

RIDING WITH THE OLD BLOKE



BEAUT SCOOT BOOGIE



(*Sorry about the title - my eldest daughter used to do line-dancing and that misquoted song title came to mind!*). **City Coast Motorcycles**, one of my local Yamaha dealers, often put photos on Instagram of their customers proudly riding out on their new purchase. This is the latest one I saw. What impressed me with this is that it shows that the purchase of the little scoot is just as important – to the customer and the shop – as the customer who rides out on a \$30,000 BMW.

The scooter is a **Yamaha D'elight** (*yes, that's the name Yamaha gave it! Groan! ☺*). It's a 125, and City Coast say it is **the lightest commuter available**. It looks good too, I reckon!

(Note: I 'converted' the-helmet to a full-face, to respect the rider's privacy).

I posted this on my Facebook page and had a few replies. **Ken**, who said he had just downsized, wrote, “Our local scooter shop has been posting pics of all new scooter (and bike) purchases for quite a while now. I think it’s an excellent way to generate good customer relations as well as camaraderie with fellow scooter riders. Good on’ em I say.” I totally agree, Ken; it’s good to see. He also said he had, “a mighty 50cc in Darwin. Loved it!” Yep, as someone once said, “Size doesn’t matter, as long as you enjoy it”. (*I think they were talking about bikes..? ☺*).

Magnus said, “If you use your bike as a daily ride you’ll appreciate how fantastic scooters are.” Indeed; they are probably the most practical thing on 2 wheels.

YOUR FEEDBACK ON DOWNSIZING

Last month’s item on Downsizing brought some response from readers. The first to reply was **Doug**, who reminded me that some time ago he had downsized from a Triumph Sprint GT to a Suzuki Burgman 650, due to having had a few joints replaced. He said, “*I haven’t looked back! Very happy, and still having fun.*” Sometime after he bought the Suzuki he wrote in telling us about it, giving an excellent full review including specifications. Read his report [here](#).

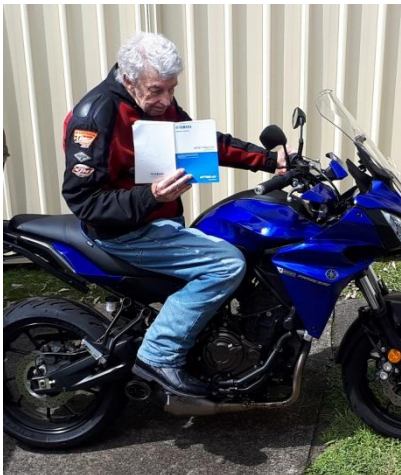
THE PHYSIO SAYS IT’S OKAY

There comes a time when physical problems can dictate hanging up the helmet; making people stop riding. I have been wondering if that time had come for me.

“I ride a motorbike,” I said to the physiotherapist, adding that I didn’t ride a lot these days. “I don’t want to give up riding, but I don’t want to wreck my neck either.” I said I realised that having 1.4kg of helmet on my head would place an extra strain on my neck; particularly when my neck is not straight. As I mentioned last time, I’ve been having trouble with my neck. I’ve had some trouble with it for years, but it has got worse. There is some scoliosis; slightly bending forwards and to the right. So my head tends to protrude forwards and lean to the right. This has been exacerbated by subconsciously allowing it to, and poor posture. I’ve had a few sessions with physios, especially over the past few years, and am currently seeing one again now. I had asked my doctor the same question a couple of years ago, and he said it shouldn’t be a problem, on the type of bike I have, and for the type of riding I do. But, as I said, it is worse now.

Another problem is that I have some restriction in how far I can turn my head to the right; and the physio said that would be the issue she would be concerned about. But that isn’t a problem – I can easily turn enough to do the required shoulder-checks. I may slightly turn my shoulders to do it, but I can look over my shoulder well enough. “That’s fine then!” she said. “I’m not worried about the weight of the helmet.” So that was good to hear!

AND FINALLY, A RIDE!



“Now, where’s the starter? Which side is the gear-lever on?” It’d been 7 weeks to the day since I’d even started the bike, so I almost needed to get the manual out to remember what to do! 😊

(My apologies again to my readers in the northern parts of the northern hemisphere, who have to pack the bike away for 3 months or more each year. A few weeks would seem only a short time!).

The radar showed rain not too far away, and rain was forecast, but it didn’t look too threatening where I was, so I took the opportunity to get the bike out and do a short run around my local area.

