

STEEL HORSES

February 2016

VOL 7, ISSUE 2

**Ride
To
Texas**

**Ride
Reports**

**Honda
F6B
Review**

**The
Hurricane
NSW Trip**





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Club Objectives

The objects of the club are to encourage members to regularly meet, ride, and join together for social enjoyment

Membership

The objects of the Membership is open to Riders and Pillions of Cruiser and Tourer motorcycles, as well as Social Members. Currently, the annual membership subscription is \$36 for Riders, Pillions, and Social Members. This is applied monthly pro-rata for new members. For new members there is also a once only joining fee on top of the annual membership fee. This covers the cost of Patch, Insignia, and other Club costs. Currently, the joining fee is \$40 for all Members. All Members must wear a vest and Club Patch. Members can view the Rules and By-laws at our monthly meetings. Just let the Secretary know

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Monthly Meetings

*Steel Horses Cruising Motorcycles
Social Club Inc
meets every 3rd Tuesday at:
Lord Stanley Hotel,
East Brisbane,
Brisbane at 7.30 pm.*

*Lord Stanley Hotel is at the
intersection of Didsbury St, and
Stanley St East, East Brisbane.*

Regular Stuff

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The opinions expressed in this newsletter are personal opinions and are not necessarily those held by SHCMSC Inc.





Sarge's Slant

Happy New year to all Members.

We are now in our 6th year as a Club and still going strong. It is nice to see the Club rides so well populated. Once again this is due to the efforts of the Ride Captains and the Ride Coordinator putting in significant effort to plan and communicate the rides every weekend.

It is nice to see new members joining us and I would like to take this opportunity to remind all new members that a requirement of your membership is to complete a minimum of 9 rides in your first 12 months of membership. This is the only time that you will be required to do this as all following years of membership have no minimum ride requirement. If for any reason you will not be able to achieve the 9 rides in your first 12 months of membership then make sure that you discuss this with the delegate or any member of the committee so that we are aware of the issue and can advise you if this requirement can be postponed or waived based on personal reasons.

I would also like to remind all members that the Riders delegate is available to you to explain any of our Club rules and / or answer any questions that you may have re the functioning of

the Club. The rules are available at every meeting for your perusal.

One of our rules is no patch on your club vest that is larger than the Club patch and no patch that looks like a 3 piece rocker irrespective of size. There is very good reason for this rule and in a nutshell that is so that we do not show disrespect for any other club by wearing of any patches that can be mistaken for an MC patch. If you have been involved in motorcycling for any length of time I should not need to explain why this is important.

This year we will be making every effort to raise the profile of the Club by attending a number of events, rides and functions that are focussed on Motorcycling and rides and these will be advertised on our Facebook page, webpage and via email. I think it is important that we are out and about showing the Club to potential members, a club only survives while it has good participating members and attending events is an excellent way to recruit new members.

Just a reminder that while the world and business is full of political correctness and people expect everyone bar themselves to be responsible for their environment our Club

operates slightly differently. We are all here because we want to be not because we have to be and this is especially true for the members that volunteer for club roles and duties such as committee members and ride Captains, webmasters and newsletter editors etc. While we have rules to keep us on the straight and narrow never assume just because someone has made the effort to take on a role in the club that they do not deserve the same respect of an individual member. If people are not spoken to or ignored due to the role that they play within the Club then there is a dispute process to follow. Club roles do not convert people into your Mother, Father, Boss or keeper and if we can treat each other respectfully then the world of Steel Horses will remain happy and focussed on what is important – RIDING-. We are NOT a business and will not operate like one, nor will be overtaken by political correctness we will be governed by fairness and respect, we are a Club or Motorcyclist. 'End of rant'

I look forward to riding with each of you in the next few weeks and particularly on the Club Poker run that is being arranged for February.

See ya on the next one
Sarge



South Ride

I thought I'd just do a little report for the newsletter, as Boots is always looking for stuff for it.

Hi all,

I had planned to go for a ride up to Marcoola with Jak, but that changed to a ride down to Oxenford, around the back of Beechmont and on to the

Canungra café for brekkie and a long chat.

There was Jak, who led the ride, me, Sarge and a mate of Jaks, Col on a fat bob.

