

# RIDING WITH THE OLD BLOKE



## MAY THERE BE SUNSHINE!

“Still the rain kept pourin’, fallin’ on my ears; and I wonder, still I wonder, who’ll stop the rain?” So sang John Fogerty in the song “Who’ll Stop The Rain”. And for much of this year, that’s what we’ve all been asking – or more specifically, **when will it stop?** Now I must emphasise that it has been much worse in other areas; but in my part of the country we have still had torrential flooding rains over the past few weeks; in April particularly. There have been roads damaged, including some favourite riding roads; and some of those favourite roads are closed due to damage. Sure, we had the odd fine day, but we’ve had a lot more days when it has been raining, or threatening rain. As I said to a friend recently, “*It only stops raining to reload, then it dumps more on us!*” Another friend summed up the year so far: “What a shocking year it’s been for motorcycling!” And it always seems to happen that when we do get a nice sunny day, I’ve had other things to do and the ride doesn’t happen again. Although I did get a couple of very short rides in.



**But May might bring a change!** It started off better: the first week of the month had more fine days than rainy days – *when did that last happen?* And on the first day of the month I went for a ride in brilliant sunshine! So we look forward to better times! (*But the rain did return!*).

## THE LATEST SAFETY RATINGS ON ALL THE GEAR



The latest safety ratings from Motocap have been published. (Thanks to Rod for sending me this.). It’s all here – jackets, pants, helmets and gloves. (*Okay, not boots; otherwise it’s all there*). There are apparently 13 new items added to the list of gear they’ve reviewed. **The reviews make interesting reading.** And it isn’t only safety; they are rated for comfort as well. And those two aspects can be a bit of a see-saw: some gear that performs well under safety testing is rated poorly for comfort. And vice-versa. Some rate highly at both, others rate lowly at both; some are good in one area and poor in the other. And as is always the case with these reviews, **price does not guarantee a good product.** There are some expensive items that rate very poorly; and some cheaper ones that rate very well.

So if you are in the market for some new gear, check it out. And even if you're not, it is still interesting to see where the quality (*and lack of quality!*) lies. Click [here](#) to go to the reviews.

## **BIG BAD BEEMER**

The BMW R18 was officially launched back in mid 2020, but with COVID-related delays in supply, it was a bit after that before supplies began to trickle in. Just when it became freely available I don't know: probably long before now, but it recently popped up and caught my attention, so I thought I would check out some details.

Yes, it's BMW's take on the big cruiser bike. It's far from the spinning-propeller brand's first foray into cruisers, but this one boasts the biggest boxer engine BMW have ever produced. Capacity is 1800cc; which means that each of its two cylinders is huge, having a bore of 107mm and a stroke of 100mm. Yes, bikes like Harley Davidson's Road Glide, with 1900cc from its two cylinders, is bigger, but that's still a couple of big pistons thrashing up and down (or side-to-side I should say), in the new engine. With just 67 kW on tap, you won't be taking it for flying laps around your nearest racetrack, but the impressive 158 Nm of torque should haul the 345 kg machine along with effortless ease.

BMW says that the bike, "*Evokes memories of our proud history and the iconic hallmarks of the BMW brand.*" That's sales-brochure speak for "*It's retro-styled*". In this case, there are very strong visual cues to the iconic R5 of the mid 1930s. That includes the rear suspension, which looks like a solid rear but of course does have a suspension (as with similarly-styled Harleys).



There are four main models in the range; with the features and fittings growing with each model. It begins with the one pictured on the left, which is your basic naked cruiser. Next up you get soft panniers and a windscreen. Then you step up to solid panniers and bigger windscreen. The top model is pictured on the right above, and comes with a top-box with integrated pillion back-rest, and bigger valenced front mudguard etc. The range starts at \$27,990, with the top model costing around \$40 grand. But if you're keen and quick, there are special deals available. For example, our friends at [City Coast Motorcycles](#) have special deals, including \$25,990 ride away for the cheapest, and \$37,490 for the top model. Click [here](#) for more details on the bike, with photos and specifications.

## **BIG CRUISE BEEMER**

While we're looking at BMW, the **BMW K1600GT** came in for an update for the 2022 model. In many ways this is the ultimate Sports-tourer. It's a tourer first and foremost, but it's also sporty, with impressive performance and handling. The 2022 model brings some upgrades that give it even greater comfort, improved handling, and more luxury items and tech stuff. Click [here](#) for a review by MCN.

## OVERTAKING – BE BAD AT IT, AND BE SAFE



In the April edition I wrote about overtaking – specifically on bikes such as my Tracer 700. (The lower-powered version that we get in Australia, for the benefit of my overseas readers). And bikes like that. Basically it comes down to gearing – which is excellent on the Tracer as it allows a good range of speed and acceleration in the lower gears. That’s an advantage most mid-size twins have over most mid-size 4-cylinder bikes.

