

# RIDING WITH THE OLD BLOKE



## SCOOTING TO THE MAX



In the March issue I started with a photo of a Yamaha scooter – mostly as a *thumbs-up* to the dealer that posted photos of that, and other new customer purchases, on social media. That was a little 125cc scoot. Well, this issue begins with another Yamaha scooter; but at the other end of the scale – the **TMAX 560 Tech Max**.

Together with the Suzuki Burgman 650, these two machines have pretty much led the field in the maxi-scooter segment. Now that the Suzuki is no more, that leaves the Yammie as the main machine in this class; and it has just been upgraded for 2022.

Australian Road Rider, in a recent test, described the TMAX as, “A motorcycle fitted with scooter transmission, and dressed in scooter clothes.” That’s a pretty good description – especially of this latest version. Check out all the details on the Yamaha site [here](#); and watch a road-test by British YouTube channel Visordown, [here](#).

One thing: in press reports – like the ARR one I mentioned – they say that Australia was only getting the basic model, not the bells-and-whistles Tech Max. But on Yamaha’s website it seems that Australia is going the way that Britain is going (according to the video) of only bringing in the top model. I haven’t checked for sure, but that is what appears to be happening.

The TMAX has been around for a long while, and I tested one back in 2011. I was pretty impressed with it. Check it out [here](#).

## BRING ME SUNSHINE



Those of “a certain age” might remember a song by that title. It was used as the theme to Morecombe & Wise, the British comedy series from.... Well, yes, a while ago. Anyway, after rain and rain, broken only by showery days, finally we got a couple of sunny days. So it was a good opportunity to get the bike out.

Unfortunately, the day didn’t pan out as I would have liked, and it was only a short ride; but it was nice to get out in the sunshine, and nice to be beside the seaside. (*Now that reminds me of a song too!*). Except for traffic. The main street of the seaside town was stop-start gridlocked with traffic!

## TOOTHLESS TIGER?



Jim Lane submitted this comment on the release of the **Triumph Tiger 660** in Australia. Here is what he wrote.

“While the new model will be available elsewhere in both full-power and restricted forms, Australia will only be getting a LAMS-compliant model. As such, the in-line three-cylinder will produce 48 hp (35 kW) and 59 Nm, instead of the 80 hp (59.6 kW) and 64 Nm of the full-powered model.

“Why do they bother? Why would any of us bother, who’ve been riding more than 5 minutes? These manufacturers are brain-dead to thousands of

over 60s in Australia who’ve done the big bike thing and are wanting light, fun, easy-to-manoeuvre without compromise on power.”

Thanks Jim. I’d seen something about this new model, but not looked up the details. I totally agree – in principle – with what he says.

Firstly, I must say I am struck by the similarity to the Tracer 700. Side by side they look like they could almost have come from the same factory! (*It even has the turned-out-to-the-side exhaust*). Specifications are pretty close, and comparing the two, each has a couple of advantage points over the other.

In overseas countries the bike, like the Tracer 700, makes a lot of sense. But let’s look at the Australian release, which Jim was referring to.

Firstly, according to the Triumph Australia website, the power is 55.5 hp (41.5 kW); and 62 Nm of torque. So a little more than the figures Jim found. But if Triumph was copying Yamaha with this new model, **Triumph Australia should have learned a lesson from Yamaha Australia with its Tracer 700**. Yamaha Australia, of course, did exactly the same thing – releasing the Tracer 700 in LAMS only configuration. And sales were very slow. And it was pretty easy to see why. It was more expensive than most LAMS offerings, and a style of bike that I don’t think most learners were interested in. So it tanked, and Yamaha Australia stopped importing them. However the style of bike would have appealed to people who, as Jim said, “have done the big bike thing and are wanting light, fun, easy-to-manoeuvre without compromise on power.” But they totally ignored this market! A market where I think the Tracer would have achieved considerable success – as it has done overseas. Experienced riders might not actually *need* the extra power, but having it available would make it much more attractive to those buyers. So, as I’ve often said, Yamaha Australia shot itself in the foot with this.

