

RIDING WITH THE OLD BLOKE



JANUARY 2024

Happy New Year!! Welcome to the start of another new year with Riding With The Old Bloke. I hope you continue to enjoy reading it.

ALL THE NEWS ON ALL THE NEW BIKES

Italjet get serious with radical 58bhp Dragster 559 Twin

05 December 2023 by Phil West



Mini Thruxton ready to roll: Triumph/Bajaj tie-up looks set to gain faired 400 retro café racer derivative

04 December 2023 by Dan Sutherland



Back with a vengeance: Honda's CBR600RR is back after a six-year absence – but why?

30 November 2023 by Dan Sutherland



There has been plenty of news coming out about new bikes that are coming (or have already come) for 2024. **MCN** (which is a British production) has a great collection of news stories on what's in store for the New Year. That's a shot of just three of their stories above; there's a lot more! So, to read the latest on what's happening for the New Year, click [here](#). (By the way, the photos above are **not** links, it's just a picture).

By the way, a lot of the news comes from the recent **EICMA display at Milan**. Reports say that over **563,000** people attended that event during the six days that it was on. That's a lot of people over that time!

FINALLY – A RIDE!

I haven't been riding much in recent times. There were several reasons for this: I've been busy with other things, the weather hasn't been suitable, my back and neck troubles (particularly my neck) have been a real problem, and my wife has various health issues (one being cancer and undergoing chemotherapy) which have required me to be doing other things.

It had been about 5 weeks since the bike had moved; and even then that had only been to get it checked for rego. But finally, a day came



along where I had no other commitments, and it was a beautiful sunny day (well it started out that way); so a good opportunity to go for a ride! It would have to be a short ride, but it would be a ride!

It felt good to be back on the bike again! My neck started playing-up, but not as soon as I thought it might. I did stop though, after about 45 minutes, to have a break and take the helmet off. And that is where you see the bike in the photo above; stopped in the street of a small town.

By that time though, the “beautiful sunny day” had turned overcast and looking like rain. So I headed home, with a detour. I was only gone for about an hour and a half, but it was still good to get out.

I had intentions of riding more regularly – even if it was only a 20-minute ride to a café or something – to build up my ride fitness, but I obviously haven’t been doing that. I will try to make that happen!

LOOKING BACK

As one year ends, and a new one rolls around, it is an appropriate time to **look back over the year that was**, and reflect on what happened.

Health issues have tended to dictate a lot of what happened – or *didn’t* happen. I suppose that’s par for the course as we get older. My wife and I both began the year on waiting-lists for operations: for my wife it was a knee-replacement; for me a hernia repair. But both were put on hold following my wife’s cancer diagnosis: that trumped any other concerns. So, as I indicated above – and have mentioned in previous issues – I haven’t been doing a lot of riding. But I have got out for a ride from time to time though.



My rides have mostly been short ones, but still enjoyable. I’m lucky to live in an area where I don’t have to go far to get to interesting roads, and places. The photo **above-left** was taken at a local lookout, about 20 minutes from home. It is good to do longer rides, of course, but I haven’t been able to do many of those. The longest ride I did was about 160 km into the Shoalhaven area. The photo **above-centre** was taken beside the Shoalhaven River at Nowra.

A highlight for me would have to be a couple of rides I did with a good friend who I hadn’t ridden with for a few years. We used to ride together (with another riding friend) very regularly, until my back (and then my neck) started giving me more trouble. They usually do well over 200 km on a ride, and I wasn’t able to do those distances. But with just the two of us, we headed out for a much shorter ride a couple of times. That’s our two bikes at a lunch stop, about 55 km away, on the **above-right**.

Going on the principle that “any ride is a good ride” (which I have found to be true), I intended doing more regular rides, even if, as I mentioned above, it’s just to a local café. I enjoy occasionally going out for a cuppa, but usually go in the car. I decided that going on the bike would be a good idea – get me on the bike more regularly and help regain some of that ride-fitness. So I have done that a few times – but should do it more often.

I haven't been doing road-tests. Covid restrictions put a stop to that; and when opportunities started opening up again I didn't do any. There were a few ride-days at local dealers, and I did intend going on a couple (one being to test a scooter, which I thought would be fun), but for one reason or another, I didn't get there. Maybe I will get to a couple this year. There are a couple of bikes in particular that I would like to test.



One interesting development through the year was **my Granddaughter buying a bike** and getting into riding. She bought a **Kawasaki Ninja 300** (which I test-rode for her), and subsequently got her L-plate and began learning. With school studies being a major priority (HSC year – last year of High School) and casual work at a chemist shop, her time available to ride has been limited. She has gone about it in a very sensible way though – spending lots of time practicing in a nearby parking area, and riding up and down her street, to become as competent and confident as she can be before heading out on a more major ride. Learning the intricacies of clutch and gears has been the biggest issue – having previously done all her driving in automatic cars. And even the little mini-bike she had as a young kid didn't have a clutch or gears.

