

RIDING WITH THE OLD BLOKE



NEW BIKE FROM BSA

At its peak, BSA was (with Triumph) the top-selling motorcycle brand in the world. Oh, how the mighty have fallen. After Norton Villiers Triumph went into liquidation in the late 1970s, BSA kind of staggered on under various owner groups, until in 2016 it was sold to the Mahindra Group, in India. The company makes scooters, so have been in the two-wheeled business for a while. And now they have produced their first model under the BSA name.



Their first release is the **Gold Star 650**. Hmm, sound familiar? Yes, the Gold Star was one of BSA's most famous bikes, that was in production from 1939 until 1963. The original bike was a single-cylinder, OHV unit of either 350cc or 500cc capacity. They were known for being a fast bike. In 500cc form, they pushed out up to 42 hp.

So, what is the new one? It too is a single-cylinder, but with twin overhead-cams, and of course the larger capacity, of 652cc. Power is 45 hp. (*So not much more than the best of the original!*). Weight is fairly substantial, at 213kg. So it's not going to be fast. It will probably stop okay, with twin discs up front and a single disc at the back. The front wheel pays homage to the original bike, being an 18".

It is first and foremost a tribute bike. Take a look at the photo above. On the left is an original Gold Star; on the right is the new one.

I don't know about you, but I don't like iconic British brands being churned out in India or China. I think it is a travesty that cars (and they are mostly SUVs) are being made in China with an MG badge. *Cecil Kimber would be turning in his grave!* And likewise BSA coming from a company in India. Okay, I admit it's not quite as bad as that, because at least some of the bikes will be made in Britain. So it's kind of like Tata in India owning Jaguar. (*I'm not happy about that either!*). Royal Enfield is different,

because they were part of the original Royal Enfield business –being made in India under licence, and then doing it full-time when the British parent company went bust. Anyway, it will be interesting to see what they are like.

FINALLY – A NICE DAY, AND A RIDE!

It had been well over a month since I'd had a ride – and that was a just a short one. As I said last time, other commitments and unsuitable weather (mainly the weather), had kept the bike in the shed. But finally a day came where there were blue



skies, mild temperature, not much wind... so it was time to get the bike out!

I headed down the coast a bit, had lunch looking out over the ocean, and then some back roads and onto the highway back home. And I stopped a couple of times along the way to take some photos.

It was good to be out on the bike again! Especially if I haven't ridden it for a while, I often reflect on just how different the bike is to what it was when I first bought it. Mostly in comfort. It rides so much better with the Hagon rear unit, and the seat ... well, it just works so well! **Mick, at MJM Motorcycle Seats, is a genius!** Even on previous bikes I used to get pain developing on the pointy bones of my pelvis. Even with a sheepskin cover with a layer of foam under it (my standard set-up on seats). But I don't get that now. And, following his advice, I don't even have the sheepskin pad on! The Michelin Road 5 tyres are smoother too, than the Michelin PR4 it had as standard.

Of course a few aches and pains have developed by the time I get back (*I'm an old bloke!*), but it's my age and skeletal issues that are the problem, not the bike.

SETTING THE SCENE



London has the Ace Café, and the Illawarra region of NSW has the **Robertson Pie Shop**. It's the place where bikers go to meet up, and admire each other's machines, and discuss motorcycling etc. And have a pie or other gastronomical delight. It's a good destination on a weekend, just to join in the atmosphere of the place.

Well, the owner – who is very supportive of the motorcycling scene – recently commissioned a couple of artists to paint a mural on the wall adjoining the entrance. **Having a mural like this on the wall really sets the scene for it being a motorcycling meeting place.**

The photo I took was affected by having the light in the wrong place, and tables and chairs in front of the wall, so I couldn't get a great picture; but you can still see how great it is! Wonderful talent! And it's so good to see that on the wall of this iconic biker's location.

The mural is also a memorial to riders who lost their lives on the road. (The Pie Shop is not far from the top of the famous Macquarie Pass). There are two names

painted on the bottom / right corner of the painting. This is perhaps a bit confusing, because the two names are *not* the riders pictured in the painting. With two riders in the painting, and two names on the bottom, it would be natural to assume those were the two who died; but they're not. The riders pictured are both alive and well.

It's worth mentioning perhaps, that the two riders mentioned, who died in 2010 and 2012 respectively, are just two in a long history of fatalities on Macquarie Pass. There was a bad period about 15 years ago when an average of one rider every year was killed on the Pass. In fact there were 3 fatalities in 6 months at one point. So the names at the bottom of the painting are a memorial, and also a reminder that the road can be dangerous.

I think the mural is an exceptional piece of work; and great to have at the Pie Shop!

A TIGHT TUSSLE AT THE TOP

Australian Motorcycle News has just announced its **Bike Of the Year**. It came down to a final bunch of 9 bikes, that they tested over 3 days. It was a tight contest at the top: the winning bike won by just 1 point; and there was a tie for 3rd. And so, the winner is..... (*drum roll*)... the **Ducati Multistrada V4 S**. Adventure bikes – if they're done well – can be extremely practical. Comfortable riding positions (*try doing a long trip on a super-sportsbike!!*), and long-travel suspension that provides a comfortable ride over our varied road surfaces (even some of highways are rough!). If they can make them go, stop, and handle, as well (a big ask, for sure) then they're onto a winning formula. The only downside can be seat-height (for less lanky people than me) and the top-heaviness that the style results in. (*Seat height could be why every time I've got on a Multistrada I've banged my knee on the back of the bike!*). Oh, and weather-protection is not usually too flash, with fairings being either non-existent or very minimal. Although I still think that in our warm climate a semi-fairing is much more practical and livable than a full-fairing.

So, apparently the Multistrada does all those good things well. There's lots of tech too – with semi-active suspension, adaptive cruise control, traction control, wheelie control, hill hold, blind spot detection, blind spot warning, and an up and down quick shifter. You also get four adjustable ride modes.

Click [here](#) for a preview video, showing the bikes in action. And click [here](#) for a story of the winning bike – and the other place-getters.

Oh, and if you want to see what I thought of the same model when I rode it back in 2011, (*it's not as different as you might expect*) click [here](#).

I HAD TO GET THE TABLES OUT



lunch was had etc. But I couldn't just put it back in the shed!

So, on with the gear, and off for a short ride. Had to be short, because I had other things I had to do. But a quick blast around the local countryside was very enjoyable.

It's Christmas Eve. We have family coming for Christmas dinner tomorrow. So I had to get the fold-up tables out to put along our back sundeck, where the feast will occur. The tables are stored against the back wall of the garage. So I have to move the bike (or the old car) out to get them out. So I rode it out into the driveway. It sat there while tables were assembled and

And yes, I said “*blast*” – it gets up and goes pretty well if you give it a few revs and give the throttle a decent twist!

COMPUTERS AND INDIGESTION

I promised you **a bit of nostalgia** last time. (*I've already given you a link to a road-test I did in 2011*). Well, this is a blast-from-the-past: a humorous article I wrote, many years ago now, about an incident that involved a recalcitrant computer, a bit of being dumb on my part, and ridiculous service in a takeaway shop. And bikes – of course there are bikes in it! Click [here](#) for that.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!

Well, as I said, it is Christmas Eve – technically it's Christmas Day, as it has just gone midnight. So I would like to wish you all a very **Merry Christmas, and Best Wishes for the New Year!**

Stay safe, and enjoy the ride.

Elwyn

(The Old Bloke)