

# ***RIDING WITH THE OLD BLOKE***



## **HARRY'S (BIKE) GARAGE**

As you probably know, cars are a big interest of mine, as well as bikes. I've always been a car-nut! And one show I enjoy watching is “**Harry's Garage**”; on YouTube. Very popular show. Last year he clocked up about 29 million views in total! He's an older bloke, former editor of *Evo* magazine (I think he founded it), and a very likeable sort of guy. Well, he's into bikes as well; and has a **collection of bikes that have won the Paris-Dakar**. Especially as the Paris-Dakar is on at the moment (well it was when I was writing this bit), I thought I'd give you a link to a video on one of his Dakar-winning bikes. He says it is his favourite: the **Cagiva Elephant 900ie**.



It is a special version of the Elephant with some changes to make it even more competitive for the grueling event. It has a Ducati engine.

Now, Harry lives on a farm (if you're interested in agriculture he also does a series called “Harry's Farm”), and his bike videos are all done around the paddocks of his farm. He gets the Cagiva air-borne a few times, and then gets it up to about 150 km/h across one of his paddocks. Click [here](#) to watch the video.

## **Downsizing – Sometimes It Works, Sometimes It Doesn't**

I was inspired to visit this subject again (I have written an article on it previously) by a friend who down-sized a while ago. He didn't sell his current bike first though, and over the next couple of months was in the unique position of having the new (smaller) bike, but also still having his old (larger) bike. It ended up being quite a decision as to which bike he kept. I won't spoil the ending (*you'll have to read the article to find out!*), but it got me thinking about downsizing, and the different experiences people I know have had with downsizing.

I'll quote a piece from what I wrote in the article; and it is an important consideration that many people don't think about. “It's worth remembering that most of us have gone the other way – started out on something small, and upsized to a bigger bike. Obviously those bigger bikes had advantages we wanted to have by upsizing. When we downsize it can be, to some extent, almost a retrograde step – giving up some of those big-bike advantages that drew us to the larger machines in the first place.” I must admit I felt a bit that way when I bought the Tracer – a bike that was somewhat similar to the bike I'd had before I went bigger and bought the XJR1300.

Anyway, I think you'll find these different experiences interesting – especially if you are at that point of considering downsizing too. Click [here](#).

## **RESPONSE TO STAYSAFE'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

The government has responded to recommendations put to it by Staysafe, and its “Reducing Trauma on Local Roads” booklet has been sent out. The Motorcycle Council of NSW have cited recommendation 21 & 22 as relevant to motorcyclists. They are as follows:

**“Recommendation 21** That Transport for NSW raise awareness of motorcycle rider safety as a vulnerable road user in local government planning and assessment in a similar way to other vulnerable road users.

“TfNSW recognises that motorcyclists account for 19.5 per cent of the fatalities on local and regional roads, the second highest percentage after drivers. Improving motorcyclist safety is the core goal of the Ride to Live education campaign, and TfNSW also sponsors and promotes Motorcycle Awareness Month. These measures are aimed not only at motorcyclists but are also intended to increase broader community awareness of the vulnerability of motorcyclists.

“Key actions in the 2026 RSAP will focus on building the capability of local government staff to support greater awareness of motorcyclist safety in local government planning. This includes increasing delivery of Safe System training for planners and road managers, and development of an integrated, online collaboration platform to share resources.

**“Recommendation 22** That the NSW Government develop additional strategies to improve driver behaviour with vulnerable road users on local roads. As part of the 2021 RSP, \$180 million was allocated to the Liveable and Safe Urban Communities program, which aims to increase liveability and safety in urban communities through infrastructure safety upgrades for pedestrians, cyclists and other road users.

“The NSW Government has been trialling a number of changes to the network to improve road safety for vulnerable users. These include changes to traffic signalling to provide additional time for less mobile pedestrians to cross and reductions in pedestrian crossing wait time to reduce the temptation to cross against the light. These and other measures will continue to be implemented where they can deliver road safety benefits.”

Not surprisingly, they also noted their focus on speed limits and the increase of mobile speed cameras. Because we all know how much safer they make us! (*Yeah, right!* ☹).

## **MOTOGP GIVES YOU WINGS**



Well, the 2022 season of MotoGP is almost here. **Hooray!** It will be good to have it back again. There have been a few changes for this year too – with the bikes especially.

Over the past couple of years aerodynamics have played an increasingly important role in the design of MotoGP bikes. This year it's gone further in that direction. What first began as little protrusions from the fairing – *that weren't really wings, wink, wink, nudge, nudge* – has now grown into big aero wings that make the front of the bikes look like an F1 car! (*Well, almost!*).

They've all got them. Now, I understand that when you've got bikes blasting down the straight at over 300 km/h, having some aerodynamic assistance to keep them on the ground and stable is a good idea! But I still think they look weird.