I am looking forward to when we are able to do a short ride together!

A LATE STARTER

My Granddaughter is just 18 (turns 19 this month), but here's a fellow who started riding at a much later stage in life. **Brendan** has just taken on the role of Area Coordinator for our local CMA (Christian Motorcyclists Association). This is how he described his biking history:

"Late to the bike life... I got my Ls at 59 (a friend lent me his 2nd bike to use). Then Ps after turning 60. But then I didn't ride again (not once!!!) for 18 months. So only got my first bike 3 weeks before my 62nd birthday." At 62 years of age, and having taken on the role of coordinating activities for the local riding group, he had only been riding for 15 months. **Good on him!** Many people go through life wishing they had got into riding, but never do.

LIVING WITH AN ELECTRIC BIKE?



Alison Silcox, from **MCN**, shares her likes and dislikes of living with an electric bike for a year. Along with **MCN's** Michael Neeves, **they discuss the good and bad points.**

The bad points are significant: very expensive, very heavy, and even in the UK where charging points are far more common than they are in Australia, there is a problem with range; especially when trying to tour on it. And when she did find a charger, there was the time spent waiting for it to charge. And she makes a good point about touring in company with petrol bikes, saying that it is totally impractical to do so. It takes a matter of a few minutes to fill-up with petrol, but much longer to top up a battery charge.

And then, of course, there's the sound – we all like the *sound* of petrol bike engines, don't we?!

Yes, there are some "Likes" as well, but to me, they are totally negated by the "Dislikes". Take a look; click [here](#).

TOURING AND SIGHT-SEEING, FROM PERTH TO MELBOURNE



Guy Allen loves a good touring ride. Recently he decided to ride from Perth back to his home near Melbourne. So he had the bike shipped across to Perth, then rode it back. The bike was a **1999 BMW K1200 LT**. Of course he wrote a series of articles about the trip. The stories are particularly interesting because they aren't just ride stories, but are part travelogues too; describing towns and places he visited along the way. There are lots of sights, good scenery, and museums – including a bike

museum. Lots of photos are included. So, well worth a read. Click [here](#).

A DIFFERENT KIND OF TOURER!

The BMW K1200 LT was a supreme touring bike – especially so, according to Guy Allen. But you can tour on anything, right? This story is about a bunch of blokes who decided to go on tour riding their **Yamaha SR500** bikes. All the way from Townsville in northern Queensland to Bethanga, just across the Victorian border; a distance of **over 6,200 km return**.

Firstly a note about the bikes, for those who might not know. Back in the late 1970s and early 80s Yamaha decided to take a couple of their trail-bikes and turn them into road bikes. The engine, frame, suspension, and general running-gear, was pretty much the same, they just swapped out the trail-bike attachments (guards, tank, etc) for road-bike style ones. They did this to the XT250 (creating the SR250 – I owned one for a few years); and the XT500 (creating the SR500). One of the few mechanical changes was that they fitted the single-cylinder 4-stroke engines with an electric starter.

The 250 might have faded from memory, but the SR500 gained an almost cult following, with owners clubs springing up in most states. And that's where we join these guys. It's a great story – click [here](#).

HOW DO THEY RATE?

Thanks to Rod for sending me the link to this; **the latest MotoCAP ratings**. There's some good value items too; like **1Tonne Fury Blue Jeans**. Never heard of them? Neither had I, but overall they outperformed many more expensive riding jeans. But be careful you look at the right one – 1Tonne also have a Ranger Touring jean, which is about the worst rating jean available! The Fury Blue costs \$190. Also impressing the MotoCAP testers were the **Respect V2 gloves**, and **Rev'it Matador jacket**. Click [here](#) to go to the full ratings.

GOOD YOUTUBE WATCHING



Yes, there are a million bike videos on YouTube, and I watch a few of them, but here's one that you might not have seen, that I recommend. I've recently been watching (and now subscribed to) a channel by **Brent Pearson**. He describes his channel as combing two of his passions, photography / videography and Adventure Bike riding. He

has videos of bike trips he's done – off road stuff, and plenty of action. He is well spoken, and his video work is excellent. My wife, who is not generally interested in motorbike videos, watches them too. They are very entertaining. [This link](#) should take you to his channel. (Or just search for Brent Pearson).

