

Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Joe Klopfer	Kawasaki ZRX1200
Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Marc Marais	Kawasaki ZX10
Ian Payne (rear)	Honda CBR1000	John Willis	Kawasaki Z1000
Mirko Strasser	Honda CBR929	Jason Wilson	Kawasaki ZX9
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Aiden Baker	Kawasaki ER6N
Chris Pointon	Suzuki GSXR1000	Rob Langer (leader)	KTM 990
Paul Simonson	Aprilia RSV4	Pierre Ong	Ducati 1098
Cindy Lee	Triumph 675	Marty Ruschena (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	BMW K1200R
<i>18 bikes, 18 people</i>			

I forgot Ian was coerced into doing the write-up and so three weeks later, with no article evident, I set out to plumb the memory depths and put a few words together. I know I stopped at Mt Slide (intersection of the Melba Highway and the Toolangi Kinglake Road) to assist second time rider Marty with a flat rear tyre. The tyre was so flat that he was not willing to ride his heavy BMW to Yarra Glen, some 25 km away, to a servo with compressed air. Alas, my CO2 bottles are long gone, so a puncture repair kit without air was of no use. His RACV Roadside Assistance service had expired on December 11<sup>th</sup>, according to the telephonist, so there was only one choice. I pillioned Marty to Yarra Glen from where he organised a tow truck to collect him from Yarra Glen servo and then the bike from the side of the road. None of his mates had trailers. I know he was home by 6 pm.

My quest for an adaptor to go between CO2 bottles, supplied by Paul Southwell, was answered by Rod Merrett whose wife works a few hundred metres away from where I work, amazingly enough. Rod donated his puncture repair kit to the cause. Of course, in another era, Ian Payne had donated the same adaptor and yes, I eventually rediscovered it while dagging around in the garage replacing my CBR headlight. It was smashed on the Heathcote ride a week later, by a flying rock spat out by an oncoming four wheel drive on the Burke and Wills Track on the last corner before Lancefield. Better the headlight than my hand. No headlight protectors, but unclear if they would have prevented such a large rock penetrating. The 954 went its whole life (251,000 km) without headlight protectors. Mind you, the headlights were pretty sandblasted at the end.

The dual headlight is all one piece and \$600+ new. On to the web and found genuine Honda OEM part on MotoSport for \$329. Headlight copies (probably the same manufacturer) were down to \$215. I eventually put out an all-persons-alert to C&C Engineering who interact with racers of all descriptions. Sure enough a slightly scratched one came in for \$200 including globes, loom and relays. Bargain! Throw in brand new (2012 CBR1000) chain and sprockets (x2) and three tyres and the \$600 had doubled. I was pretty happy to see genuine Honda split links in the goodies box when I opened it. Special thanks to Craig and Clyde at C&C Engineering for supplying a contact.

From memory the ride progressed without incident. We ended up at the Toolangi Roadhouse for lunch. We tried to sit outside but it was too windy and threatening rain – and the waitress wasn't going to deliver meals outside, no matter what. Some sort of policy.

Speaking of wind reminds me that it was particularly blowy at the top of the Myers Creek Road, a large fallen tree blocking three quarters of the road. We were able to squeeze by. A mini hurricane was tearing up Melbourne at the time, according to the TV news that evening.

The Reefton and Black Spur were covered in leaf litter. I remember the Black Spur was heavy with cars; you either sit behind and travel at 55 km/h the whole way, or grit your teeth, cross your fingers, and go like a cut cat. Controlled aggression. You can guess which option I took. Maybe not surprisingly a car load of youths mouthed abuse at us at the Healesville petrol station where we regrouped. A 4WD was deliberately and dangerously blocking the guys as they tried to pass. A bit scary for some.

Did I mention the Reefton? Well, there was that 4WD police vehicle poked up a side shoot in the lower reaches, and later tootling along. Mirko carved him up – and paid the price. Didn't see him as he passed mid-corner. Not optimal. I missed all this drama and ploughed along merrily, passing

Paul Simonson and Pierre Ong (that would be a first) doodling along, scared of the police I later learnt. Life's short, I say.

What was before the Reefton? The Warburton Bakery, as distinct from the coffee shop below. There is some sort of moral obligation to support a fellow motorcyclist trying to make a go of it, and Pina succumbed. But the variety of food, ease of parking, speed of service and less agricultural seating saw the rest of us at the bakery. Pina eventually came and joined us.

Both Cindy and Pina were without their partners on this relatively arduous ride. Misho is renovating his bathroom, doing battle with poor tradesmen and high quotes. He has gone missing for two months now, and we were lucky to have him on the Jindabyne weekend. It was only that he needed a break.

Before Warburton? Nice roads up through Gembrook, and an opportunity to reflect on the rise of Kawasaki in recent times: 6 Hondas and 6 Kawasakis and then six other riders on six different makes. Is there something about 666?

I rang Rob that night to ask how the rest of the ride went. By the time he reached Kinglake, planning to go down to Glenburn, everyone had left except Ian Payne, the rear rider. So they headed directly to Warrandyte café which was without power. (That same wind storm.) I think Rob eventually negotiated to get an iced coffee.

Rob confirmed a total of 260 km for the day in balmy 33 degrees. Till next time then.

**Ben Warden**