



Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Phil Hotschilt	Suzuki GSXR1300
Ian Payne	Honda CBR1000	Tony Stegmar	Suzuki GSXR1000
Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Glenn Aspden	Suzuki GSXR1000
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Duanne Rafferty	Suzuki GSXR1000
Scott Bowden	Honda CBR929	Geoff Shugg	Suzuki DL650
Jesvin George	Honda CBR600	Yasas Ranabahu (1 st ride)	Yamaha R1
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Olly Clack (1 st ride)	Yamaha R1
Paul Gilmartin (1 st ride)	Honda CBR600	Garry Boucher	Kawasaki ZX14
Aiden Westrip (1 st ride)	BMW S1000RR	Cliff Peters	Kawasaki ZX10
Michael Srb	BMW S1000RR	Rod Silver (rear)	KTM RC8
Rod Merrett	BMW S1000RR		<i>21 bikes, 21 people</i>

I was overseas on holidays for two months but it feels great to be back riding with the MSR again. During the time away I rode on a few exotic roads passing through tropical forests, one of them with 41 continuous hairpins. Last Sunday's ride to Buninyong Fire Tower via Linton was my training ride to re-adjust to the CBR600 from the Yamaha R15 which was my rental bike.

Eagerly awaited, Sunday arrived and for the first time ever I was fully prepared for crashes, wearing my latest protection, a pair of TCX boots. The ride started with Ben's slightly longer pre-ride talk, maybe because we had four new riders. I volunteered to be the journalist for the day. Looks like this ride will be the last one starting from Berwick; in future the starting point will be at Officer.

After a few boring kilometres along the freeway, a big roadside sign from www.spokes.com.au reminded us that "Motorcyclists are 38 times more prone to injury in the event of a crash than car drivers." Is this true? Aren't we are invincible?

After the freeway there were a few long straights so instead of cracking open the throttle I decided to practice a few braking exercises. My speed depends on how quick I can stop and I'm always keen on 'braking performance'.

Twenty-one riders including four first time riders and a sunny day made for a good vibe. Excitement was in the air with a good mix of carbon monoxide.

First stop at Loch where I scanned the parked motorcycles. My hardly washed, never polished CBR looked quite dull among this exotic group. I wish I had a red and white one. Now time to meet the new riders. Names exchanged and names forgotten the next second but it was a pleasure to meet everyone. I also had a short conversation with Ben in regards to cornering and he said “Do not chase me, Misho and that man on the Suzuki”. And I thought, “That will be interesting”.

Soon after we started the second leg to Korumburra along the Glen Forbes road. I saw Tony Stegmar standing on a corner and waving at us to slow down. I smelled a crash and promptly stopped further ahead and jogged back. Is it Tony’s new bike? No, it is Yasar. His R1 had gone through the electrified fence wires and the R1 headlight assembly had come off. Minor cosmetics to Yasar who has only been riding for a year and had a 250cc before the R1. He was not in a state to talk to the Roadside Assistance agency so I took up the job and they said they can’t help as this is a crash, not a ‘breakdown’. What a joke.

After waiting for a possible explosion (electrified fence + crashed bike) Cliff Peters crawled under the fence in perfect military fashion and turned off the ignition while Misho Zrakic pushed the bike across the farmland and Rod Silver went to see if he could open the farm gate. The older guys did all the hard work while I decided to stay upright and take photos, like a pro journalist.

After seeing the crashed bike I lost confidence and cruised while Misho shot past me on his Frankenstein yellow Fireblade. Confidence regained by the tenth corner and constant gear changing on the 600 to keep the revs up, I regained some pace. Then I saw Ben coming in the opposite direction, reason unclear. A few kilometres later we regrouped where we could see glimpses of the sea.

At Korumburra I had a chat with a few guys meeting Ron and Julie Johnston. Ron is out of licence points and impatiently counting the days while he still visits the group on Sundays.

Despite having a 600 I have to fill up at every fuel stop. On a top gear commute I get around 280km/tank but much less on Sunday rides.

I had barely finished lunch when Ben shouts the five minute warning. What? Didn’t I read something about a “leisurely lunch break” on the itinerary? Back to the dry roads.

Cliff Peters, riding with a little or no movement of his body, on the green Kwaka which falls into corners in a non-threatening manner, passes neatly and heads to the next corner. Cliffy and his bike look like a wind-up toy doing the same stuff again and again. He disappeared, and then Misho goes by. Too fast to chase so I give up.

We passed through a few gravel sections and I stopped at one right after a fast stretch to warn the following riders. BANG! There goes Geoff Shugg on his Suzuki DL650 like a rocket making me look like an idiot. Bitumen or dirt he doesn’t care.

I occasionally passed Paul Southwell, Phil Hotschilt, Glenn Aspden and some others and they all passed me at various points. Pina Garasi was riding very well and constantly on the pace. What magic happened to her in two months? Most of the time I was riding in no man’s land and Tony Stegmar later mentioned he didn’t see me at all. Aiden Westrip was riding well considering this was his first ride with us.

Towards the end of the leg I saw Pina, Misho and few others standing on the road side searching for something. Later she told me her bag was open and things had flown everywhere.

At a corner mark with Glenn Aspden I saw Michael Srb popping a short mono which looked like it was in second gear. Rod Merrett passed us on his BMW which has got a distinctive buzzsaw exhaust note. Misho was following. Those two made nice gear shifting symphonies.

We stopped somewhere for another break before heading to Powelltown. Olly Clack on the R1 reckons my bike is fast for a 600 and scrutinised it for aftermarket performance products. I told him everything is stock except for the levers; however, I didn't show him the Nitrous kit hidden in the pillion seat bag.

Paul Gilmartin from the UK expressed his joy of riding on warm days Down Under.

Ben announces that we are leaving. What? Didn't we just stop? Anyway, it is always good to be back on the road and better to get home early. Now we are on the beautiful roads to Powelltown and the CBR is gliding. Didn't Ben say something about not chasing a Suzuki? Which one was that? There are a few today. No time to worry about it so I passed a few riders and the roads are still great. Here comes another sweeper; one gear down with revs matched, full throttle to 14,000 rpm while sweeping the corner. Now I can see Ben ahead. Betting between \$140 and \$170 through varying sweepers enjoying those grippy roads, going left and right while trying not to lose Ben from sight. I also tried to tighten the lines half way through some of the corners – just for the sake of it. Finally Ben disappeared as soon as the corners tightened, which was not a surprise.

Gradually everyone departed for home after the break. What a day! It didn't rain so dry roads and dry leather, no speeding fines or major dramas other than a wrecked bike. Thanks to Ben and Rod for front and rear duties. Thanks to Good Samaritans Misho and Cliff for their crash scene assistance.

Jesvin George

PS. This ride was special to me because when I did the same ride last year on 18th March 2012. It was my third ride with the MSR, and I was much slower. Today's ride was pay back.