

Kenilworth to Kilkivan – 19/20 – November 2011

You could almost smell the anticipation in the air at the Kenilworth car park. Out of the group of 14 a lot had not ridden for nearly six months so to say they were keen was an understatement.

The guys varied in age from Sam at 21 right up to Chris at 64. We had a full range of abilities from Mick, Steff, and Foxy who were just getting into riding after many years break, to Julian, Harv and Brian who were seasoned veterans. In between there was Mark, Phil, Grant, Col, Sam, Troy, Chris and Pete. None of us stars but keen to give it a try. Chris had been setting the pace all morning as he had been up since 4.00am fully dressed in his riding gear. Julian had broken into his honeymoon to be at the ride (brave man) so he was hoping for a great couple of days.

As the bikes were unloaded, the car park was a sea of blue, with a sprinkling of red, orange and Chris' lone new Berg. Everyone was quickly kitted up and after a pre-ride talk and introductions to Bill, Brian and Will we were on our way.

Bill decided to take us on some gauging hills first up to see where we were at. It quickly became apparent we had the full range of abilities as there were plenty of spills and thrills. At the first stop for smoko there was already a few grazes and scratched bikes.

After a feed, Bill warned us that the lactic acid would start to kick in and sure enough in the next half hour there were more cramps than a geriatric rugby game. The cornerman system was getting slower as the pack strung out and people had to stop and try and iron out their ailments. Luckily everyone started to come good in the half hour up to lunch so we were able to pick up some time. One particularly nasty hill saw Brian the super sweep come into his own. Steffs XR was not idling well and being a kick-start was proving difficult to start. People were taking turns at getting it going and everyone was getting pretty stuffed. Brian took the initiative and not only started it but rode all three Hondas to the top while we were all gasping for breath.

As we rode into Amamoor State Forest, Will had a great spread set up for us by the river. With Bikes and bodies refuelled, Bill said he would take us up "Gentle Annie" as a bit of an easy ride after lunch. We couldn't work out why Brian was sniggering in the background, but it soon became clear. Gentle Annie was anything but gentle with some great uphill and treacherous downs. Some of the downhill proved a bit much for Pete as he came to grief a few times. By then some of the riders were way out in front and after waiting for 45mins on some corners it became apparent that something was not right. Bill started making his way back picking up the cornermen on the way and gathered half of us at a meeting point. He then rode off to see what had happened as we waited for another hour. It turned out that one of Pete's fork seals had leaked oil all over his front brake pads and in the struggle to wrestle the bike down the back side of Gentle Annie, Pete had taken a few spills and had overheated in the 30+ degrees heat of the afternoon. Super sweep Brian proved his worth again when he provided Pete with a free ride out and Mark and interesting hill climb on the back of his trusty steed to nurse Pete's bike to the support vehicle. Eventually, everyone came along but it was apparent that Pete had hurt his knee and ankle pretty badly and was exhausted. So from there it was into the support car for Pete and the Honda and his tour was over. For the rest of us we were still 70km's from Kilkivan at 5.30pm in the afternoon, so it was fill the bikes and hammer up the bitumen. Chris and Grant on the 2 bangers loved the ride and as the sun set we rode into the Kilkivan pub, but the drama was not over.

As we grabbed some beers we could see Bill looking agitated. We soon worked out that the pub had managed to double book some of the rooms so all of a sudden a bad day got worse. Bill had steam coming out of his ears as he tried to work out what had happened with the rooms. There was talk of having to sleep at his mates place, but in the end the ladies at the pub did a great job of sorting out some extra mattresses and bedding and squeezing them in where we could. Brian gave Bill a big cuddle which settled him down and the free shooters at the bar later in the night smoothed the waters. After a big steak there were plenty of laughs with the guys and the Dutch backpackers working behind the bar. Col managed to get his arms around

them, telling the rest of us that it was just for a photo. The publican was last heard yelling at Bill and Brian to “shut up and go to bed” at 1.30am then the hotel fell silent.

The sun was up at 5.00 and so were the riders. There was a flurry of activity with air filter changes, chain tightening, chain lubes and KTM fuel injection filter changes (a KTM feature apparently). There was also a comparison of bumps and grazes with Foxy well in front in that department. He had bark off most limbs and a Lantana lash to the face in addition to the bruises starting to form, pretty impressive. Brian gave Foxys suspension a tune-up which helped him stay on the bike a bit more Sunday.

Plenty of bacon and eggs and the obligatory photo in front of the pub and we were on our way at 7.30am. Lots of open trails and a couple of testing sections and before long we had eaten up the k's and arrived for morning tea. A quick feed of sugar and we were on our way.

Just before lunch, Bill showed us a gnarly hill climb and laid the challenge down. One shot at the title due to time constraints. Failure was not an option. Steff, Mick, Foxy and Mark (who had been busy grooming himself and not listening), took the chicken track to the top for a tea party. The rest of us roared off to the bottom salivating. As we got there Mark came barrelling down the hill climb after realising where we were. He then proceeded to ride back up. Next was Brian making it look easy, followed by Phil. It was 3 nil to the blue boys at that stage. Troy tried to putt up to no avail, and the yammys had their first failure. He pleaded for another go and this time did it looking like a pro. Col was up and next was Harv on the first mango muncher. He was going great until he dropped his handbag and tried to grab it and looped out. He was skull dragged to the top with his head hung low. Grant also had a try on the orange machine but went back down the long way. Sam had a go on the 250 but didn't have the power and kicked his bike back down the hill. Finally Chris had a chop on the Berg, but was unable to conquer the mountain. Plenty of laughs and a resounding win to the boys in blue.

After lunch Bill said he would take us for a couple of hours of hard yakka if we were up for it. He said he would hand out some pain tickets so only come if we were really keen. Steff and Mick decided they had enough riding for the weekend, but the rest of us were on. What followed was a couple of hours of fantastic riding. Plenty of hills and tight single trail to keep all entertained. Troy and Harv had a great dual for more than 20 minutes with Harv unable to take him. Also plenty of spills as everyone got more fatigued. Mark and Julian had also spent the previous hour contending to dust each other when Mark hit the deck. He was busy posting it on facebook and explaining himself to his wife when Brian the sweep came along and told him to get his arse into gear. A quick straighten of the bars and Mark was on his way. Julian then had a nice get-off near the end as he stoved his head into the mountain he was found wandering around looking for his Mojo.

As we rolled up to the Kenilworth Sewage Plant we had huge smiles through our dust covered faces. As Bill gave the final wrap up, Sams back tyre went flat. The first of the weekend at just the right time. Then it was back to load the bikes and a couple of cold beers at the Kenilworth Pub before the long drive home. A top weekend and great introduction to Kenilworth.

Thanks to Bill, Brian and Will from Scar Tours.