It was a perfect day for it, and because we were early, it wasn't busy at the cafe.

After our break, Sarge and I left Canungra to go home

and Jak and Col went for a ride somewhere else.

It was the perfect way to start the new year, a nice ride with good company, and a few laughs.

Look forward to a lot more riding this year.

Cheers
Steiny

A pic of me heading up the mountain for a relaxing cruise with the boys



Payback time!

Hurricane's Trip Around New South Wales



Finally I have found time to write this story for the newsletter, it is about a 'wee' bike ride I did with my little Kiwi brother, Greg to NSW in November 2015.

Some of you may recall a previous story I did about a similar ride to the same location where it rained all the way. Well I decided to do the same trip only this time it was sunny all the way, thank god!

Just to give you some background, my brother Greg lives in a small town in NZ called Hokitika.

It is a town of about 3500 people and is situated on the West Coast of the South Island. It is a beautiful place surrounded by the Southern Alps and is the gateway to Westland National Park, which features the Frans Josef and Fox Glaciers.

For a long time, Greg

never bothered departing the shores of NZ, he was content to ride his Triumph Storm around the tree lined highways that traverse the South Island of NZ, oblivious to the beauties the rest of the world offers. After some coaxing I finally managed



to convince him to come to Aussie and experience the wonderful and exciting place that Queensland is.

To my surprise, he has now visited a couple of times over the last few years and is even getting used to the funny way you Aussies talk!

Greg also shares a passion

for bike riding and on one trip he surprised me by suggesting he buy himself a bike to keep at my place so we could go on rides when he visits! Of course I was happy to baby sit the bike and kindly offered to take it for the odd ride, just to make sure it was

going ok! I know what you're thinking, what a good older brother I am! Anyway, to cut a long story short, he ended up purchasing a nice little VN900 custom, it's a great bike and runs really well.

A few months later I decided to call Greg

to see if he wanted to join me on my Wollongong odyssey. My thoughts were not entirely pure as I saw it as an opportunity to 'test' the fortitude of my little brother on a long ride. 'Testing' Greg is something I have enjoyed doing all my life. My target was a return trip to the



Seacliffe Bridge, which is just north of Wollongong. This trip would be long enough to test Greg and I could raise his anxiety levels by taking him though the busy metropolis of Sydney; or so I thought.

My first under estimation was to find out that Greg was keen as mustard. This was not the response I was expecting! Although, he expressed concern that he "may not be able to ride such a long way without ending up walking like John Wayne after a day in the saddle". This last comment gave me hope that my plan may work after all. So after a number of lies about the distance we would travel each day he was on board with the idea and we agreed on dates.

The trip soon came around and Greg duly arrived on my door step with all his bike gear in hand. My planning for the trip was well advanced by the time he arrived. I roughly

knew where we were going but had only booked accommodation in Thirroul, a small town south of the Seacliffe Bridge, as for the rest of the trip, we would just wing it. Greg seemed relaxed about my extensive travel arrangements and I was starting to doubt whether my dastardly plan would have the desired effect, but I reasoned with myself that he was just putting on a 'show' and I would soon see him squirming in his bike seat; or so I thought.

We were soon packed up and on our way. To show Greg the magnificent Queensland country side, I decided to ride out through Rathdowney and into NSW via Kyogle.

As most of you know, it's a very twisty road and initially progress was very slow. I soon realise that Greg seemed at home on the big highways, probably because they don't have similar roads on the West Coast

of NZ, so I headed to Casino and the Summerland Highway which also enabled us to pick up the pace.

The funny thing was, each time I gave Greg an update on how far we had come and how far we had to go his eyes seemed to widen more and I think he was starting to realise how big a country Aussie is, perhaps my plan was working after all?

Onwards and onwards we travelled and we soon arrived in Grafton. From here we took Orara Way which sort of mirrors the Pacific Motorway down to Coffs Harbour. It is a great little detour through the fertile farmlands of northern NSW. The road eventually winds its way to Nana Glenn, where Russell Crowe has a farm, and then comes in the back way to Coffs Harbour where it meets up with the Pacific Highway again. It's a great ride and I recommend it if you are traveling down that way.

