

RIDING WITH THE OLD BLOKE



MAY 2023

A NICE DAY FOR A RIDE

Rain; too hot; other commitments; physical ailments; the ~~excuses~~, I mean reasons, I haven't been out on the bike very much are many and varied. I had done a few short local rides, but it'd been quite a while since I'd been on any sort of decent ride. But about the middle of last month there came a day when I didn't have any other commitments, and the forecast was for mid 20s top temperature, sunshine, and light winds. Perfect! So a ride down the coast, stopping for lunch at a favourite eating-place. I really wanted to go further, but the problems I have with my neck especially, prevent that unfortunately. I felt fine at my lunch stop, but... I thought I better not. It was a wise decision, as I was getting some pain in my neck and across the back of my shoulders by the time I got home. But it was good to finally get out on the bike for a decent ride! And the weather was beautiful!



NEW MID-SIZE KING?



For a long time **Yamaha's MT-07** has been the king of mid-size bikes. Well, sort of, anyway: in terms of popularity, and testers reviews etc. But there is a new contender to the throne: the **Honda Hornet CB750**.

I described the basics of this bike back in the December 2022 issue of this epistle. Back then I did express some reservations; based on riding-position and non-adjustability of suspension (beyond rear pre-load). But it does have a lot of other things going for it.

So how does it stack up against its obvious rival? Well, **Motorcycle News** has done [a back-to-back comparison between the two](#); and the Honda came out on top.

Okay, so the Yamaha went on sale in 2014 (or late 2013), so it's a much older design. Although it has had a few up-grades along the way – for example, the rear suspension now has rebound adjustment. (Which, as I mentioned, the Honda doesn't). The Honda is basically a **new generation of “mid-size” twin-cylinder naked**. And that is especially evident in the technology. It also has a bigger engine – 755cc, producing 67 kW; compared to 689cc, producing 55 kW, in the Yamaha.

FEEDBACK ON ORIGINAL HONDA 750

And speaking of Honda 750, last month I published a link to a story on **the original Honda CB750**; a bike that basically changed the motorcycle world. Two readers wrote in with comments on the bike, born of much experience riding them. Interestingly, the opinions of the bike were very different!

The first was from a former motorcycle policeman, **Doug**. “I was attached to the old Special Traffic Patrol (STP), later to become HWP, when we went from Triumph 650s to the Honda 750s; and they were like chalk and cheese. The Hondas were a brilliant all-round bike for all riding conditions, comfort, acceleration, braking etc when compared to the Triumphs. The only area the Triumphs had over the Hondas was the much lower centre of gravity for very slow riding and manoeuvrability. But the Triumphs were also a small bike physically for us tall guys; but OK.” I vaguely recall people, who might have been inclined to break the law, being afraid of the police on the new Hondas!

The other response was from a friend of mine, **Steve**. His opinion was, as I mentioned, very different. “I do not recall mine, which I bought new in 1972, with any sort of rose-tinted glasses. Yes, it was reliable, dependable, smooth, powerful and comfortable, but it had a mean streak and literally tried to kill me on more than one occasion. The suspension and handling could only be described as poor, the frame flexed and the bike seriously exceeded the ability of the standard tyres. A tank slapper at 90mph (which began for no apparent reason) on the expressway was a huge concern and its tendency to wallow like a drunken walrus in corners was not confidence inspiring. It also tended to break traction at the rear too easily. The stainless steel disc at the front wasn't brilliant and its performance deteriorated dramatically in the wet. Modern bikes are much better.” Well, yes, I guess when it is compared to modern bikes there has been a big improvement. I recall that early Japanese bikes were often criticised for flexing of the frame; and those solid front discs were a problem in the wet.

Finally, I'll add **my comments** from the time I rode one. At the time (late 1970s), this was the fastest bike I'd ridden; so the performance was impressive. There was instant acceleration, and I commented that, “It took no time at all to whip out and overtake!” When I wrote my comment (sometime in the early 2000s), my memory was that it even handled okay too. (*But my experience with this type of bike was very limited back then*). A few years later I remember looking at one and thinking that it felt very “flat” to sit on. The seat was flat and straight, and the tank seemed to just continue on at the same level.