Anyway, that reminded me of **an article I wrote for the website, quite a few years ago, on overtaking**. I wrote about being “good” at overtaking – as some riders might describe “good” – is not necessarily safe! That is what [this article](#) is all about – how to be **safe** at overtaking; which is really what we should be doing! There are some examples I’ve shared of riders definitely *not* being safe – including a couple of incidents that happened to me.

## TIME TO UP-SIZE!

There’s been quite a bit of talk in these publications, as well as on the Facebook page, about downsizing. Well, a reader, Chris, has just gone the other way – **swapping a couple of big bikes for something even bigger!**

Chris was the proud owner of a 1992 Harley, which I have seen and can verify that he kept in immaculate condition. He also had a Yamaha MT-01 – a 243 kg monster with a 1700 cc V-Twin pumping out huge torque. (In fact he had two of them!). But he was having problems with both bikes. The Harley, at 30 years of age, was beginning to tire, and he was having trouble keeping up with his mates on their newer, faster machines. The MT-01 was up to the task of keeping his mates in sight, but he started having issues with cramps in his legs and his hands. Something newer and more comfortable was in order.

He considered downsizing, but had always liked big bikes. Then one day he happened to spot a **Honda F6B**. The F6B is basically a stripped-back Goldwing. He wrote,



*“Never in a million years did I envisage myself on something like this, but against my better judgment, went back to the dealer next day and took it for a test ride.”* He wrote that he was, *“Hugely impressed”*; and ended up buying a good 2<sup>nd</sup>-hand one. He’s already done a couple of big rides (when he bought it he rode it home from Bathurst to Port Stephens), and is really enjoying it. Click here to read his story of the swap

from big bike to bigger-bike; and more about the new Honda.

## ALL SET FOR ANOTHER YEAR



In the UK (as many people – especially those living there – will know), there is an annual roadworthy inspection called MOT. An Instagram friend posted this photo of his Yamaha XJ900 Diversion which had just passed its annual MOT. Pretty good for a bike that has to be around 20 years old, and has 108,389 miles on the clock. (That’s about 174,000 km).

He obviously looks after it. And it shows good old Yamaha quality and longevity!

By the way, you'll notice the protection bars around the engine. These came in handy a while ago when someone backed into it while it was parked and knocked it over. He came back to the bike to find it lying on its side on the road. Luckily (and thanks to the crash-bars) there was only minimal damage done, which he was able to fix himself.

## WHERE IT ALL BEGAN



Here is some interesting history / nostalgia for you. The **F series BMWs** are very popular these days. They all started way back with the single-cylinder **F650**. The background was interesting – based on an Aprilia design, and using a Rotax engine, it was a BMW make-over (or make-up!) rather than a brand new product from the BMW factory. But that didn't really matter – it said BMW on the badge; and it was designed as a go-anywhere type fun machine. In fact they even called it a '**Funduro**'.

It was very popular – so much so that when they updated it, including giving it a larger 800cc engine, it retained its F650 name. And you'll see in the report I did on it, that the names got even more confusing! Even today, there is an F750GS and a F850GS, but they both have the same 850cc engine. (Except the 850 has a bit more power).

This was actually one of the first road-test reports I did. It was written in retrospect – I'd ridden it some time before the report appeared on the website in 2006. So we're going back about 20 years with this one. Click [here](#) for the report.

## MORE FEEDBACK ON HELMETS

I received a few emails in response to the item on helmets in the April edition. I published one in the special Easter edition; and here is another interesting one. Bill wrote in recounting a couple of incidents; one in particular that was a quite frightening.

"Helmet law came to NSW before ACT where I lived as a novice rider. It meant if we crossed the border to Queanbeyan we had to wear a helmet. I bought a \$20 open face helmet from a car accessory shop because it looked nice and sparkly (metallic finish). A really important consideration.

"My mate Ian bought a weird thing. A full-face Shoei S20. No one else had a full-face helmet. I remember the date Sunday 9 December 1973. I was riding my Honda CB350 with Ian on his Honda 750/4 and we stopped at Curtin shops. As we mounted up again I said, 'Can I have a go at wearing your full-face. I've never worn a full-face'. So we swapped helmets.

"Five hundred metres down the road I swerved to miss a car (my fault as I was inattentive) and ended up sliding down the road into oncoming traffic on my face. Thankfully the only injuries I had was gravel rash in a number of places despite wearing a leather jacket but the chin of the S20 was a right-off from taking the force of the impact with the road. Lesson learned. I've worn full-face now for nearly 50 years...but never again tested one like that!"

Thanks Bill. I think *Someone* must have been looking out for you that day! Very lucky! A good endorsement for full-face helmets. But I will say again that helmets are a very personal choice, and some will choose to wear an open-face. And that's fine, everyone should be free to choose what they decide best suits them.

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

*Elwyn*

(The Old Bloke)