By this time we were both getting a bit scratchy and our rear ends were feeling the effects of the miles we had covered, however, being the considerate brother I am, we pushed on! Once you hit the Pacific Highway south of Coffs Harbour you travel through areas such as Nambucca Heads, Macksville and down

towards Port Macquarie, however, we soon discovered that this part of the trip is a nightmare. There are road works almost all the way and the traffic is heavily backed up at a number of locations. To top it off, the road is highly policed by the Cops and they monitor the road works with a passion that I have not seen before. In saying this, one of the locals told us that people are often killed on this stretch of the road, which is not surprising given the amount of road works that are taking place.

Despite the holdups we pressed on as I was determined to 'test' my brother's resolve to his limits, I was not letting him have an easy ride – it was payback time; or so I thought...

As I approached the small town of Kew, I suddenly realised that I'd had enough of riding for the day and made the usual hand signal to Greg to pull off the highway for the night. At Kew we found a motel with a pub next door so we were 'made' for the night. Of course I told Greg I could see he was getting tired so that's why I decided to stop, I can sound convincing when I want to.

That night we discussed a number of very important issues over a few beers, none of which we could remember the next day, except that we had decide

Payback Ride



to stick to the highways for the remainder of the trip, it was the quickest way to cover some ground and I was convinced Greg would be intimidated by the volume of traffic the closer we got to Sydney; or so I thought...

Unfortunately, the next day I noticed I was leaking some oil out of my air filter. It didn't appear to be anything serious and I wondered if I had overfilled my oil prior to leaving Brisbane (actually I knew I had). We decided to take a short detour to Taree to fix it up, which was soon done, but more about that later.

We continued in our southerly direction via the Pacific Highway towards Sydney. Greg had never been to Sydney, so surely by dragging him along the busy and congested roads of the city I would see the effects of my plan come to fruition; or so I thought...

As we approached Newcastle the traffic started to build up and we were soon in the Hawkesbury River area. I love this stretch of road; the highway

is carved through rolling hills and also meanders its way through the lagoons and waterways all the way to Sydney.

By this time I started to doubt my plan, Greg seemed to be thriving in this environment; he was actually enjoying the ride and did not seem to be fazed at all. I consoled myself in the thought that there was still time for my plan to take effect; or so I thought...

We soon hit the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge and unlike last time, I selected the right lane to ride over it. After ticking that feat off of the bucket list, we rode to Circular Quay and parked up for a while to enjoy a cold beer by the Opera House. I know what you are thinking, and yes, of course I made Greg pay for the beers!

We soon got bored with sightseeing so jumped on the bikes and headed off to Bondi Beach, another icon all Kiwis must visit at least once in their lives. Upon arrival there we did the cruise up and down the

main street and parked up for 5 minutes to look at the eye candy. It was getting late by this time so we decided to head south to Thirroul and subsequently spent the next 2 hours trying to get out of Sydney in peak hour traffic. I remember thinking to myself 'well, this is fun!'

After finally escaping Sydney we headed south via the Royal National Park. This road is off the beaten track but is a fantastic ride and very picturesque, if you every get the chance, I also recommend this ride, whether you are on a bike or in a steel cage. After traveling through the Park you end up on the South Coast of NSW and follow Lawrence Hargrave Drive through small towns like Coalcliff and Scarborough. Along this road you travel over the mighty Seacliff Bridge. This bridge is magnificent and has been the subject of a previous letter to the editor, so I won't go into it again.

One of the main reasons I wanted to travel this route again was to stay at 'The

Beach Hotel' in Thirroul. On my previous trip to this location 2 years ago they had been so good to me. I had arrived at the Hotel tired, frustrated and absolutely drenched from the torrential rain I had been riding in all the way from QLD. They took me in, found me a room and dried all my gear in their commercial dryers. They were just fantastic, especially an old guy that lived upstairs in the hotel. He took me under his wing and looked after me, proving again there are some good Aussies out there!

After checking into the hotel, I asked the barmaid if the old guy was still there. I explained my previous experiences and the barmaid actually remembered me, how funny is that! She confirmed the 'old guy' still lived upstairs and that his name was Jimmy.

