

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



Thanks to all those who have emailed to say they like the new emailed update format. I think it's a good way to go now. The website is in serious need of an update; and that can't be done easily. Facebook is okay for those who use it, but not everyone does. But an email with the Blog-newsy-type items attached seems to be working well.

### **URBANISED TEST-TRACK**



This section of road, which I visited again recently, is the start of what once used to be a very narrow, seldom-used minor back-road to a few farms. It begins (just before the photo) with a right-angle turn off another minor back-road and is exactly 500m long before it takes a sharp 90-degree turn to the left. From way back when I had my XJ600 I would occasionally ride along that road, usually

up to the right-angle bend, turn around and gun it up to 110 km/h, (which even on the XJ600 was reached at about half distance), then sit on that for a few moments before backing off well in time to easily brake for the T-intersection with the road I'd turned off. I did it in that direction because it was slightly downhill on the return, so aided the acceleration. To me, it was impressive performance in a short distance; especially when I would always start and finish at almost walking pace.

When I began testing bikes for The Old Bloke website, **I would occasionally take a test bike along there**, if I was in that area, and see what it would do. I'd turn onto the road, going very slowly, then give it the berries and see what speed it would get to before backing off and braking in plenty of time to turn around at the right-angle bend. Doing it from that end (the direction in the photo) was slightly uphill, but I did it that way because there was a potential escape-route at the right-angle bend: a dirt track that went straight ahead to a farm. So if I over-cooked it, or the brakes failed or whatever, I had somewhere to go. I figured that was safer than belting at high speed towards a T-intersection with a barbed-wire fence on the other side! Not that I ever needed the escape-route – I always made sure I had plenty of room to slow down.

The record was **145 km/h, on a Suzuki Bandit**; which it reached at about half distance. But man, doing 145 km/h on a narrow little road that was only 500m in total length felt fast – ***very fast!***

I never seriously tried my XJR1300 on it. Sure, I went along there and gunned it up to about 120, and sat on that for a bit before backing off, but I never gave it a really good try. Didn't seem much point. I knew it would accelerate as quickly as the Bandit,

and if I was going to go for the record, that would mean getting it up to about 150 on that narrow, short little road; and that was too fast for me! Doing 145 (and even 140 on a previous test bike) was as fast – or faster – than I wanted to go on that road!

Now, as you can see, it is a wide road on the edge of a housing estate; complete with side-streets running off it. It's been that way for a while now. So no more high-speed runs. *They've urbanised my old test-track!*

## MY OLD FAITHFUL RIDES ON



It's now been over 2 years since I bought my new bike, and sold my old faithful XJR1300 to a friend from Nowra. He has ridden it more often – and further – than I used to. And it has been on a few big trips, and seen a lot of new places since he has had it. Here it is recently at a lunch stop in Narooma, on the NSW South Coast.

**It was such a good bike, I'm so glad it went to a good home;** and it is continuing to provide excellent service

for its new owner. It's even been pillioning, with his wife riding on the back. So it is having lots of new adventures!

## ALL ABOUT LIGHTS



The subject of improving the headlights on bikes is a real can-of-worms! There is lots of advice out there – much of it contradictory – and even more opinions; some of which come from reliable sources, others not. Recently I've read a couple of things by people who are experts on vehicle headlights, so I thought I would share this with you.

The first one comes from an auto-electrician, Mac Carter, from Townsville Truck Electrics. His writings appeared in a classic car magazine, but it applies equally (if not more so) to bikes.

He addresses the issue of replacing standard Halogen bulbs with LED. This is a hot topic among motorcyclists at the moment. It can be done, but you need to know what you're doing – there are dangers! But when done properly there can be benefits. My previous bike (XJR1300) had a fabulous headlight – a big round light that worked about as well as car headlights. But the new owner – who works in the automotive trade – fitted LEDs to it a while ago. I'm not sure why, but he did, and he said it gave even better light, with more spread.

Anyway, back to Mac Carter. The main thing he urges people *not* to do is to increase the wattage. He says that **“the use of high-wattage headlight bulbs has often proven to be a complete disaster”**. He lists things like burnt-out bulb-connectors, burnt fuses, relay blocks, damaged wiring looms, burnt-out headlight and dimmer switches, as well as heat-damaged headlight reflectors and lenses. He says that vehicle fires have resulted from overheated wiring and components. So the message is clear – high-wattage globes can be dangerous! (Some installations include fans to keep the whole show cool). He also advises to avoid the cheap stuff: top quality globes will cost more (2, or even 3



times the price of eBay specials from some unknown seller), but are worth it in the long run. He says that there are ADR-compliant bulbs available that can be safely swapped over from your standard light and require no alternations to wiring or connectors, and will provide a much better light than standard. These are the ones to go for – but still look into it, because just replacing halogen globes with LEDs can be quite involved.