A FOGGY START



Terry recently set off on another trip, (he's done lots of touring) and this was what greeted him on the first day – **fog!** This was on the **Cullerin Range**; a section of road that used to be the Hume Highway, but is now mostly deserted. It's an interesting piece of road; but on this day spoilt by the fog. On his return trip the weather was fine, so he rode along it again.

DON'T TELL THE MISSUS!!

Guy Allen's recent re-telling of the time he bought another bike and didn't tell his wife ([click here](#)) reminded me of a story I was told several years ago. It's an example of the principle that **when some people are digging themselves into a hole, they only stop to get a bigger shovel!**

I was browsing in a BMW dealership on the NSW Central Coast, and admiring a nice looking, big, blue coloured BMW. From memory I think it was a K1300. Anyway, the salesman, who I'd been chatting to, said it belonged to one of their customers. "Has it been in for a service?" I asked. "No, he keeps it here." The salesman replied. Then he told me the story.

I'll call him John (I don't think the salesman mentioned his name, but I'll use that name). John decided to upgrade his current BMW. He had previously employed the old trick of buying a bike of the same make and colour, and pretending to his wife it was the same bike. (*How many people have done that?!*). The only trouble was, the necessary colour of blue wasn't currently available. Only red was in stock. John decided to go ahead anyway. He figured that his "*You're-not-buying-a-new-bike!*" wife would eventually come round. (*Yep, he's started digging! ☺*). So he traded in his old blue bike on the new red one. But of course he couldn't take it home until he had convinced his wife to let him buy a new bike. So the dealer agreed for him to leave it there.

Now, his wife might not have known anything about bikes, but she did twig to the fact that his bike had disappeared. "Where's your bike?" She enquired. "I've lent it to a mate" John replied. (*The hole is getting deeper!*). In the meantime, John was sneaking out of the house with his riding gear, going to the dealer and taking his new bike for a ride. Time went by and he kept on bringing up the question of buying a new bike; but the answer was always the same: "You're not buying a new bike!" So eventually he went to the dealer and said, "It's no use; she won't agree to it. I'll just have to get a blue one and pretend it's my old bike." (Blue was by then available). So he traded in the near-new red bike on a new blue one. (*I wondered how much money he would have lost on that deal?*). The blue one duly arrived; but there was a problem. He had (supposedly!) been without a bike for months; so his wife suggested he didn't need a bike. "You might as well let him keep it; you haven't had it here for months!" "No," John replied, "I still want my bike; I like riding!" "You can't be wanting to ride very much; you haven't had your bike here for months! Sell it to him!" She insisted. (*That hole is really deep now, and he's still shoveling!*).

So he went back to the dealer and explained the situation. "I'll just have to tell her I've sold it. Can I still keep my bike here?" The salesman agreed. So at that stage, a few months after the replacement blue bike had arrived, John was still keeping it at the dealer's and sneaking out to ride it, while his wife believed he'd sold his old one and had given up riding. I was incredulous. We both had a good laugh.

HISTORIC REGISTRATIONS

One for the oldies – bikes that is! The ACT has introduced a provision for **vehicles (including bikes) registered under the Historic scheme** to be driven for private use, independent of club runs, for a total of **60 days per year**. This brings it into line with other states in Australia; although the details (and cost) varies from state to state. In the ACT it will cost \$99.10 for a year's registration under this scheme. And the bike (or car) has to be 30 years old to qualify.

In NSW we've got the best deal; with a year's registration providing 60 days private use per year, and costing just \$47.

The worst state is Queensland, which provides no private days, and costs \$191.00.

Other states fit between these extremes, with the number of private-use days varying from 30 days (in W.A.) to 104 days (in Tasmania). Victoria has a choice of either 45 days or 90 days; with the price increasing by around \$70 for the extra days. (And note that all these prices include CTP insurance!).

Most states require the vehicle to be 30 years old to be eligible for Historic registration; except Victoria and South Australia, where the requirement is just 25 years.

I don't have a classic bike (*I'd like one!*), but I do have a classic car; and I love the private use days!