I headed upstairs and sure enough there he was, in the same room filled with cigarette smoke. I introduced myself and

it turned out he also remembered me, we had a laugh about that day 2 years ago and I thanked him again for looking after me. I told him he was a legend in Queensland, as I re-told the story as often as I could, this actually seemed to give him a lift and I think he felt good that I had taken the time to catch up with him.

You may be wondering how Greg was going! He was loving the trip, so he said, however, I was still quietly confident that my plan still had some life in it and the return trip would be the true test for him; or so I thought...

Later that night, Greg and I partook in a few beers and I must admit that the feeling took a while to come back to my rear end. After a while, the distance we had travelled didn't really seem that far, funny what a leveller a few beers are.

The next day, the plan was simple, head for Queensland! I did a bit of research and identified that if we travelled up to Newcastle we could turn off the highway onto Bucketts

Way, which then turns into Thunderbolt way. The road looked interesting and I was desperate to 'up the ante' on my plan, surely this would be the knockout blow that would truly bring Greg to his knees; or so I thought...

Our return trip would take us up through central NSW and would eventually meet the New England Highway just short of Glenn Innes. Google maps indicated that there were plenty of small towns along the way where we could stop overnight and once we hit Glen Innes we could turn off and travel down to Grafton.

It turned out to be a master plan, as the road is a well-used route used by bikers as it offers scenic riding and quaint towns to visit along the way. We ended up staying the night in Gloucester, where we again sampled a number of cold beers at the local hotel. I must tell you, it was hilarious when we checked in, the landlady cracked a joke about putting us in a room next to the 'prostitutes', it was about

5pm so it was not until later that I realised that she was already pissed, you have to love the locals.

The next day we pressed on to Glen Innes and then took the Gwydir Highway into Grafton. Some of you know this highway and it was a fun ride down the hill. About halfway along a couple of rusty old 4 x 4's passed us at speed, they were showing off as we were just cruising down the hill within the speed limit at the time. Their overtaking manoeuvre can only be described as ludicrous! So I decided to put them in their place and took off after them. I passed them a few km's down the road and once I had passed them (I cannot divulge my speed) I stopped on the side of the road and let them go by, just to make my point! A funny thing then happened, Greg arrived and we continued on our way, however, a few kms further on we passed a speed camera. It was parked behind bushes and I am sure the dickheads in the 4x4's would not have seen it, justice I thought!

We stayed in Grafton for the night and the final leg of the trip was home via the Pacific highway.

Getting back to my oil problem in Taree, a young guy at the local Trax Tyre store went out of his way to help me, for no charge, demonstrating once again that there are good Aussies out there. I ended up writing to his boss but I didn't hear back, so hopefully my letter got back to him.

It was a great trip and a great way to explore the country. As for my dastardly plan to test the resolve of my little brother, by the time we got back to Brisbane I had long given up on it, Greg had obviously enjoyed the trip and had easily risen to the challenge, I am sure I will see him back again soon.

I am now thinking of a new plan. It is not over Greg!

The end.





South Ride

A week or so before the south rider's choice I had a call from Yogi saying "as there is a Heavy Duty shop ride on the same day as a South rider's choice can we go on that please, please, please. I would like the experience of riding with all those Harleys." "Ok Yogi" I said "I will see what I can do." So on the morning of the 17th Sarge, Grumpy, Yogi,

Specs, Ace, Hurricane, Drastic, Suzie and I turned up to do the ride and Mac came to say hi before we left. 180 bikes left the shop and the first few kms were what I would envisage at flag fall on the Isle of Mann. Things settled down when we got on the highway but there was the odd strange passing maneuver and an idiot on a cam am with a

trailer dressed in a rabbit suit (I shit you not) who thought he should take up half the lane like a bike. We made it to Fernvale for a break without incident. The second half of the ride was from Fernvale around Wivenhoe to Plainland. We moved to the front of the pack to get some consistent riding but there were still many in the group who had no idea



about group riding and took unnecessary risks. We arrived at Plainland and had a settling drink then said our goodbyes to Yogi and Sarge and the rest of us headed to the Sundowner Saloon at

Haigslea for lunch before heading for home. All in all an interesting day and thanks for the suggestion Yogi, but I don't think I will go on another one.

