

RIDING WITH THE OLD BLOKE



RIDING IN THE SUNSHINE



The weather in May (around my area anyway) kind of alternated between sunshine and rain, with about a week almost of each at a time. I had a fair bit going on during the month, (not to mention some physical problems) but I did manage to get out for a couple of rides.

There was one I mentioned last month (which happened in the first week of the month), and then

there was another short ride during the next week of sunshine. I was only out for a bit over an hour (with the only stop being this one to take a photo), but it was very enjoyable! Beautiful sunshine, pleasant temperatures, and not much trouble from my neck, or back. Actually, this photo was taken in the same spot as one I published in the April edition – but that was with threatening skies; *this was in sunshine!*

EXTREME OFF-ROAD RIDING 1.



I think I have mentioned (either here or on the Facebook page) the YouTube channel **Harry's Garage**. It's basically a car channel, presented by Harry Metcalfe who is perhaps best known as the founder of the British car magazine, *Evo*. But he is into bikes as well. In fact he started out with bikes before swapping to (or including) cars

when he was at legal driving age.

He has a collection of Paris-Dakar winning bikes; and has done videos of each, testing them around his farm. In this video he rides one on an event called **Sandraiders 2022** – an event that pays tribute to the Paris-Dakar events that were held in Morocco in the 1980s. It was 1500km over 7 days across some treacherous rocky trails and sand dunes. And you see it through Harry's helmet-cam. (With a bit of off-bike coverage along the way). It shows you just how tough this is! It goes for a bit over 50 minutes, and is **great viewing**. I was breathless just watching it! Click [here](#).

EXTREME OFF-ROAD RIDING 2.



Thanks to **Rod** for sending me this. This video shows some amazing trials-type riding by **Pol Tarres**. To make the amazing even more amazing, he isn't doing it on a trials bike, but on a **Yamaha Tenere 700**.

The places he rides are just incredible! Sure, we've all seen trials riders do unbelievable things on bikes, but this guy takes it to a whole new level! Some scary situations too, like riding along the top of a wall with a huge drop either side. *One slight wobble and!!*

There's a bit of a life-message behind this too, which is worthwhile I guess; but just be amazed at the riding! Click [here](#).

TRIBUTE TO HIRSTY



Those of you in NSW (and, to a lesser extent, in other states too) would know of the **Grey Gums Café**. It's located about half way along the much-loved biking road, The Putty Road. And while it is a café serving all travelers on that winding un-populated road, most of its business comes from bikers.

On 22nd May they held a ceremony to dedicate a new verandah to the memory of **Greg Hirst** – or “Hirsty” as he was known.

I'm sure motorcyclists all over the country will know of Hirsty, and the great work he did for the benefit of the biking community. He was a big supporter of Grey Gums Café, and in fact the very first group ride organised through the TV show, 'Temporary Australians' (which he hosted together with Brendan Jones) was to the Grey Gums Café. That was in 2015. Brendan Jones said they expected maybe 50 or 60 bikes at most. They got 400! On the eve of the dedication of the verandah, Grey Gums put up this video of that first ride on their Facebook page. It's good to look back at this, and good to pay tribute to and remember the man. Click [here](#) for this one.

AN OLDIE AND A GOLDIE



I saw this on a Facebook post from a riding group. Taken on a group ride. **What a great looking bike!** Considering these ended production in 1996, it really looks fabulous for a bike that is about 30 years old! The black and gold looks quite spectacular.

I shared it to my Facebook page, where it got a good response, so I thought I'd include it here too.

AN ADVENTUROUS TRIP TO KANGAROO ISLAND

A riding friend, Geoff, has been a regular contributor to the website (and links have been posted on the Facebook page) recounting his **tales of riding adventures all over the world!** There must hardly be a place left where he hasn't ridden!

Motorcycling's equivalent to that old song, 'I've Been Everywhere, Man'! **Everywhere from Iceland to Africa!** And most places in between. He writes a good story too!

Well, travel restrictions curtailed his global adventures, but he recently went on a ride to Kangaroo Island. But, of course, he took a most interesting route that took in some interesting places as well. Read all about it [here](#).

IS IT TIME TO STOP?



The **Isle Of Man** races began in 1907. Yes, way back then! You can imagine the speeds weren't very fast back then; although there were still crashes. A few years were canceled – the war years of course, and then one year because of the foot-and-mouth disease. Other than that the races have been held every year.

I don't have to tell you that **the course is extremely dangerous!** And, not surprisingly, as bike speeds have

risen, the danger has increased. The average speed being achieved around the twisty mountainous course that passes through town and has long tree-lined straights is now over 135 mph. It's not surprising then that racing at those speeds along that narrow public road has brought many people undone.



Many riders have survived some horrific crashes. But many have died. (*I don't know what happened to the rider in the photo here*). This year there were **five fatalities**, bringing the total since 1907 to 265. Yes, you read that correctly – **265!** The first death happened way back in 2011. **The worst year was 2005, when 11 people died.** (Included in that total were a marshal and a spectator). Since 1937 there has only been one year when the races were held

when no-one was killed. That was 1982.