And now Triumph has produced a bike that is similar in specification, even looks similar, and has done exactly the same thing Yamaha did! **Yep, “brain-dead” sums it up pretty well!**

Now, as I’ve said, I bought a Tracer because I like the style of bike (I’m the type of person Jim described who it would appeal to), and I was prepared to accept the reduction in power – only because I’d given it a good test, and the power is actually not too bad. But you don’t know that until you’ve ridden one; and perhaps even more so, owned one. And of course there is the “stigma” (as some potential customers would see it) of knowing they’d be “*going back to a learner bike*”, after many years of riding bigger, more powerful bikes.

So I can only see this as being **another good bike that is, in Australia, aimed at the wrong market; and because of that, will probably fail**. Which is disappointing.

## THE EASTER BATHURST BIKE RACES



Easter in the 1970s and 1980s meant one thing for motorcycle racing fans – Bathurst! **A 3-day race meeting was held over the Easter weekend every year, and attracted motorcycle-racing fans from all over the country.** For many it was a ritual – where they went and what they did every year at Easter. I never went there, but a couple of my mates were regular attendees. One, Phil Hall, began as just another spectator but ended up being a photographer and then a commentator.

The racing was always great; in some instances, truly legendary. As **Phil Hall** wrote, in an article published in the online magazine **MCNews.com**, “The races themselves were always wonderful, even those that appeared to have the least promise. After all, you could scarcely expect 125s to turn on a show on a course that had a 174m difference in elevation between its highest and lowest points. But what the track lacked in appeal for the smaller bikes it made up for in colossal fields and close racing.” **There were over 1,000 riders from all over Australia, and even some from overseas, competing in various categories over the weekend.**

But of course it was the larger capacity classes that attracted the most interest. The 500cc bikes were always a big attraction, and for many years it was the 500cc bikes that made up the Australian Grand Prix. The Unlimited Production race saw much larger capacity machines competing.

Click [here](#) to watch a video of the 1983 Australian Grand Prix. Click [here](#) for the 1986 Unlimited Production race. And [here](#) is an on-board video of Dennis Neil riding a lap of Bathurst in 1981 on a Honda 1100 – with commentary!

**The Mount Panorama circuit at Bathurst is not an ideal motorcycle racing circuit** – in the same way that the Isle Of Man is not an ideal motorcycle racing circuit.



There are concrete walls and Armco fences all around the place. There are some drop-offs beside the track that, back in those days, were only separated from the track by wire fences. So if you had an off up there, it was almost guaranteed to be a bad one!



On the left: Roger Hayes lost control and rammed the fence. On the right: The commentator described Malcolm Campbell's crash: “*A moment ago he was the crowd's delight; now he's a tangled body, in a leather bag, dumped on the track.*”

Both of the above survived and recovered. Many didn't. The list of deaths in motorcycle racing at Mount Panorama goes back to when the track first opened, but as we're focusing on the races of the 70s' 80s, and early 90s, I'll list those.

1972 Lan Hog, sidecar

1976 Ross Barelli, Suzuki RG500

1979 Ron Toombs, Yamaha TZ 350F

1980 Rob Moorhouse, Yamaha TZ750

1980 Alec Dick, Kawasaki

1994 Jim Colligan, Sidecar

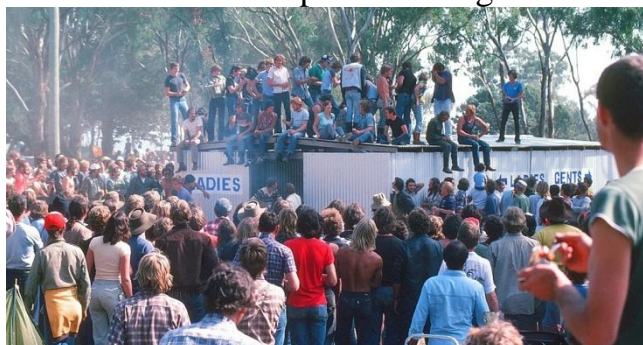
1994 Ian Thornton, Sidecar

Click [here](#) for a story by Phil Hall of the tragic weekend that saw the death of Alec Dick and Rob Moorhouse – with Rob Moorhouse being the focus of Phil's story.

*(\*Phil's story states the year as 1981, but all the references I saw listed it as 1980).*

Sadly, while famous for the racing, the Easter weekend became just as famous – or infamous – for the rioting, which plagued the event in the 1980s.