(PS some artistic licence was used in the drafting of this report)
Cheers
Jak





JANUARY 10

Ride Captain:
Hurricane

Members:

Mac
Boots
Sarge
Grumpy
ACE
Rick
Axle

Visitors:

Shaun Watts -
0419661561
Cliff Ramsay -
0415196316
Paul Rodda -
041835528
Casey Edwards
(ACES's son)

North Ride

I will preface the report by stating that the ride started off a little strange, what I mean is, Sarge volunteered to be the tail-end Charlie? Most of the members were a little confused by this to say the least, after all Sarge is not known for his patience and I am sure a few wondered whether it would last? But sure enough, as we left Caseldine there he was, at the back of the pack!

The route for the day took us north of course, up the highway to the turn off at Caboolture and then onto Beerburrium Road, it was a beautiful day so the ride out of town under the canopy of the trees was very pleasant. We soon turned off onto Old Gympie Road which presented riders with an opportunity for a break-out, which most took. Old Gympie Rd is very twisty and is only 80 km or less in some places, so riders couldn't go too crazy. After regrouping at the end of Old Gympie Rd we went

up through Peachchester and onto Bald Knob Road where we had another break-out. Then it was up the hill, through Monteville and onto the Mapleton pub. I don't know about everyone else but I never get sick of this stretch of road, it is picturesque and you have some great views out towards the Sunshine Coast. When we arrived at the Mapleton pub it was closed, I know, I should have remembered this but for some reason I was living in hope! Oooooooooooooops sorry.

After being berated for my mistake, we took off again and went down the hill to Nambour where we located an air condition establishment that provided everyone with the necessary refreshments, thank god for that as I suspect I would have been lynched if the pub had been closed. It was at this point Sarge decided to depart us, apparently he had decided to pick family duties over ride duties, what is the world coming to?

After refuelling the humans, we took off over the highway towards the Buderim Tavern where lunch was waiting for us. It didn't take us long to get there and I thoroughly enjoyed the bangers and mash that they serve up there, the funny thing was, going to the Buderim Tavern for lunch was a strategic move on my part as I knew Sarge liked their bangers and mash! never mind, myself and 3 others enjoyed them.

After lunch we made a group decision to return to Brisbane via Landsborough, Woodford and then over Mt Mee. Boots decided to head for home straight after lunch so he headed straight down the highway, he made some excuse about having to mow the lawns and do his washing or something? Lets not judge him!

A funny thing happened just past Landsborough, it absolutely poured down! It was like we where being targeted by the rain god because it was sunny everywhere else but above



us, it was bizarre. We soon rode out of it (It only lasted 5 minutes) and back into brilliant sunshine. We made our way to Woodford via Commercial Flat Road and then took the Mt Mee turn off aiming for a pleasant ride over the hill. Unfortunately we had to stop at the rest area halfway up the mountain and wait for ACE as his Boulevard was experiencing some challenges (Boules never break down). After much discussion and advice we decided to continued onto our end point in Dayboro. Good byes were had there and I overheard further planning by some riders to meet up for either coffee and beers.

Everyone indicated they had a great day and I really enjoy the fact we stuck together, its a great sight to see hone we ride as a group, in this case 11 bikes. We also still managed to finish reasonable early, so I deemed it another successful day out for Steelhorses.

Hurricane





Texas and Back



South Ride

Hi all,
I thought I'd knock up a report for the newsletter, since we have been a bit short on input lately.

5 of us turned up at the West meeting point for an 8.00 O'clock start for Texas. The weather didn't look too good and we all thought we might end up with wet clackers before too long, but as we headed off, after the usual disgusting meal that only McDonalds can offer, we were lucky enough to dodge the rain, with only the odd spot or two here and there.

Sarge was leading the ride

for Mayhem, and our first stop was at the big servo on the left as you go into Warwick. We all had a coffee and a nibble and a bit of a rest, then off again to Stanthorpe for a drink.

After we headed off to Texas, we came across wet spots where the rain had been before us, but it certainly didn't look like the aftermath of the "Fierce storm warnings" that the exalted weather man was bleating about, and it ended up being a nice cool ride all the way.