As much as it is incredible to watch, one has to wonder about the viability of continuing it. Every year riders and spectators must arrive wondering, "Who is going to be killed this year?"

I know people say the riders go into it knowing that risk, but is it acceptable to organise events where that risk is a certainty for some? I watched an interview with Guy Martin – who had a spectacular crash one year, sustaining significant injuries – and he was in favour of it continuing. He described the buzz that riders get from competing there. The exhilaration of facing the dangers and beating them! The exhilaration of going so fast past stone walls, buildings, trees and other obstacles. So it can be argued that, if people want to do that, they should be allowed to. But when someone dies I think of the fact that they all have family and friends who are deeply and tragically affected if they die or are seriously injured.

So, particularly as speeds get faster each year, **maybe it's time to call it quits?**

LOOKING BACK - CHEAP PRICE SPORTS-TOURING



When **CFMOTO** first came to Australia, they were probably seen as just another el-cheapo Chinese brand. They might still be seen that way. And yes, they are still around. They disappeared from our market for a while, but a few years ago they were back. But “*el-cheapo*”? well, yes and no.

Yes, they were – and still are – cheap priced Chinese bikes; but they aren’t necessarily cheap in quality. And they have some high-class connections.

The bike I’m looking back on this month is the **CFMOTO 650 TK**. I mentioned in my report on it that the engine was based on that found in the Kawasaki ER6. These days there is still some connection with Kawasaki I believe, but the main one is KTM. CFMOTO make the engines that power the KTM 790 Duke. And KTM’s 999cc V-twin engine is made by CFMOTO too.

The company dates back to 1989, and these days produces a huge range of products (they are very big in ATVs) including, of course, motorbikes. The 650 TK was their first foray into sports-touring. It hit the local market in 2013, and was priced at an astonishing \$6990+orc. It was quite well equipped too, including standard panniers. I’d been impressed when I saw it on paper, and was impressed when I took it for a test ride. My main criticisms concerned the weight – it weighed 220 kg – and the fact that it carried that weight fairly high, giving it a high centre-of-gravity. I also criticised the way-too-short side-stand; but that had actually been fixed by the time I did the test-ride. (Not on the test bike though). But other than those gripes (oh, and the mirrors), I was quite impressed! It had a comfortable seat (*big tick for that one!*) and a surprisingly good ride. Performance was affected by the weight of course, (it was LAMS compliant and produced 41 kW) but it was still adequate. Click [here](#) to read my 2014 test-report.

There is an equivalent current model, called the **650MT**, which sells for \$8,290 ride-away, which comes standard with Pirelli tyres, LED lights, and a 5” TFT display. Panniers are optional. It has a 3-year warranty. I reckon that would be a good buy. But if you found one of these early models that had been well-cared for, (I had a quick look on [bikesales.com](#), but none came up), it would be cheap-as-chips and could be well worth considering if you’re in the market for a sports-tourer and don’t want to spend a lot of money.

BRINGING BACK MEMORIES

Dave wrote in response to my look back last month at the **BMW F650**, which was one of the first test-rides I did. Dave said he owned one of these back in the day, and sent me a photo of it.



He said it was the second bike he bought after getting back into riding after a break of about 30 years. The first bike he tried was a Suzuki DR250 trail-bike; just to see if he was going to enjoy riding again. Well, he obviously did, so stepped up to the BMW. He writes, “*I agree that it lacked a bit of power, especially on the hills, even on a slight grade. The low seat was a big factor in getting this BMW model,*

which I paid probably too much for. However it was a great bike to get back into riding having had a 30 year break!” The photo here was taken in 2006 at his property near

Taree. In 2008 he up-graded to what he describes as, “*My favourite bike of all, the Suzuki V Strom 650.*”

TRICK PHOTOGRAPHY

In last month’s edition there was an **item on Overtaking**, with a link to a piece I wrote on the subject a few years ago. A couple of people wondered about the photo at the top of the article.



“I presume that is you, and a pillion who took the photo?” Asked one reader. *“You look very close to the car, and almost forcing it off the road. I guess it was all set up to look like a dangerous overtake.”* Well, yes **it was set-up, but not like you think.** I took the photo, and I was the only one there.

What I did was get in the car, taking my helmet, and drove to a little-used back-road. I stopped the car, on the road but towards the side. I got out and held my helmet up in my right hand and took the photo holding the camera in my left hand. (*And hoped a car didn’t come!*).

I made sure that the now vacant driver’s seat was out of shot, and that my arm going up to the helmet was also out of shot (or later cropped out). So it looked like a shot from a motorbike overtaking a car, but was actually me standing beside the car holding my helmet up with my hand. So now you know – trick photography!

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

Elwyn

(The Old Bloke)