

RIDING WITH THE OLD BLOKE

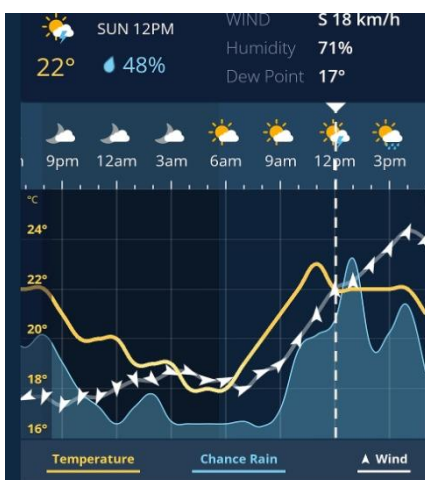


DECEMBER 2023



An appropriate start to the December edition! An online friend, **Kevin**, takes part each year in a great event called “**Santas On A Bike**”. Lots of bikers dressed in Santa suits, delivering presents and, in particular, raising money for charity. Great to see so many riders participating. Well done, Kevin! (That’s his Yamaha XJ900 at the front / left. He also has a late model Royal Enfield).

RAIN, RAIN, GO AWAY



Speaking of Christmas runs, the **South Coast Toy Run** was on 3rd of this month. There is a local (to me) one, but for many years I’ve preferred this one. It starts at Nowra, about 75 km away, then rides back to Berry, about 20 km, arriving at the Bowling Club carpark at 12pm. This was the weather forecast chart for the day – rain right on the time we would be arriving.

The past couple of times I’ve been in it I rode straight to the end-point. The reason was to avoid the stop-start slow (*and hot!*) riding through the town. Although I don’t think it has been held for the past couple of years due to Covid.

Anyway, the forecast rain was enough to put me off riding there. (As well as my physical ailments at the moment). I considered going in the car, but ended up taking my wife out to lunch at a different venue.

Oh, and yes, **it did rain** – although a little later than predicted, (where I was anyway). We’ve had a lot of rain over the past few weeks!

GAINING CONFIDENCE



of extra time also. But she has been out practicing. As I mentioned before, one of the things she had to get used to was using a clutch and gears: she has never used a manual transmission – in anything. It’s a common problem these days: kids learn to drive in an automatic car, only drive automatics, and when they get a bike.... There’s a whole new skill to learn before they can even start off! And that quite apart from learning how to ride a motorbike!

Anyway, I recently got an opportunity to watch her ride. She was riding around a huge parking-area not far from her home. I hadn’t seen her ride before. She looked very confident. She still felt a bit intimidated by the clutch and gears, and that whole process, but she was doing well. And practicing around a parking area like this is great. She is a very sensible young girl!

I was able to pass on a few little tips (like using a few more revs on take-off), and it was good to see her gaining the confidence.

GEOFF DOES JAPAN



Yes, he’s been off globe-trotting again. This time our intrepid world biker has been in Japan. As usual, the stories he writes of his trips describe the fascinating culture and customs, along with what it is like to ride in these places. A great read! Click [here](#).

IT REALLY WAS A WIDOW-MAKER!



We got some feedback on the story of Harry Metcalfe and the **Kawasaki H2**, in which he refuted (to some extent) the name of ‘widow-maker’ applied to it. **John** wrote: *“The HP2 was a widow maker. Your correspondent is too young to know. I never owned one but whoever did rode them at warp speed. I spent a little time on a Honda K2 which was a whole lot more sensible.”*

Harry Metcalfe is in his early 60s, and is a professional and greatly experienced motoring journalist. The main issue here is that the version he was riding was the 3rd or 4th version, and it had been toned-down a bit by then, to make it more rideable.

I remember reading an article a while ago (which I mentioned in an item here) why Honda didn't throw all of its latest technology at the 750 – they deliberately made it less powerful than they could have, to make it easier and more practical to ride.

Doug, a former motorcycle policeman, wrote: *“I had an ‘interesting’ experience with a H1. With the police I had to ride a stolen one back to the police holding yard. In full police cyclist uniform, I hopped on kick-started it, rode off, gave it a fist full and the front wheel rapidly popped up in the air..... Totally unprepared for this, and fortunately I backed off and the wheel came down, but geez, scared the crap out of me. Wasn't hard to do a controlled wheely on the police 750 Hondas, but this just popped the wheel up without warning as if it was the normal thing to do and in full uniform for all to see.”*

And they'd all be saying, “Look at that hooligan copper!” ☺ Yes, as I mentioned in my reply to John's comment, Honda intentionally didn't make their 750 as powerful and fast as they could have done – to make it more user-friendly. Fast and powerful, but controllable.

WOULD YOU RIDE WITHOUT BOOTS?

For many that would seem a silly question. (*I've seen people riding in thongs!*). But for ATGATT people (like me) it can be a significant issue; if the situation arises.

Recently I had one of my riding boots in for repair. The left one. The leather pad on the top of the foot part (that cushions the foot against the gear-lever) came off. I know when it happened. I felt something soft hit my left leg, but assumed it was just something that had been flicked up off the road. I noticed it missing when I got home. (*“Ah, so that's what that was!”*). I rode with it like that for a while, before finally taking it to a local boot-maker to get fixed. He's a great guy! I take all my shoe / boot repairs to him. A lot of his business is making special shoes for people with physical problems, like one leg shorter than the other, or some other problem where they need specialised footwear. He can also stretch shoes to size if they are a tight fit and so on. But he is busy; so the repair took a couple of weeks.