When we got to Texas, we were all well and truly

ready for a cold drink and lunch. Grumpy, Jak and I stashed our gear in our rooms and we were glad to see that each was fitted with air conditioners, which we promptly cranked up ready for us to return to a nice cold room.

After lunch, Sarge and Mayhem said their "goodbyes" and headed for home.

We hung out at the bar for a while knocking back a few coldies, then went and got into our sloppy joes so we could really relax.

We had a lovely dinner, a couple more drinks, and I

was ready to crash.

We bypassed the buffet breakfast next morning, and decided to wait and have brekkie at Tenterfield.

We left Texas for Tenterfield and somehow came across the dreaded gravel road..... we stopped and had a pow wow and decided to go for a while , eventually stopping to talk to a farmer on his tractor, and ask for directions.

When we finally got back on to bitumen, and were loping along at a reasonable pace, I noticed something come flying out from Grumpys right side, and

then go flying back like a shot out of a gun. As I went past the spot, I noticed a dead wallaby in the grass off the side of the road. The little bugger had raced out straight into Grumpys bike. Luckily it just grazed the back of his fork, then hit and bent the foot brake pedal, gave grumpy a nice whack on the ankle, and then went careening back to

where he came from....and then I'm sure, to that big green meadow in the sky.

We got to Tenterfield, after stopping at "the Lunatic Pub" for a drink, and had breakfast at the Blue Bell Cafe'

Off to Casino and then Kyogle for lunch at that pub we said we'd never go back to.... the one that always

gives me cucumber! We left there for Rathdowney via Summerland way, where we stopped for another drink.... seems to be a pattern there somewhere.... said our goodbyes and then all headed home via Beaudesert, Stanmore Road, Gold Coast Highway.

All in all, it was a bloody great two days, with good

company, good roads, and luckily, good weather.

we must do that again sometime, soon, somewhere else.

Cheers

Steiny

"A man has got to know his limitations"



V Rod Test Run

A few Fridays back, I had a warranty issue to sort out on my bike and took it in to Gasoline Alley. I was a bit later than usual doing the drop off and as the guy in front of me was given an 883 iron as a loan bike I was concerned I might be given a bicycle as a loaner. However after looking around Chris, the workshop manager, came out and gave me the keys to a shiny new 2016 Night Rod saying “I’m giving you the go fast bike today”

I have never been a fan of the V rod bikes but even going around the corner to Springwood Suzuki to have breakfast with some of the other Steelhorses reprobates I could tell that this was a bike that would be worth taking on a little highway excursion. When I pulled up Rowdy said to me “I could see the smile on your face as you were riding down the road”.

I knew my bike wouldn’t be ready to pick up till late in the afternoon, so after an extended breakfast I headed for the highway with the idea of going to Oxenford then over Tambourine and down Henri Roberts Drive to see a mate in Nerang. Entering the M1 the Night Rod came into its own and the development work done by Porche became obvious. The bike red lines at 9000 but after you hit just over 4000 you need to hang on

tight. The power kicks in and you are pushed back in the seat all the way up to nearly 100 kph as I would not obviously break the law. The power is awesome but not for me as I think my licence would be short lived if I owned something like this.