Another thing I read recently concerned **the colour of the globes**. There are some fancy globes around that are coloured, with blue being the popular one. Some think that a blue light will be better than a plain one. It won't be. The article I read described the different amount of light produced from different colour globes, as well as how each colour is received by the human eye. The best colour for amount of light and how well our eyes see what the globes illuminate, is **white**. So, while blue lights might look cool, they won't be as effective as white lights.

You can also keep it simple and just swap halogen for better halogen. That's what I did with mine. The standard lights on my Tracer were quite poor – just how poor I realised when riding down Macquarie Pass one dark night. *Someone walking in front with a candle would almost have been better!* I bought good quality bright halogens of the same wattage, and they are much better.

When looking at globes remember the important figure is how much light they produce, which is measured in **Lumens**: that's the figure to look at and compare.

## **MICHELIN ROAD 5 CONTINUES TO IMPRESS**

In the first December issue, I described the differences between the Michelin Pilot Road 4, and the Road 5. One of the advantages was an improvement in the ride. Today I rode along a road that is notoriously bumpy: one that, even on my previous bike, I had sworn not to ride on unless it was necessary. But it has attractions – like being a back road with not much traffic, and nice country scenery. I still got bounced around a bit at times, but for most of the time it wasn't too bad. Certainly a lot of that smoothing-of-the-bumps comes from the Hagon rear suspension unit I had fitted, but I have been along there since that was fitted and the ride has improved again with the new tyres. They are a much better tyre than the PR4.

## **INDIAN IS 'FUN TO RIDE'**



I don't know what "FTR" stands for, in the Indian model name, but from what they say about the bike – and what they've done with it – it could stand for "Fun To Ride". It could also stand for "Flat Track Racer", as it was sort of based on their old flat-tracker of many years ago. In any case, they've made some changes, including dropping the front wheel size from 19" to 17". Seat height has come down as well. In any case, the changes they've made to the new model make it much more road-orientated. It handles better, steers more easily, and is generally more, well, more Fun To Ride. So they say.

Here is a video of Jeff Leisk – former motocross star – talking about the new bike. (Yes, he has probably been paid to say what he says, but at least he tells you all about the new bike). There are quite a few test videos on YouTube if you want to look them, up. But for those who think Indian is just an alternative to Harley cruisers, take a look at this. Click [here](#).

## YEAH, YEAH, WHATEVER....

If you're anything like me, when people start talking about electric bikes I immediately tune out; or flip the page if it's in a magazine. Sure, I know they can be pretty quick now, and range is getting better, but .... Nah, I don't think so. However, if you believe that they are inevitable as our future, [this article](#) lists 5 advantages they have over petrol-driven bikes. One even mentions performance!

## SECOND-HAND BARGAIN



I mentioned the **Suzuki Bandit** in the item about my old "test-track". Well, I promised you some nostalgia, so I thought I'd give you [a link to my test of that bike](#). That was back in 2008. Sure, that was a while ago now, but those bikes are pretty bulletproof, and there are some good examples around. A check on [bikesales.com.au](#) brought up some good examples between \$4,000 - \$6,000. There was a 2012 model, with a claimed total of just 30,000 km on it, looking immaculate, and priced at \$8,000. And a 2009 model with just over 12,000 km for the same money. I reckon you'd want to try to get the price down a bit from that, but you'd be getting a good bike.

## WEATHER TO RIDE OR NOT?



Well, here it is, heading towards the end of January, and, well, **we haven't had much of a summer, have we!** Sure, there have been a few hot days, but not like a normal summer. Okay, if you live in Perth, you will have just endured 5 continuous days of over 40 degrees, but in my neck-of-the-woods, the highest it has got so far for the whole of January has been just over 28. **And we've had lots of rain.** We've also had days like that shown in the photo above, where it isn't actually raining, but looks like it will at any moment. So the bike has stayed in the shed. There have been some nice days, but often I've had other commitments. And when I do have a free day, well, the weather is often like that in the photo!

## YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO FAR



I did manage a couple of short rides though. And proving that you don't have to go far to enjoy being out on the bike, this photo was taken on a little back-road less than 10km from my home. I went riding around some back roads – most of which ended up at farms, or dead-ends. I only did about 35 km in total, but I still enjoyed the ride!

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

*Elwyn*  
(The Old Bloke)