

Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Adrian MacGeraghty	Honda CBR600
Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Cliff Peters	Kawasaki ZX10
Michael MacRae	Honda CBR1000	Tony Stegmar	Suzuki GSXR1000
Simon Wastney (leader)	Honda VFR800	Rob Langer (rear)	KTM 990
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Glenn Aspden	Triumph 675
Roman Biaroza	Honda CBR600		<i>11 bikes, 11 people</i>

Great news! A text message indicating that my VFR was ready for pick-up after being serviced. Bad news! A message from Ben looking for a write-up for the ride I lead a couple of weeks ago. So here's a quick summary of my experiences leading the ride down to Cape Patterson.

I hadn't seen any history of prior Club rides down this way but it looked like an interesting extension down to the coast south of an area that we ride a lot.

I made my way out to the Officer South meeting point nice and early. I'd been expecting to be first to arrive, but not quite. The forecast for Sunday looked okay earlier in the week but wasn't looking too flash on the day itself, though we still had eleven keen starters, mostly comprising the regular riders.

Time to go! Usually there's somebody holding up the tail-rider. Rather embarrassingly, this role was now played by me, the supposed leader. All my gear was on and I was ready to turn the key. Damn! Nothing to turn. The key is buried in the pocket of my leathers, deep under a layer of weather proof jacket. Gloves off, unzip everything, locate key, reassemble attire. Hopefully, nobody noticed.

It didn't take long for the rain to arrive, and remain a theme for most of the day. By the time we got down to Loch for the first break it was teeming. Quite a few of the group opted to depart for home at this point. A couple of people claimed mechanical issues and Ben was under the weather with a bad cold. If I hadn't been leading I might have applied the 'If I was out on a ride by myself ...' principle of common sense and headed home as well.

Pina's mechanical issue was an apparent vibration. Pina asked Ben to test ride it and give an opinion as to the problem's nature. He was gone for ages. I was assuming that he'd got two or three km down the road and the CBR600 had stopped. I considered mounting a search and rescue. Ben eventually returned, unable to find fault. Pina, freezing cold and wet through, opted to head home anyway.

So we were down to six riders: Rob, Glenn, Cliff, Adrian, Tony and myself. It'll clear up eventually we thought. Lots of wet roads later we reached the coast and stopped for a quick break at one of the scenic lookouts. I'm into yacht racing and have sailed this stretch of coast quite a few times, but haven't visited from the land side until doing a dry-run of the route a couple of weeks earlier.

In Inverloch Cliff proposed we have fish and chips for lunch. The sun comes out for the occasion and we have a good feed and dry ourselves out.

Next stop fuel. I'd made sure to ring the service station that morning to make sure that they had fuel. There had been wide-spread fuel shortages during the week with Cootes trucking company having all their vehicles ordered off the road after regulator inspections revealed endemic safety issues. One of their tanker trucks had caught fire causing a death the previous week leading to the inspections.

We continued on to Drouin. Plenty of nice roads but not much fun as it was still very wet and I was leading at a cautious pace.

Usually I'd write more about other people riding, but I rarely take more than occasional glances out behind me. In Drouin I find that we'd lost Adrian. Apparently his bike was spluttering with electrical issues. Now we only had one rider keen for more, so I decided to finish the ride here.

We congregated at the café which had an assortment of home-crafted sculptures, along with a kiddies bicycle covered in colourful knit-wear. Glenn posed on it for a few knee-down photos to stick on the MSR Facebook site, and then we were off home along the freeway. It was surprisingly sunny for a time until normal service resumed: a heavy downpour for the final stretch back home.

Thanks riding companions. I'm looking forward to my next ride.

Simon Wastney