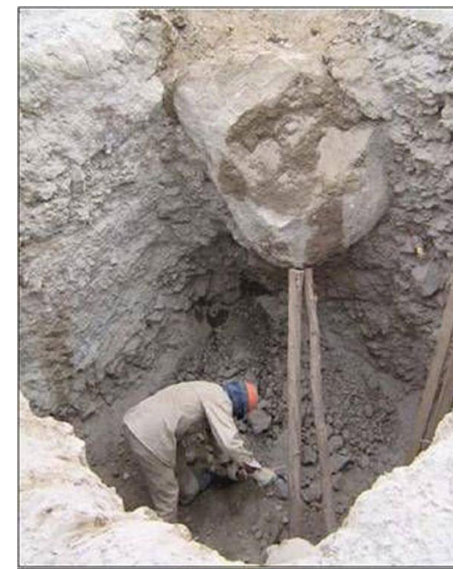
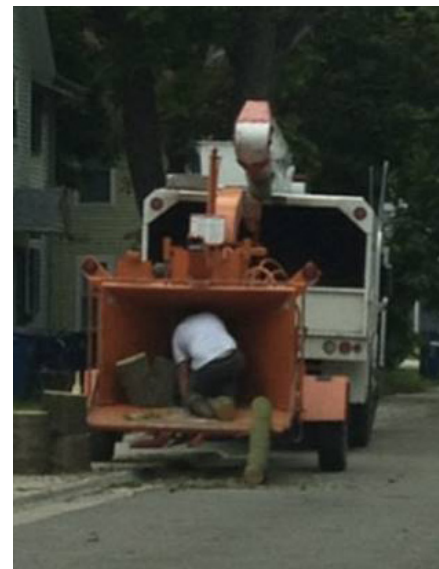
Climbing up Tambourine the combination of the bikes 240 rear and its newness to me had me going pretty easy on the corners but I am sure that with familiarity it would be a reasonable bike to handle. It is light and nimble but it would never be considered a great handling machine. Going up the steep roads on the mountain was another story altogether. The 113nm of torque and 125 hp combine to make the steepest climb a breeze and again the smile was growing on my face.

While visiting my mate at Nerang I contacted GA and to my joy found out my bike would not be ready to collect till the next day. I had awesome fun playing in the traffic on the way home and had envisioned a 5 am rise to put some more ball tearing ks on the bike, but alas rain intervened and instead I had a slow careful trip back to return it.

Would I swap it for my Street Glide? No way! But in a perfect world with unlimited points on my licence I would have one as a second bike in a flash.

Cheers

Jak



Is your
pillion
ugly?

2016 Honda Gold Wing F6B

by TJ Hinton

Honda revealed its original GL 1000 “Gold Wing” in 1974 to compete directly with Harley Davidson for a slice of the American tour-bike market, but it was a tourer in name only.

More of a big cruiser by American standards, the fairingless, bagless Gold Wing found a toehold on U.S. shores, and Honda went to work perfecting its new platform.

The GL1100 Interstate, released in 1980, was really the first proper tour

bike version of the Gold Wing with a full fairing, windshield and baggage — features that catapulted the GL series to the top of the U.S. import-tour market. Honda carries that style all the way through to 2016 with its GL1800 Gold Wing, and the less-tourtastic, but definitely boulevard bruiser-esque, Gold Wing F6B and F6B Deluxe. The popularity of Gold Wings is undeniable, evidenced by its legions of loyal fans, so let’s take a look at what Honda has in store.w



As Honda’s flagship model, the new GL1800 represents over 30 years of evolution on the “Interstate” platform, and it’s come a long way to say the least. One thing that has remained constant is Honda’s dedication to comfort. The fairing and adjustable windshield forms a veritable cockpit that hides the rider from wind and weather, —boots to helmet — and the mirror housings break the wind off your fists. Heated handgrips and seats complete the cold-weather riding ensemble. I actually sneered a little when I typed that last; but truth to tell, there have been times that I would have given my eyeteeth for heated grips, and I am not above taking my seat inside with me at night so at least it’s warm in the morning.

While the Gold Wing comes fully bagged out and singularly set up for long road trips, the F6B and F6B Deluxe loses the trunk and tall windshield for a clean, yet somehow menacing look that I find comparable to the Harley Street Glide and Victory Cross Country , among others.

This is a solid move because that market is enjoying something of a boom right now, and Honda already has a proven platform in the GL series. Both the full-dressed version and the F6B bagger version come with a number of sub-models, and two of them really stand out.

First, the dresser Gold Wing line offers an airbag model in Grey Metallic/Black that comes with collision detection sensors that deploy an — you guessed it — airbag that help reduce ejection speed in the event of a head-on collision. Comforting, to say

the least. Secondly, the F6B is available in a standard version, or a Deluxe version that comes with commonly added accessories, namely the centerstand, heated handgrips and passenger backrest, so if you fancy any of those options, you can roll them right off the showroom with the Deluxe package.



Chassis

Although it fits the very definition of a big bike, the Gold Wing family maintains a compact wheelbase at only 66.5-inches long. The beauty of the frame layout lies with the trail. At only 4.3-inches long, the short trail contributes heavily to the Gold Wing’s phenomenal cornering ability, and that agility is one of the cornerstones of the Wing’s success over the years. Of course, the cornering performance gets a lot of help from the low center of gravity created by the fuel tank arrangement and flat-six engine.

