

RIDING WITH THE OLD BLOKE



OUT ON THE ROAD – WHEN I CAN



A fine day, with light wind, and warm sunshine would have been the perfect conditions for a ride on a winter's day. But, as Meatloaf used to sing, "two out of three ain't bad". The day I picked was fine, the wind was very light, but there was no warm sunshine! In fact **it was pretty chilly** – especially up in the Highlands, where I decided to go. That included a ride up and down Macquarie Pass, and lunch at Robertson Bowling Club. (Great food and no crowds – just how I like it to be in these COVID-plagued days!).

On the coast it was about 16 degrees, but up in the Highlands it was only 9. I was dressed warmly, except for my legs. My Draggin C-Evo jeans, being fully lined with Kevlar, are very good at insulating the legs from temperatures – both cold and hot actually. But my legs were feeling a bit cold as I rode out. (*Note to self: get the thermal long-johns out!*).

I checked the weather when I left to come home and it was **8.6 degrees with a "Feels like" of just 3.7**. And as someone said when I posted this on my Facebook page, "On a bike, with a lot more wind-factor, it is even less!" True!! But it was still enjoyable to get out for a half-decent ride!

I haven't been doing much riding though. As I explained previously, bad weather, other commitments, and problems with my neck and back (neck mostly) have kept me off the bike – apart from occasional short runs.

SCOOTING IN THE SUNSHINE



It was about a week after that ride I mentioned above that there were all three of those ingredients for a good riding day that I mentioned above – a fine day, light wind,

and warm sunshine! Having ridden in the Highlands the week before, this day I stayed on the coastal area. There were a lot of bikes out and about, including this group of scooters lined up outside a café in Jamberoo. Quite a few different makes and models. *Looked good!*

CRAZY AUCTION PRICES!

Putting a dollar-value on a classic vehicle (bike or car) can be a difficult thing. There are guides, of course, (for those into classic cars I've just bought Survivor Car Australia's annual guide to classic car values – check at your favourite newsagent!); but basically it boils down to **'whatever someone is willing to pay'**. And what people are sometimes willing to pay can be mid-boggling, to say the least!

As an example, Guy Allen, in his always interesting monthly online publication, Allmoto, reported on a couple of sales at an auction in UK. The first (pictured below / left) was a **1993 Ducati 900SS**. It had been sitting around for a few years and needed a bit of a tidy-up, but was apparently in pretty good condition. It sold for the equivalent of just \$2,800. *For a classic Ducati!!* But at the other end of the scale, a **1968 Lambretta**, which was described as "nicely preserved", went for the equivalent of \$45,700!! *What??!! Crazy!*



THE COST OF RIDING?



With the way prices have been sky-rocketing lately, **the cost of fuel and the economy of bikes seems to have become a big topic of conversation on forums and social media.** I must say, that is something that has never concerned me; and still doesn't! That's because I have always viewed bikes as being extremely economical (compared to cars), and so riding a bike is very cheap. Now, I should point out that the riding I do is for recreation; I don't commute. For those who do ride to work (and I know some people ride a fair distance each day), then obviously the cost of petrol is a significant factor. But when a weekend ride is going to cost way less than an outing in the car, it tends not to be a concern.

Another issue of course, is how hard you ride. My previous bike – Yamaha XJR1300 – could apparently get quite thirsty if you rode it hard. (*But the cost of speeding fines doing that would bring, would far out-weight the extra cost of petrol!*). So I didn't ride it that hard. But I didn't pussy-foot around either! I've never ridden for economy on a bike. For me, **the only times I've ever ridden to conserve petrol is**

when I've been worried about running out! Even so, I still got around 19 – 20 km /L out of that big-engined bike.

Sure, I do notice the increase in cost of petrol when it happens. I remember when \$10 would easily fill the tank after a day's ride. When I started needing more than \$20 to top-up, I did raise the eyebrows a bit. These days, even on the Tracer (which is very economical), it would take around \$30 to fill it up from almost empty. But when I regularly put over \$100 in the car to fill up, it still seems cheap.

