



Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Steve Mudford	Suzuki GSXR1000
Ian Payne	Honda CBR1000	Cliff Peters (leader)	Suzuki GSXR1000
Nigel Oman	Honda CBR1000	Chris Kioseoglou (2 <sup>nd</sup> ride)	Suzuki TL1000S
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Ed Simonis	BMW K1200R
Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Geoff Dick	BMW 850R
Damir Djikic	Honda CBR1000	Rob Langer	KTM 990
Scott Bowden	Honda CBR1000	Geoff Jones (rear)	Yamaha R1
Jesvin George	Honda CBR600	Marc Marais	Kawasaki ZX10
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Andre Dreszga (1 <sup>st</sup> ride)	Ducati 900
Paul Gilmartin	Honda CBR600		
Michael MacRae	Honda CBR600		
<i>20 bikes, 20 people</i>			

For once Gil and I arrived for the start of a ride with ample time to have a low grade, overpriced coffee and catch-up with some of the MSR members. It seems like normally I'm in such a rush to get there, and then I get there and bang! It's time to go.

I was really looking forward to this ride as I had done a great run out near Daylesford a couple of months back with a few friends. Unfortunately, today I woke up with a pounding headache. No, this was not due to over indulgence the night before. Just one of those things, I suppose. Man up! The Missus gave me the go ahead to abandon my family for the day to head out with a bunch of people she doesn't know (I barely know) on a ridiculously overpowered missile between my legs. I better make the most of it!

Now I'm not great at remembering where I am on MSR rides as for the most part I'm concentrating 100 percent on the road in front of me. I do know that in the first leg a rabbit or possum, or some kind of crazy Australian creature I've never heard of, bolted out in front of me which gave me a bit of a scare. I'm pretty sure that in this leg Misho did a pretty impressive wheelie up near the buck thirty area. Or so my speedo read.

A couple weeks back I got some really good feedback from Misho and Steve about how I was riding. Misho had sat behind me for a while to see how/if I had progressed and perhaps how I was handling the new Blade. After hearing this from these two very experienced and quick riders it really made me feel good as I feel like I've gotten much quicker and smoother. Well, it's one thing to be quick when the conditions are perfect ie. wide open sweepers with 100% visibility. It's a totally different kettle of fish when you're out in the Wild West (as Pina refers to it) with next to no visibility around corners, strategically placed bumps mid-corner, and single lane roads. I've got a long way to go because I was not feeling that confident on big stretches of Sunday's ride.

Cliffy had warned us about a couple of sections of gravel road. I wouldn't have normally brought this up as it was pretty much a non-event but I did laugh a bit when all of us on sportbikes slowed right down as we were coming into the second stretch of gravel, but Rob on his KTM Adventure thingy actually sped up and went flying past most of us. I bet he was glad he was on the KTM instead of the Ninja. And just an aside, how quick is he on those big, adventure-touring bikes!? Awesome!

Heading into Kyneton I felt my bike cut out slightly a couple of times. I then ended up corner marking and when I went to fire the bike up when I saw rear rider Geoff on his R1, it wouldn't crank. Oh dear, wtf, etc... Geoff raced off to grab Ben to come back and give me a hand. I tried a few more times and finally got it started. I made it to the scheduled rest point in Woodend before trouble struck again.

To make an extremely long story shorter Ben diagnosed the problem as a bad connection at the battery terminal. This was after a bit of troubleshooting because at first we thought it could be a battery on its way out due to all the silly gadgets I have on my bike – heated grips, iPhone charger and Bazzaz FI, TC and QS. *(fuel injection, traction control, and quick shifter – I had to ask ...Ed.)* Well that sort of played a part. It turned out that the problem was that the threaded shaft/pin/bolt for the positive battery terminal was too short to have three things connected to it. That and the fact the seat bolts were tightened way too tight, with the Phillips heads stripped, preventing us from getting to the battery. Steve, Ben and Gil stuck around while the group carried on to their final stop. Tried as they might to get those stripped headed screws out, they could not. Alas Gil and I bid Steve and Ben adieu as there was nothing more they could do and, unfortunately mine and Gil's worst fear was realised – having to pillion Gil from Woodend to Altona on his bike. After riding a litre bike for a few years and then going to a 600 is one thing. Doing so with a pillion was actually laughable. *[I told Gil to make sure you were pillion because being pillion was going to be agony with the height of the pegs putting your knees around your ears. You owe him big time! ...Ed.]*

Made it home in extreme discomfort (probably more so for Gil), grabbed my impact driver, a couple of 5 Seeds Cloudy's and back to Woodend we went. Stripped and over-tightened seat bolts were no match for my trusty Makita impact driver. Got the seat off, jiggled the wires at the terminal and it fired up no problem. Made it back home and we treated ourselves to Indian and beer. All is well that ends well, I suppose...

As per Ben's advice, I swapped the standard seat bolts for Allen key driven ones and a longer battery terminal bolt to accommodate my gadgets. That Ben really is a wealth of knowledge. He actually knew off the top of his head what gauge bolts I needed for both the terminal and the seat.

A big thanks to Ben and Steve for trying to help me get the bike sorted, Gil for helping me pick up the bike, and last but not least, Cliffy for leading and Geoff for being the rear rider.

**Scott Bowden**