Brake and suspension components have their work cut out for them. At 900-plus pounds wet, and well over half-a-ton with some combination of rider, passenger and cargo, this is a whole lotta’ bike to keep under control. To that end, Honda started out with 45 mm, right-side-up, cartridge forks that come with an anti-dive feature

to combat that tendency under heavy braking. The rear suspension runs with a monoshock on a single-side swing arm, and it comes with a computer-controlled preload function, so no dirty knees are required for a quick adjustment in response to a load change. With 4.8 inches of travel up front and 4.1 inches in the rear, the GL family comes

with a pretty plush ride.

The front brakes run big, 296 mm disc brakes with three-pot calipers, and the rear runs an even bigger 316 mm disc, also with a three-pot binder. While it’s a little unusual to see a bigger disc in back, I reckon this is for the folks who like to tour with a little trailer, and I know from experience that it doesn’t hurt to have a little extra insurance back there, especially if your trailer doesn’t have brakes. Honda uses its combined brake system (CBS), a brake-by-wire feature that reads rider input and distributes braking pressure in the correct proportions to the front and rear brakes while preventing wheel slip from overbraking — all good stuff for hitting the highway with confidence under a full load.

Drivetrain

Honda used its liquid-cooled, 1,832 cc horizontal six as the beating heart for

all Gold Wing models this year. This slightly over-square mill runs with a 74 mm bore and 71 mm stroke, SOHC and dual-valve heads. A Programmed Fuel Injection (PGM-FI) feature and digitally mapped ignition control manages the power output and helps the mill meet emission standards.

While the engine is the same across the board, the rest of the drivetrain isn’t necessarily so uniform. The GL1800 comes with a feature that doesn’t make it onto the F6B / Deluxe, namely an electric-reverse function. I’ve already established that this is a lot of bike to control, and saving yourself the effort of having to

Fred-Flintstone it to back up is huge, especially with a trailer in tow. This five-speed, overdrive-ratio transmission, and shaft final drive, delivers quiet power to the rear wheel for comfortable highway cruising.

Price

The factory calls the baseline GL1800 package the “Gold Wing Audio Comfort,” and in spite of the champagne nature of even the base model, Honda lets go of it for beer money at only US\$23,999. The top-of-the-line “Gold Wing Airbag” with all the bells and whistles rolls for around 7k more, still not as high as some big-name competitors I can think of. Stripped-down looks equal stripped-down prices for the F6B sub-family. The GL1800B “F6B” barely breaks the 20k mark at US\$20,499, and the GL1800BD “Deluxe” model will set you back another grand at US\$21,499. Not exactly entry-level range,



2016 Honda Gold Wing F6B...

but definitely within the realm of reason for most.

Competitor

By Honda's own admission, the Gold Wing was designed to compete with the domestic tour bikes on U.S. shores. So, I thought I would pick another typical American dresser that also comes in a pure-tour configuration as well as a bruiser layout, and the Cross Country and Cross Country Tour (CC / CCT) from Victory seems a good choice for a non-Harley competitor.

Victory follows a more traditional look with a fork-mounted fairing and open engine compartment, but the tradeoff comes at the expense of comfort, and the CCT lacks the cockpit-like bubble of the Gold Wing. To be fair, Victory does offer many of the same features as Honda, such as ABS, cruise control and an accessory sound system, just with

a different delivery, as it were. In spite of the extra body components, the CC manages to maintain just a bit of the typical Victory swoop, but not too much in my opinion, just enough to let you know what you are looking at. As always, looks are subjective, and even secondary to performance for some, hard to believe, I know, but there it is.

Another aesthetic feature with nothing directly to do with aesthetics would be the engine. Victory runs its Freedom 106/6 engine in the CC family, a big V-twin mill that fits right in with American bike culture, and so the engine itself becomes part of the overall look. Honda shrouds the GL mill, so in that case the lack of engine visibility adds to the look. I guess I should mention that the Freedom has that nice, V-twin lope that is so musical to Australian ears.