LUCKY ESCAPE!



These photos were taken from a video uploaded to Dashcams Australia. The video was taken from a B-Double truck. What happened was that a Ford Ranger towing a big caravan pulled out to overtake the B-Double. The manoeuvre took longer than expected (maybe the driver didn't realise how long the truck was?) and there was traffic – specifically a couple of motorbikes – coming the other way. So the Ranger cut in front of the truck as soon as possible; but in doing so, the caravan clipped the truck's bulbar, which threw it into a violent fish-tail, and it rolled – right in front of the two bikes!

The bikes managed to stop before hitting the wreckage (and “wreckage” it was, with the caravan totally destroyed!). The last photo shows them riding between the truck and the wreckage. They pulled up at the side of the road – probably to change their underwear!

HONDA CB500X REVIEW



In last month's edition I mentioned that a friend of mine, **Steve**, had just bought a new **Honda CB500X**, as a down-size from his previous Suzuki V-Strom. You might recall that it came up in an item where, in 2013, I'd picked the Honda CB500R as the best bike I rode that year.

Well, Steve offered to do a review of the bike when he'd clocked up a few kilometres on it; which he now has. [Here is his review of the bike.](#)

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE?

We all know that the future of motor vehicles is electric. (*GRRR, electric motorbikes? GRRR!*). And here is a chance to invest in that future. Safer than Bitcoin and a lot more fun! 😊. Yep, **electric motorbikes!**

Savic Motorcycles is a name we are probably going to hear more of in the future. Yes, they are electric. The good thing though is that they are located right here in

Australia – Australian owned, designed, and built. Well, they will be, once they get the cash to start full-scale manufacture.

The company was founded way back in 2016 by ex-Ford engineer, Dennis Savic; and the promised bike has been almost ready for the past couple of years. **They are inviting investments in the company.** They say they have over 250 orders already; which equates to about \$6 million in sales.

You can read all about the company – with a preview of the bike – [here](#).

DARREN'S 10 YEARS OF OWNERSHIP



Darren bought a new [Triumph Tiger 800](#) back in 2013; so he has now had the bike for 10 years. That's it pictured on the left.

The bike is currently off the road, due to some difficult financial circumstances for Darren; but he will soon have it prowling the roads again. And in the meantime, it is appropriate for him to look back over that decade of ownership, and report on how it has served him; along with a look at how it stacks up against the competition. Here's Darren.

Well what can I say? I'll get another 20 years. It's a keeper, for me anyway. That stance/styling: I never get sick of it. Or the 800cc triple engine.

Where have all the road bikes gone? Since riding on the road from 16 and 9 months, road bikes were all I really rode; till much later in life. There were a few discomforts on long trips with a road bike: always a sore/stiff neck, and sometimes wrists. So the transition from road bikes to chook-chaser's. Yamaha 1983 XT Tenere, KLE 500, KLR 650 (around the clock with that one). The upright position is so much easier/better! No neck problems or wrists.

A road bike is faster, but what bike can you not lose your licence on? I find I have the best of both worlds. As much fun on road in corners as a road bike. I scraped or touched down the pegs at times. But then hit the fire trails. It works well a little bit everywhere. Just my opinion, but to give it a score - 9/10.

I've test rode the later models. The weight reduction was very surprising. It felt easy. As both bikes were there, we swapped a few times. It only gets better. It's like the (Triumph) 1200 XC. From the first model, today it's had a lot of R&D and it's a completely different bike now. As with the BMW 1200 models. When you ride one, the centre of gravity and the weight distribution make it feel lighter than my 800. Amazing bikes. But I'll keep mine!

MY GRANDDAUGHTER HAS HER L-PLATES

Finally, an update on my granddaughter, who you might recall bought a motorbike recently. Well, she has now passed her Learner's course and has her L-plates. She's not hitting the roads just yet though; her Mum (my daughter) wants her to be on her green Ps before she takes a bike on the road. The reasoning being, that gives her a full 12-months experience on the road before she starts riding. I think that's pretty good logic; and my granddaughter is okay with that.

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

Elwyn
(The Old Bloke)