The bike started like it had run yesterday.... *And I didn’t really need the manual!* In fact I rode very smoothly, almost like I’d ridden yesterday!

I was only out for about an hour (including stopping to take a couple of photos), but it was enjoyable – **good to get out on it again!**

It was quite hot though. It shouldn’t have been – temperature was only about 25 – but humidity was well into the high 70s. Next day the rain was back – and every day since has either been rainy or I’ve had other things happening.

TEENS WHO LIKED A FIZZIE

In a regular email I get from a classic car guy in UK, he mentioned that when he was 16 he wanted a motorbike; in particular, a **Yamaha FS1-E**. In the article [“Your First Bike”](#), if you scroll down to the section “A British Perspective” you’ll see that a lot of British riders began on this particular machine. The reason is that **it was officially a moped**. In the UK at the time (we’re talking mid 1970s), 16-year-olds were allowed to ride, provided the machine was a moped and had an engine of no more than 50cc. Yamaha had a 49cc bike on sale in Europe called the FS1, and they realised that if they stuck some pedals on it, they had a whole new market in UK! So that’s what they did. (The “E” in the bike’s name simply stood for “England”).



Now, ‘Blind Freddie’ could see that it was a motorbike with pedals, not a pushbike with a motor; but it fitted within the rules, so was acceptable to be sold to young pre-license teens. And as such, it was much admired and sought-after. They called it “Fizzie” (from “FS1-E”, obviously).

The engine was a 2-stroke, and it ran a 4-speed gearbox. It was claimed that, with the help of a tailwind and lying flat on the

tank, it would reach 50 mph. If it happened to be downhill, 60 mph was almost possible. Removing the baffles from the exhaust was apparently a popular modification; although that probably produced more of an increase in noise than an increase in power.

The pedals could be lined-up to form motorcycle-style footrests when under engine power. To engage the pedals the left pedal was rotated forward and locked. A drive gear then engaged allowing the rider to pedal. A short chain connected the pedal drive to the main engine-chain drive system. Of course they weren’t really meant to be pedaled, and pedaling was hard work because there was no freewheeling, the gearing was very low, and the machine was a lot heavier than a pushbike! My correspondent said he tried it once and, “concluded after much effort and aggro that it was definitely a cosmetic adornment.”

Here’s [a link](#) he provided which shows a “senior” rider taking one for a test-ride.

FROM OLD-SCHOOL TO SPORTY NEWIE



One of our regular readers, Evan, wrote in to tell us that he had traded his Yamaha XJR1300 on a new KTM Duke 890R. So from old-school muscle-bike to sporty new machine with loads of technology.

Being smaller and almost 50kg lighter than the old XJR, this is another example of down-sizing – but with a difference. No compromising on performance with this one!

The KTM has more power than the XJR, and only slightly less torque. Sounds a good way to “downsize” to me! Check out what he has to say about it [here](#).

I STILL LIKE THEM!



I’ve written about the **Triumph Sprint ST** a few times; and I have said that this is **the only bike I really “fell in love” with on test**. There have been many that I liked a lot – including the Yamaha XJR1300 – but when I rode this, I was in love; “*I want this bike!!*”

I’d always liked the **Triumph Sprint ST**. At one point I had good intentions of buying one (of the earlier models). I took one

of those earlier 955cc models for a test-ride not too long before I rode this one, and I liked it. I test-rode this in **2007**. (Click [here](#) for the test report).

The new shape, with the larger 1050cc engine, came out in 2005. It received some criticism from owners for the riding-position being too lean-forward aggressive. The previous model had always been comfortable – sporty, but comfortable. So in 2007 Triumph released an updated version, with more user-friendly ergonomics. This was the one I tested.

I loved it! As I've already said. **It was comfortable, it was easy to ride, it was powerful, it was fast, it was superbly stable, it handled well, and it rode well.** The engine was a real gem! It was powerful yet very tractable. I didn't comment on the sound of the engine, but nearly every other road-test does; expressing great admiration for the sound of the triple, especially at high revs.

Now, just in case you think this was just me, it was liked by the motorcycling press too. In a recent review of the bike, [Motorcycle News](#) gave it a **5 star rating and described it as, "The best sports tourer of its day"**. They wrote that it had a "Fantastic engine and chassis." That assessment – that it was the best sports-tourer of its day – was interesting, because when I rode this I was in the process of compiling [a feature on Sports Tourers](#), and the Triumph came in as my number-one choice. I summed it up by saying, "It's a joy to relax and cruise on; and the great ergonomics, effective fairing, and panniers, make it a very good touring bike. But it's equally good when blasting along and carving up corners. The powerful engine gives it great performance; but it's also torquey, smooth and flexible at low revs. It's secure and stable at high-speed, but it's also very pleasant and easy to ride at low speed and through the town. The fact that it impressed so much on a test route that gave it less opportunity to really shine than any of the other bikes (*there was very little open-road cruising*) shows just how good a bike it really is! And to top it all off, it's great value for money!"