Phil Hall, described the situation that developed at the top of the mountain. “It was at the top of the mountain that the, how shall I say it, more ‘rowdy’ element of the crowd gathered and it was that group, which grew steadily in numbers year by year, that was to precipitate the riots that blighted the races and dominated the media reports in the late 70's – early-80's. For altogether too many of the mountain-dwellers, Bathurst was an excuse for a three day booze-up and many of these people never even raised themselves from their positions to go out to the fence and watch a race.



“The concern by the authorities about the increasingly raucous behavior on the mountain especially at night once the races were over (burnouts in the dirt, torching peoples' bikes, fights and excessive drinking / drug taking) led the police to be in increasing numbers on the mountain which only inflamed the situation. Stand-offs between the police and belligerent spectators became increasingly tense and ultimately led to ugly riots that garnered all the wrong sorts of publicity.”

But confrontations with police started before the bikers even got there. As Phil Hall describes, “Nearly all motorcycles coming into town from any direction were routinely stopped, license checks were carried out and luggage searched for drugs and weapons. It was claimed to be for safety reasons but it basically amounted to officially sanctioned police harassment.”

Click [here](#) for a Channel 7 news report of the riot in 1985.

As far as I can tell (exact details on the last meeting are a bit scarce) the races came to an end in 1994, following the deaths of another 2 competitors that weekend. Yes, there was one held in 2000, as a kind of tribute to the race weekends that had gone before, but from what I recall it was all a bit flat. There was some good racing, but it didn't have the atmosphere of the ones before. And it never happened again.

*(\*Click [here](#) for the full article on the races by Phil Hall)*

*(\*Photos: Various online sources)*

## FEEDBACK



Doug wrote in response to the item on helmets in the last issue. It was Doug who suggested going to an open-face helmet; which he said was much lighter, gave much better vision, and was much cooler in summer. He wrote: “I know you aren’t rapt in them but here is mine. It is a **Dririder** with a substantial fixed peak bolted on and a flip up Perspex screen that slides up under the peak when up.

“I know, it’s horses for courses.....”

Yes, it is a personal choice, and definitely horses for courses. It looks like yours is a good thing anyway, Doug. Like the Shoei I mentioned which had extended sides and the visor clipped onto those. Dririder is always good quality stuff too. (*Not like those \$69 cheapies I mentioned!!*). I’ll stick to my full-face, but I’m sure the lighter weight and coolness in summer etc would be an advantage.

## BACK TO BASICS

I’ve been watching **a few videos on basic operations**. You might recall one I put a link to on here about various basic techniques, including getting on and off, a couple of issues ago. (*I still don’t do it that way outside the garage by the way*). Anyway, I reckon it doesn’t hurt to go over basics now and then. For most of you reading this, you will, like me, have been riding for a very long time, and would be inclined to think you got all the basics down pat many years ago. But over that time you can forget things; or maybe there are things that you never actually learned at all back then. Anyway, I’ve been watching a few of these, and I have to say that I have picked up a couple of things. **For example, stopping.**

Stopping is easy – you just do it. But there is a lot involved actually. The video I watched on this didn’t go into all the details (like where to stop in relation to the car in front if you’re in traffic etc), but there was one thing I haven’t been doing – not all the time anyway – and that is **completing the stop with just the back brake**. You use both brakes to slow down, but for the very final stage of the stop, use just the back brake. It makes the bike more balanced and stable. If you use the front brake to come to a complete stop there is more weight on the front, the forks compress more, and the whole thing is less stable than doing that final part of the stop with just the back brake. If you’ve ever come to a stop more suddenly than you expect (with the front brake applied), and the bike has wanted to fall as you momentarily lose your balance, you’ll know what I mean.

Most of the videos I’ve watched have been by MCrider. He’s pretty good. Click [here](#) to watch the one on stopping.

## RIDING AT EASTER

Easter is not really a good time to be on the road. But I usually do get a ride in over the Easter weekend. Yes, I have occasionally been caught in traffic, but I usually avoid traffic by going places where there isn’t a lot of traffic. (Road closures were another problem this year). But we finally had some nice sunny days, so on the Saturday I did go for a short ride. Not far, but it was still good to get out on the bike!

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

*Elwyn*  
(The Old Bloke)