During that time, the above issue came up. I don't have spare boots. (*Why didn't I keep my old ones as spares when I bought these?*). There were only a couple of occasions when I considered the possibility of going for a ride; but it was enough to make me wonder. So if I rode, it would have to be without boots. My options were to wear gumboots (back in my early days of riding trail-bikes my riding boots were steel-capped gumboots), or normal joggers. Back when I used to drive some distances to test-ride a bike, I would sometimes wear joggers to drive, and keep them on when I rode. (Always tuck the laces inside the shoe!). There were places I wouldn't ride without proper boots, but a short easy ride to a favourite café might be okay. But I decided not to. I could wait; although that was another reason I didn't go on the toy-run I mentioned on the first page. (Although if I'd had my boots I still would have decided against riding there – for the reasons mentioned).

MASTERING THE DUCATI?

There's no doubt that Ducati is the bike to have in top-level; racing. In Superbikes a Ducati had won with a couple of rounds still to go. In MotoGP the championship went down to the wire, but it was a matter of which Ducati is going to win? So it's no surprise that **Marc Marquez** left the under-performing Honda (who he has raced for since joining the championship in 2013). Although the people at Honda were apparently not happy about it! But, the question is, will he master the Italian beast? The Ducatis have proven to be, let's just say, *different* to ride in the past. A few people have gone to Ducati from other teams and not done well. Valentino Rossi is perhaps the prime

example of this. Others **have** done well. Casey Stoner is perhaps the standout here, having gained most of his success after he moved to Ducati.

Well, initial tests have been completed, and Marc Marquez has impressed everyone with his speed. What makes his speed even more impressive is the fact that he is riding last year's bike, (*actually "this year's" to get the official timeline right*).

But there is criticism too. Some riders are maintaining their view of Marc being too aggressive, causing crashes etc. His fans say he had to be aggressive on the Honda to get it near the top. But now? One of our readers said, "*Being on a Ducati means he can hit other riders at greater speed.*" Harsh, perhaps, but I am also of the opinion that his style has been, and maybe still will be, overly aggressive. We'll see how he goes!

SOJOURNING IN THE SNOWIES

A couple of friends have been to the Snowies (the Snowy Mountains region of NSW and Victoria) recently. Both had a great time: there are great roads for motorcycling all around the area. But both friends had difficult conditions to ride in.

Terry has been riding in the Snowies area each year for many many years, being a regular at the Snowy Ride, until it finished a couple of years ago. But he and his son (and maybe one or two others) still go riding down there every year.

This year they decided to do some dirt-road riding, and travel down the Barry Way. The only problem was Terry was on a road bike, while his companions had Adventure bikes that were better suited (and had better tyres) for those road conditions. He said it was a bit hairy at times, but he got through; and had a great time.



Phil rides in the area every year too; although has traditionally avoided the weekend when thousands of other bikers are there too. This year his rides in the Snowy area were great, although they did get a bit of rain. The really difficult parts came on a couple of occasions when riding mountain roads in rain and fog. The roads his group rode were sealed, but that still doesn't stop you riding off the edge of a blind corner, or crashing, or being crashed into. Brown's Mountain (going from the mountains down towards Bega) was one of those roads. Phil, a very experienced and capable rider, said it was "terrifying". They had to keep moving, but visibility was almost zero.

But despite those times, he said the trip was "Fabulous!"

RIDING THE HIGH COUNTRY

Brent Pearson has a YouTube channel where he posts videos of rides he has done. This one is not exactly the Snowy, but the **Victorian High-Country**, which is sort of the same. Spectacular tracks, and interesting riding – including a couple of crashes.

Click [here](#).

YEARBOOK A GOOD READ

The “Yearbook” edition of **Australian Motorcycle News** has just been released; and it’s a good read! There are lots of interesting articles. Of course there is the **Motorcycle Of The Year (MOTY) award**, with 10 bikes up for the title. They state that, “*No motorcycles were harmed in the making of MOTY 2023, but blood was spilled, glorious roads slain, heated debates bashed out, and lashings of social lubricant consumed*” during the process. The bikes contesting the title ranged from a CF Moto 450R, to a Ducati Diavel V4, and Moto Guzzi V1000 Mandello. How do you compare those? Try to be objective and judge each within their category. So – **spoiler alert!** – what bike won? The **BMW M 1000 R**.

There’s a fascinating story on MotoGP behind-the-scenes legend, **Carlo Pernat**. “*Racing isn’t sex, drugs and rock’n roll anymore, so it’s not my life anymore.*” The now 75-year old says. He tells stories of when it was, but there are other stories too; like bribing border officials to “lose” a competitor’s imported fuel (because the local fuel was rubbish). The competitor’s team came to him and asked if they could buy some of his fuel (he had imported some earlier). “*Sure. The price will be \$200 per litre.*” he replies. (And that was 1985!). The competing team went away empty-handed; and lost.

And there’s more; including an interview with Superbike supremo, **Alvaro Bautista**. As I said, it’s a good read!

AUSSIE POST GOING GREEN – AGAIN.



I should have taken a photo (he probably wouldn’t have cared if I had done), but I didn’t. I was at a local shopping centre and saw a green postie bike pull in – all loaded up with the usual postie mail bags. I expressed my surprise at the colour to the postie, who said they were a special issue – and he’d got one! It looks so different, seeing a postie on a green bike.

They did try going green a few years ago, but only briefly. The bike is a **Honda CT125**.

NICE VIEW – PITY ABOUT THE PARKING.



“**Bald Hill**” at **Stanwell Tops** has always been a popular spot for bikers. It provides a great view out along the coast too. And it is almost always very busy.

So, a few years ago, the local council provided a special “Motorbikes only” parking area. Nice thought, although it would have been better if it had been positioned on flat ground. Where it is, the ground slopes to the left, so bikes are leaning over on the side-stand a fair way.

It’s still used a lot by bikes though (as you can see in the photo).

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

Elwyn
(The Old Bloke)