Although I didn't get to ride it on roads where it would really be in its element, two sections of my route showed particularly how good it was. One was a steep, narrow, winding, rough, back road up a big hill. Up and back down, the bike was easy to navigate the difficult road, showing admirable handling, stability, power and ride. The other was a straight section of back road with a lumpy bumpy surface. Being a decent straight gave me a chance to give it the gun a bit. I sat it on (*a very illegal!*) 140 km/h and the bike was incredibly stable and, as I said in my report, "The suspension gave a superbly compliant ride, soaking up the bumps very well". Very impressive! Some time later I rode a Triumph Speedmaster (*yes, a very different bike!*) over the same road and said, "the rear end of the Speedmaster jolted harshly and gave my back a serious pounding!" And that was at about 80 km/h.

Every time I've ridden a Sprint ST I've marveled at how the plush-feeling seat and the suspension complement each other. When you hit a decent bump you feel the suspension absorbing it, and at the same time you feel the seat absorbing that part of the impact that gets through the suspension. Suspension and seat working in harmony together! I've seldom felt that "*dual-action*" on any bike I've ridden!

To come back to **Motorcycle News** again, they say, "The 1050 ST is the last of a generation, a genuine sports tourer with enough performance to put a smile on your face, genuine long distance comfort and the practicality that comes with a full set of luggage. It's as manageable about town as it is fun on the twisties and just devours the miles on a motorway slog, making it the perfect work horse for one who gets about."

During the time when I was seriously looking to buy one (but finances meant it would have to be a 2nd-hand example of the previous model), I rode one with 65,000km up, to see what one with a bit more use up felt like. It felt good!

Now, at this point – *with many of you saying, "Well why didn't you buy one?"* – I should mention that, as I got (just a little bit) older I preferred a more upright riding-

position. When I first rode an XJR 1300, I did so back-to-back with a Sprint I was considering buying (fitted with bar-risers even), and found I much preferred the big Yamaha. It was easier to ride, and I loved the grunty torque from the big engine. So I ended up with an XJR 1300, rather than a Triumph Sprint ST.

In terms of reliability, **Motorcycle News** said that, “**As with all Triumphs, there are still a few quality niggles with the Triumph Sprint ST**, ranging from corrosion to faulty parts.” Personally, I’ve heard stories of amazing reliability; and I’ve heard stories of them getting to a certain mileage and then lots of things going wrong. I’ve also heard of a couple of things that can make ownership frustrating. Removing the seat – which on bikes I’ve owned has been a simple matter of inserting the key in the lock and lifting it off – is apparently a more difficult job, involving bolts. The battery – which again, in my experience, has been pretty easy to get at – is a real hassle (unless you have a special tool, or the bike has been ..ahem.. “modified” to make it easier).

A well-maintained one can still be a good buy. A quick check on [Bikesales](#) revealed a few with claimed low kms for around \$6,000 - \$8,000. If they are as good as described, they could be well worth considering if you’re in the market for that type of machine. Sure, they are old now, but as a sports-tourer they would still do the job pretty well. As **Chris Picket**, from Cycle Torque, wrote at the time, “If you are looking for a bike capable of handling the cut-and-thrust of every day life, do the big tour with ease, plus handle a dog fight, the Sprint will do sterling service!”

Well, that ended up being longer than I intended. As always, if you’re interested you can follow the links in the story – to mine and other links.

AND NOW THEY’RE UP TO 6



I’ve mentioned **Michelin tyres** a couple of times in these writings; so it is perhaps worth mentioning that there is a new one out. Yes, they now have a **Road 6**.

As with I think all previous versions of the “Road” series (initially called “Pilot Road”, but now just “Road”), Michelin claim the new tyres provide longer life and more grip in the wet. In fact they are claiming 15% better wet-road grip than the Road 5. That, they claim, is due to, “100% Silica technology and a new tread pattern.” They also claim the tyres will provide 10% longer life. *(If they keep on increasing tyre life, eventually the tyres will outlast the bike! ☺).*

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

Elwyn
(The Old Bloke)