But, as I said, I have noticed it becoming a common topic of conversation online, and amongst riding groups. And it does seem – for some people anyway – to be influencing what bike they buy. Again, this is more of an issue for people who do a lot of riding, but I see people asking about prospective bikes and how many km owners get to the tank etc. And so there seems to be a trend – *amongst some people, not all!* – away from big bikes, and towards smaller, more economical bikes. Yes, people are still buying big bikes, but **smaller, more economical bikes I think are going to be an increasingly popular choice in the future.**

By the way, about 10 years ago I wrote an article on the website on **the cost of riding.** This covered not just petrol, but lunch and other costs that may be incurred in a day out on the bike. Everything taken in, it actually can get quite expensive. The figures for those consumables have changed since then, of course, but the principles are the same; so you might like to take a look. Click [here](#).

YAMAHA GOING ELECTRIC



Last month I wrote about BMW's new electric scooter. Well, Yamaha are about to release an electric scooter. The **Yamaha E01** is aiming strictly at the commuter class though; and offers performance equivalent to the 50cc – 125cc petrol-powered models. It has a range of about 100km. There are no plans to sell it here though. The electric scoot is going to Europe, Indonesia, Taiwan, and Thailand (as well as Japan, where it is built). These countries are places where scooters are very popular, so they

will see how they sell there before offering it in countries like Australia.

But wait, there's more! The **Yamaha NEO** is made in Vietnam, and aimed at the 50cc petrol market. Although – *typically!* – it is much more expensive than those. Again, Asia and Europe are the target markets. It has a range of...*try not to laugh!*... **37km.** Nah, I can't see Australia getting that – *I know people who ride further than that to go to the pub!* (If you're interested, [here](#) is a video on the Yamaha E01).

WILL HISTORY REPEAT?

During World War 2 – and for a time after it – petrol was in short supply. Add to that the fact that cars were very expensive, and you have good reason for people to choose a motorbike for their day-to-day transport. This is one reason why bikes were so popular in Britain – a country where weather conditions are often not exactly favourable for motorcycling. (Of course some bikes were also being ridden for enjoyment!). It happened in Australia too. I remember my father telling me about a mate who had a motorbike-and-sidecar as his family transport during the early 1950s; for those same economic reasons. (Dad often travelled in the side-car when his mate would pick him up

to go somewhere). Then as petrol supplies went back to normal, families (especially with more than two people) started going back to using cars for their transport.

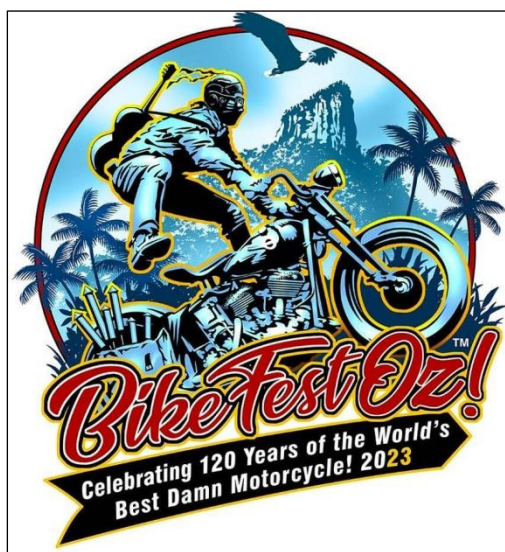
But cars were still expensive. I remember reading a road test of an Austin Freeway (*remember them?*) back in the mid 1960s and the writer commented on the reasonable price, saying that it was “no more than the average annual salary”, which he said was what people wanted. So the motorbike was still seen as an economical alternative to using a car – although more as a second vehicle to go to work than main transport. But, over time, cars got a lot cheaper (compared to average income) and the motorbike became less attractive as an alternate means of day-to-day transport.

A short article in the June / July issue of Australian Road Rider summed up this transition very well:

“Post WWII, motorcycles became really popular because they were vastly more affordable than cars, and used less fuel..... As the price of fuel dropped, and cars became both cheaper to buy and more reliable, motorcycles became recreational vehicles rather than everyday transport.”

But now, they suggest, the tide is turning again – petrol is much more expensive (*due partly to war again!*), and as the cost of living rises against average income, a motorcycle – which is much cheaper to buy and much cheaper to run – will become increasingly attractive as a means of transport. Interesting speculation!

BIKE FEST COMING NEXT YEAR



Chris Beattie is the founder of Heavy Duty magazine – a magazine that caters mainly for Harley Davidson aficionados – and he reckoned Australia needed an annual Motorcycle event; like they have at Sturgis in America. So he got some like-minded people together and they have started planning. The result of the planning so far has resulted in a name, **Bike Fest Oz**, the logo you see here, a location, and a rough plan of when. The location will be Queensland’s Gold Coast; and the ‘when’ looks like being around mid August next year. Yes, they’ve given themselves a year to get it going. As Chris has said, “*There is a bloody lot of work ahead, that’s for sure, but we’ve got the*

support of a lot of the local community up here.” It sounds great (especially if you’re a Harley fan), so pencil it in the diary for next year.