### **NO MORE FREE-TO-AIR**

And still on MotoGP, **there will be no live free-to-air coverage any more.** I believe in UK that has been the case for a while (*UK readers might confirm that?*). But here in Australia we have had it on one of our free-to-air channels up until the end of last year. But now that is gone. A deal has been signed with **Foxtel and Kayo** to exclusively stream live coverage of MotoGP. Maybe TEN will do a brief highlights package a day or so later, as they've been doing with F1. *I couldn't watch MotoGP like that!* I actually signed up with Kayo towards the end of last year, so I didn't have to wait until 10.30pm the next day (*after having inadvertently heard who won on the news, or seen posts on Facebook!*) to watch the last few F1 races. So I will have to keep that going. You can also watch it by subscribing to **motogp.com**.

### **THE DUKE OF TOURING**



**Nostalgia time!** When we think of Ducati today we think of sports bikes. Or perhaps dual-purpose bikes, with the Multistrada. There was a time though, when Ducati produced sports-tourers. Good bikes they were too!

It all began in 1998 with the release of the **ST2**. It was a V-twin of 944cc capacity, and came with hard luggage as standard. It was subsequently replaced by the **ST4**, and **ST3**.

Yes, in that order. You see, the number wasn't a model number, but represented the number of valves per cylinder. The ST2 came with the standard 2 valves (*desmodromic of course!*) per cylinder. The ST4 had 4 valves per cylinder; and then the ST3 went half way between its predecessors with 3 valves per cylinder. (*And that explains why there wasn't an ST1. ☺*). By ST3 stage the engine had been enlarged slightly to 992cc. The 3-valve engine was reported to be smoother and more user-friendly (therefore more fitting the purpose of sports-touring) than the 4-valve design.

The **ST3** was introduced in 2004 and ran until 2007. I tested one in 2007, and while I did have some criticisms, I thought **it was a good sports-tourer**. In fact the criticisms I made related mainly to low-speed and around-town riding. "*When it's cruising at high speed it's obviously in its element*" I wrote. Underscoring that was my comment that it felt "*a bit awkward*" under 100 km/h, but over that it was "*great to ride*". I commented a few times on it being high-g geared. It wasn't: the gearing was pretty much spot-on for a sports-tourer. I think it was probably a matter of engine characteristic more than actual gearing – it wanted to be revving, not slugging at low revs. *It was a Ducati after all!* I was sorry to see it discontinued.

Anyway, click [here](#) to read my road-test back then.

### **NOT MUCH RIDING**

Well, I'm afraid The Old Bloke hasn't been doing much riding lately. My last ride was just over 3 weeks ago. As I mentioned last month, **the weather** has been playing a big part. Those of us in Australia (east coast area anyway) will know it has been a very unusual summer. We have had some hot days, but not the continuous over-30-degree days we usually get. And we've had rainy days – lots of them! So it has either been too



hot (on those hot days), or too rainy. Yes, I know, temperatures under 30 aren't really too hot, but I'm getting more picky, less tolerant of the heat, as I get older. I figure that if I'm not going to enjoy it, because of being uncomfortably hot or whatever, then I might as well not go. Yes, a bit pathetic really isn't it. Call it getting old(er!).

The other reason has to do with getting older too – and **the old bones and muscles start playing up more**. My back gives me trouble, although hasn't been too debilitating of late, thankfully. But I have problems with my neck. I have had occasional trouble with my neck for years, but it has got a lot worse of late. There is some scoliosis present, but also problems caused by muscles and whatever being a bit out of whack, and bad posture. My neck tends to protrude forward and to the right. Has done for years, but it's getting to be more of a problem. And putting 1.4kg of helmet on a head that isn't sitting straight is not good for the neck. The upright riding-position is good for it, but the posture isn't. I've had physio on it before – mainly given exercises to do (*which of course I don't do as often as I should!*), and am currently having more physio; this time with some massage and stretches being performed on it.

But back to **the weather**. In my part of the world we should always count ourselves lucky that we can ride all year round. Yes, it might get too hot on certain days in summer, and too cold on certain days on winter, but as readers in places like UK, and other places in the far northern regions of the hemisphere at the top of the globe will know only too well, they have at least 3 months of the year where only the hardest of riders go out. Freezing cold, rain, fog, snow.... ***not the nicest of conditions to be out on a motorbike!*** At the moment it is still winter, of course, but as it heads towards the end of the coldest months a few people are venturing out. Here are some photos from the Tracer 700 UK Owners Facebook page.



The photo on the left was taken outside The Cat & Fiddle hotel in **Manchester, England** The middle photo was taken in **south Wales**. The one on the right shows another problem with winter riding – **salt on the roads!** Salt is used to melt snow and ice, so it keeps the roads more useable in those freezing months. But as you drive or ride on it, it flicks up and coats the lower regions of the vehicle. Salt is of course corrosive, so you don't want to leave that muck on for any length of time. You have to clean it all off after every ride!

So, if I complain about the weather, well, I really don't have anything to complain about, do I!

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

*Elwyn*  
(The Old Bloke)