

WAS THAT “NO THROUGH” RD?

Story: David Burke

A few months ago I took my little Honda XL250 for a spin through the **Yuraygir National Park**. Beaut road. Candole Forest road winds up through the hills between Wooli and Brooms Head. I got about 40 k's along this road and came to a "Road Closed" sign.

Well, that's a bugger but, “Oh look, there's one called 'Through Rd' that looks promising”. (*Was that 'No Through' Rd? Elwyn* ☺).

So off I went along “Through” Rd. But it started at the top of a big hill and got progressively steeper and steeper. I should mention that the bike had road tyres on at this time (moved to knobbys now). It had been raining a lot and the track was quite slippery. There was clearly no turning back.

Well, that's part of the fun, no? I slipped and slid down to the bottom of the hill, with a certain sense of no return. On level-ish ground I came to a farm gate. Padlocked, sadly but hey, there's a phone number. I had a bit of phone reception and called the number to see if I could get access through the property. Got a very grumpy farmer and explained my predicament. “*No F\$%^*#n motorbikes!*” was the response. I explained that I was one guy on a quiet bike who would show utmost respect, but got nowhere. (Found out much later that he'd had trouble with idiots on bikes who stole from him and made arses of themselves.) “Well, fair enough mate”, I said; “It's your property and I respect that.”

I sat on the bike for a while trying to gain the courage (skill?) to attempt the hill when the phone rang. It was the farmer, kind of contrite, who said “If you go back 100 metres, you'll get to Wallaby Lane. That should take you out to Brooms Head road.”

Thanking him, I set off as directed.

Well, maybe this was farmer's revenge, I don't know, but pretty quickly I found myself in a swamp. And I'm talking real swamp here. Water up to my knees on the bike. The poor little 250 was revving her heart out but I figured I had to keep going. The track was ill-defined and I could only see deeper water on each side to mark my way.

Wasn't long before I came to the first tree across the track. Well, “Jiminy!” I said (or words to that effect.) No way around. What to do?

Fortunately, the little bike is indeed, little. So I parked it next to the log and kind of, rolled it over. Upside-down at one point. Broke the mirrors off but, hey, I got it over. Trouble was, now it was flooded (fuel-flooded, I mean). No kick-start and I didn't think I could push-start it in knee-deep water. Happily, the ‘little-bike-that-could’ wound and wound over and got going. Phew!

Travelled into even deeper water now and started to worry about water entering the air-intake. There was nowhere I could turn the bike over to drain it. But, don't we worry unnecessarily?

I was starting to freak out a bit now and, of course, that's when the chain came off the rear-sprocket. A stick had lodged in the guard and knocked the chain off. So, there's Dave, knee-deep in water, trying to wrangle the chain back on and, of course, now it's starting to get dark. I still have no idea where I am and no mobile service to check maps (even if this track was on Google maps).

But, the little bike has a great headlight and she just kept soldiering on until I finally made it onto Brooms Head Road.

This is why I love my little 250. A real trooper. If I'd been on a big adventure bike, things would have turned out quite differently, I suspect.

And hey, when we're old and in the nursing home, will we remember the times we rode to the coffee shop? Or will we remember the time we thought we were going to die in the bush?

P.S. I'm much more cautious about riding alone and will definitely tell someone where I'm going next time.