used for holiday accommodation. It's wonderfully peaceful, surrounded by hills with no cell phone coverage. No

Facebook, no email, no SMS, no worries. I shared with Andrew “ARCS” and Paul Southwell in the “Miners Cottage” across the road from the pub. It was more than adequate for our purposes.

Dinner and drinks at the pub was plenty of fun, although I was so tired I wasn’t talking much. The usual motorcycle-related topics came up of course, like the never-ending debate over “back brake, or not?” and “Will Rossi be competitive in MotoGP now he’s back on the Yamaha?” Perhaps at the next over-nighter I can stir up the oldies with a debate on “to lean off, or not lean off the bike”. I notice not many people in the Club lean off and they’re faster than any road-riding people I’ve ever met. Although, I should probably not come out with that until I can actually keep up with them. I think I’ll stick to just asking questions for now and learning from their experience.

A few of us were in bed fast asleep not long after dark.

This was my first over-nighter with the Club, so I really enjoyed getting to know the other members better, discussing suspension and all things motorcycling. One of the things that attracted me to join MSR is how well organised everything is. We’d paid a very small fee for the night’s accommodation and Sunday breakfast, which consisted of an egg’n’bacon roll and a coffee. That’s when we discovered John’s Kawasaki had scrapes on the exhaust and lower fairings he didn’t know were there! He thought he was just scraping his footpegs. Other stories came out about people scraping their tailpipes which is pretty impressive lean angle on today’s modern sportsbikes.

Thunderstorms were forecast for Sunday morning, but by the time we were up and breakfasted the thunderstorms had nearly gone. All that remained was a bit of drizzle that disappeared before breakfast to leave the sun shining again. On the way out the road was already dry in patches. It was going to be another great day.

I found the road out of Dargo better than the day before. We were fresh (well most of us who didn’t drink too much) and it was mostly a gentle uphill climb. It’s always easier when I’m heading up the hill, much easier on the wrists.

This was also the day for playing swapsies with the bikes. People swapped bikes, BMW for CBR, CBR for GSXR and others I may not have seen. That was when I learnt my forks and shock were set up way too hard for the road. I wanted to get back on Damir’s CBR with the Ohlins front and back, it was so soft and compliant but still responsive enough for my skill level.

Everybody enjoyed the trip to Licola. The scenery was spectacular. I really love the hilly valleys with rivers in the gully. The road winds up the side of the valley, along fairly narrow roads. I was just overtaken by two riders, Steve Mudford and Misho who flew past at the same time as there was a strange kink in the road with another bike and rider, Paul Southwell, parked on the side of the road. I thought Paul had run off because he was in amongst the bushes on the edge of the cliff. It was a strange kink with a lot going on for me so for a split second I thought I was going to join Paul in a very uncomfortable way! I certainly wasn’t riding at 100% on that cliff face, so there was plenty of time to brake and turn in, keeping up with Steve and Misho for a good corner and a half before they disappeared at right angles. I later discovered Paul had just stopped to check his tyre pressures as there was a slippery area that made the bike behave as if it had a flat tyre. Others had felt the same sensations too.

A few of us continued on up the hill past Licola but the road condition got worse and worse until we were finally stopped by a farmer moving his cows up the road. I was hoping that smell wasn’t coming from one of the other riders going too fast near the cliff face. It was exciting stuff coming down, the edge of the road seemed to disappear completely to a valley far below.

On the way back out from Licola I tucked in with a group: Phil on the Hyabusa, Tony on the black CBR and later we were joined by Pierre on the Aprilia who moved his way through the bunch

during the trip. A great thing about riding with so many experienced riders is that it stretches my riding skills. Not so much that it's dangerous, but I try to follow someone that travels a bit faster than me so I can improve my cornering. It was great fun. When we got to the top of the road it was smiles and laughter all around saying "How good is that road?!"

We were back off through the same farmland, lakes and rivers as yesterday. I'm not very familiar with the roads or places, so forgive me if I get them muddled up. My favourite part was Moe to Hill End. It was a place with fast sweepers, 80km/h (recommended) corners that just seemed to go on for ages. It was exhilarating. Unfortunately, it was quickly followed by a road in a very bad state of repair. Massive potholes the size of your wheel. Again the scenery was incredibly beautiful, this time quite thick intermediate rain forest.

We were then back into familiar territory for me, Noojee and Powelltown, where we stopped and said our goodbyes (to those who hadn't left already). I then headed back along my usual route through Healesville and up the tight twisty fun to Toolangi. I've never been so quick on that road, so clearly my skill had increased again after riding with a great bunch of experienced people in MSR.

Thanks to all for a great weekend.

Glenn Aspden