SHORT ON SIZE FOR SHORT ON BRAINS

I like the AMX store's product review videos, featuring Riana Crehan "interviewing" staff or company reps about a particular product. Of course they are advertisements, but somehow Riana manages to still retain a "respectable journalist" image while asking the sale-point questions required of the ad.

One recent video featured **M2R open-face helmets**. Now, yes, I know, it's an image thing: cruiser riders love them – part of "the image." And yes, it can also be a comfort thing as well. Some are okay I guess; although I would never wear one. The only time I have ever worn an open-face helmet is when I used to do slow trials riding.



Anyway, in the video they present various models of M2R open-face helmets, finally coming to this one, the **Rebel Shorty**. The guy from AMX describes it as, "**The smallest legal helmet available for use in Australia.**" I got the impression that they showed it because they had to – it's part of the range. But it's on screen for less than 8 seconds, in a video lasting just over 2 minutes.

I remember a couple of years ago being shown one of these type in a local bike shop. I'd been browsing through helmets and the salesman showed me one of these *pudding-bowl* models. He shook his head at the logic of anyone wearing it, but said they had to stock it because they kept getting asked for it. Cruiser riders were the ones who wanted them. "They spend \$30,000 on a new bike, and they want a helmet that costs \$69!" he said. And one that offers next to no protection. Crazy!

[Here](#) is the link to the video. The price of this useless thing (the videos never mention price) is \$89.95.

TRUST YOUR BIKE

I read an article recently by the always excellent and entertaining Guy Allen – *yes, there's a lot of him this time!* – in which he makes the point that **bikes will, "outride 99-plus per cent of riders in a similar percentage of situations."** (Click [here](#)).

He mentions the situation when a rider goes into a corner faster than he / she intended and suddenly freaks-out (*my words*) and doesn't make the corner. His point is that in those 99% of cases, if the rider just leans the bike further, it will go around. This is provided, of course, that the rider is not already going at lunacy speed and fanging it stupidly fast. He writes that a lot of riders will go into a corner at a speed they think is too fast, and just freeze – they don't attempt to make the corner. But bikes are way more capable than we think. If we think we can't make the corner, we should just trust the bike and lean it more into the corner. I'll add one more thing: it's important to look ahead in a corner, not at the road immediately in front of the bike. Look at the spot where you want to exit and head for that. If that requires more lean angle to get around the corner, then do that – lean it more.

I've seen this kind of "brain-freeze". I remember one particular occasion, a long time ago, when I was following another rider. We came to a tightly sweeping right-hander, and he ran wide of the corner, stopping on the grass verge beside the road in about the middle of the corner. I remember thinking how strange this was, because he was a very experienced rider, and he wasn't going all that fast. I remember him later

saying that it was something that happened to him from time to time – he'd suddenly get a wave of fear that he was going too fast, even when he really knew he wasn't, and he'd just freeze.

I have to take issue with one thing in the article though. He writes that, in most cases, if the front slides, or the back slides, there is nothing to worry about; it can be saved. I have to disagree here – I reckon any slide on the road is potentially dangerous! Apart from the slide continuing and the whole thing falling on its side, if there is a sudden grab of traction it can result in a high-side, with you spending some time in the air before hitting the ground.

Part of the problem with crashes in corners is that riding involves movements and actions that are counter-intuitive. For example, natural intuition dictates that you turn in the direction you want to go. On a bike it's the opposite: you turn (or push on the bar) in the opposite direction – the direction you *don't* want to go. For example, say you go into a right-hander a bit too hot and the bike is running wide, towards the edge of the road. You want to turn the bike more to the right, so instinct tells you to turn the bars to the right. And when you do, the bike straightens up and veers even more to the left, and off the road. Or, say you are going around a left hander and a car comes from the opposite direction cutting the corner and is in front of you. You want to turn the bike to the left to miss the car, so instinct makes you turn the bars to the left: and the bike goes further to the right and you hit the car. There is a reason it is called "counter-steering": it's not just counter to the direction you want to go, but counter-intuitive as well.

Anyway, I've gone off topic – the article makes a good point, and is worth a read.

A TRIUMPH OF OWNERSHIP



This year – actually December just gone – brings up 10 years of ownership for **Darren** and his **2013 Triumph 800XC**. He bought it new on 5th December 2013. He still loves it and rides it regularly. It did spend a couple of years off the road when Darren wasn't riding, but he and the Triumph are back on the road again. This is what he had to say about it:

“So this will mark 10 years of ownership of my Triumph 800xc. And what a great motorcycle it has been. And she still puts a smile on my face every time I ride her. I won't part with it now. I wouldn't upgrade even after test riding a newer model, which I noticed had much improvements. I'm sure the 2024 models will continue to make any rider smile.” Great to see, Darren!

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

Elwyn
(The Old Bloke)