The concept has been tried before, of course! The most recent one was about three years ago when the **Australian Motorcycle Festival** was held over two days in November 2019 at Wollongong. I was there for that; in fact it was where I bought the winning ticket in The Snowy Ride’s bike raffle! It was intended to be an annual event, but it hasn’t happened since – probably due to Covid more than to a lack of intention!

Prior to that, back in 2003 there was the **Australian Motorcycle Week** held in Tasmania. That was a big event, very well organised, and involved places all around Tassie. I was there for that one too! My wife and I had been planning a holiday, and I cunningly suggested we go to Tasmania; in November, just happening to coincide with Motorcycling Week. My original intention was to hire a bike (we flew there) and do some riding while we were there. But the cost of hiring, plus the “excess” for any insurance claim (even if it was stolen from outside your motel room at night) was prohibitive. (*My wife wasn’t overly keen about me abandoning her to do her own thing*

while I went riding either!). But I did get to see a few displays, and events etc. It was held again the following year, (I didn't go to that one) but that was the last one. Tasmania was a great place to go riding, but a difficult and expensive exercise in getting there. You can read about my trip there and the festival by clicking [here](#).

WHEN TO REPLACE THE GEAR?

I got involved in a discussion on Facebook with a friend and others commenting on his post, about **when to replace riding gear**. He hasn't been riding for some time and recently has been servicing the bike and sorting gear ready to hit the road again. First thing – and the subject of his post – was his **helmet**. When should you replace your helmet? I wrote an article for the website on this a few years ago – click [here](#) to read that. As I mention in that, Arai's recommendation (which is a good guide) is **5 years after it is first worn, or 7 years after manufacture**. But I reckon it's not as simple as that. As I wrote in that article, it can vary depending on how often you use it. I still think it's only logical that if you use your helmet every day, rain, hail or shine, it will deteriorate more quickly – and therefore need replacing sooner – than if you only use it on weekends, and on fine days. So, again as I wrote in that article, the answer could be, “when it needs replacing!” That, I would argue, could be sooner, or later, than Arai's guidelines. But remember that the materials – especially the styrofoam – will deteriorate over a long period of time, even without being used.

One difficulty can be knowing when it was made. I address that issue in the article too. And it is important, because sometimes they can sit on the shelf in the shop for years before someone buys it. As I wrote there, I saw one that was well into its 4th year still sitting on the shelf “new”. I once saw some helmets that were being sold at reduced price; there was no reason given for the discounted price, but a look at the manufacture date revealed them to be all a few years old – one was 5 years old! So it is important, but **finding the date of manufacture – especially on a used helmet – can be difficult**. Arai (my friend's helmet was an Arai) are good – they have the date of manufacture stamped into the chin-strap. Some have a label stuck to the inside of the helmet, underneath the padding somewhere. (*And good luck finding it!*). I have a Shoei and it had the date printed on a sticker on the inside of the chin-guard section. The problem is, over the years it has worn off. (Thus my mention of used helmets above). So I don't know when it was made. I think it was about a year old when I bought it. I do know when I bought it, so that is a help. (*And it is over-due for replacement!*).

My friend then mentioned jackets. Hmm, now there's a thought! They probably have a “use-by” date as well; because materials and stitching will perish a bit over time. My (fabric) winter jacket is I don't know how old! It would be around 15 years old I'd guess. Maybe even more! But it looks fine – there are no rips or tears, no sign of stitching coming apart etc. But how would it perform in an accident? No doubt the foam armour would be getting old and perhaps not as good as it should be.

What about gloves? I have a few pairs of gloves, but mostly only use one pair now; a pair my wife bought for me many years ago. They too, seem okay, but do they deteriorate? I remember back in my trail-riding days the leather gloves I wore would wear-out after a few years, and I'd buy new ones. But there's no sign of wearing-out on any of mine. So should they be replaced after a particular length of time? I really don't know! But it's got us all thinking! Let me know what you think!

Well, that's it for now. I hope you enjoyed the read. Stay safe, and enjoy the ride!

Elwyn

(The Old Bloke)