

ACROSS AND BACK AGAIN, PART 1

CHINESE BURN INTRODUCTION THE BEAR STORY/PHOTOS KARL PIRCHMOSER



Chinese bike quality is crap, right? Well... maybe not...

When I rode CFMoto's 650TK a little while ago on the launch, I was impressed. Oh, there were a few problems, yes. Some of them were easily overcome, others would need minor changes at the factory. Overall, though, the bikes were a lot of fun and certainly looked pretty well made, and they were certainly well priced. But the prejudices wouldn't quite die... and after all, what are you really saying when you point out that these bikes are the cheapest fully kitted tourers on the market? That's not truly all that much of a recommendation, is it?

You, our readers, deserve better than just being told that the price is right – or, anyway, even if not right then at least low. And the importers deserved

to show their bikes off in a way that would actually demonstrate their quality. Somehow we needed to put these machines to a real test... and then the light bulb went on over my head.

When Kawasaki first launched its 1400 GTR, they promoted it as the transcontinental tourer. So at the time I asked the late and sadly missed "Davo" Jones, the founder of the FarRiders, to take one and ride it across Australia and back. Just to prove that it really was a "transcontinental" bike. Well, he did and it was. The bike proved itself glowingly, and Davo bought one. As did a lot of our other readers; just check the arsenal of the FarRiders today.

So... wouldn't it be convincing if we did the same thing with a 650TK from CFMoto?

I asked the importers if they would be prepared to supply a bike. They not only agreed to provide two bikes but also offered to pick up the bulk of the tab, just as Kawasaki had done with Davo's ride – and also on the understanding that their contribution would make no difference to the final judgment.

Then I dropped a note to my mate Clint, at FarRiders, and asked him to put the word out that a burn across the continent, a re-run of Davo's ride, was on offer. I won't go so far as to say that we were inundated with applications; after all, we were asking these guys to ride 10,000km in six days, on bikes they had never even seen before. But we got half a dozen pretty amazing CVs...

"In the past twelve months I have ridden approximately 45,000 kilometres, most of which have been of substantial distance and certified by the Iron Butt Association (IBA).

"My last ride (November 2013) was a world first riding a 150cc capacity Yamaha YZF-R15 motor cycle 4,000km in under 50 hours (50CC IBA awaiting certification). The ride commenced in Newcastle (NSW) and was completed in Perth (WA), considered impossible on such a small capacity bike. I am currently planning to replicate the trip next year however making the return run completing 8,000 kilometres in 4 days (100CCC).

"In September this year I successfully completed a SS1600K (under 24hrs) memorial ride on an air cooled 125cc Honda CB125e motor cycle, returned home the following day completing over 2,800 kilometres in 48 hours.

"In the last twelve months I have made several trans-Australia crossings on a 1400cc Kawasaki GTR (certified IBA 50CC and 100CCC). I have made numerous IBA certified rides of varied lengths and destinations. I have participated on numerous organised rides with FarRiders and am a mentor to numerous riders."

Impressive, right? Well, here's another example.

"I'm a self funded retiree aged 52. I... ran the Polar Circle Marathon last year, I've run six half marathons this year and will be running the Tokyo Marathon next Feb and the Big 5 Marathon in South Africa in May. Running has nothing to do with riding other than ensuring a high level of fitness and endurance which feeds into my ability to complete long rides safely.

"I did my first IBA Ride in October 2011. I did my 19th IBA Ride last week. Since 6 October this year I've done a 100CCC, and SS5000K and an SS3000K Gold [3300K in 36hrs – look the others up on the IBA website!].

"I have done IBA rides on my 2009 Harley Davidson Road King, a Yamaha TTR 250, a KLR650 a Super Tenere, an SS1600K on a CBR125R and most oddly the recent 100CCC (Newcastle - Perth - Newcastle) in less than 98 hours was on a CBR250R.

"I was one of only two riders to fully complete the FarRiders FarChallenge last year.... It involved riding over 38,000km to 50 different locations throughout Australia to take a photo at each. I have never failed to complete an IBA Ride I've undertaken. I pulled the pin on a longer ride to Darwin on the way home from a 50CC (Newcastle - Perth 47 hrs) in January this year due to the heat as I considered it unsafe to continue. Safety is my No 1 priority."

So, with that kind of talent on offer, we had no trouble filling the two slots. What was difficult was deciding whom not to ask! In the end we settled on Karl Pirchmoser and Craig Harcombe, two FarRiders who are also active in the Iron Butt Association and who have experience on bikes of different sizes. Who knows, maybe we'll also have a ride for the other guys to do (and you to read about) some time.

So without, as they say, any further ado, here is part one of Karl Pirchmoser's report (edited only for grammar and cut only to fit it into our pages) on what he calls the...

TRANS AUSTRALIA INSANITY RIDE

February 2014

The long awaited call came at 1100hrs on Friday, 8th February 2014, only a week before the Trans Australia Insanity ride was to be attempted.

I grabbed my boots, jacket and helmet and was driven to ARB Dubbo, the CFMoto dealer, where a shiny red CFMoto 650TK was parked, waiting for me. I savoured the moment, walked inside and was greeted by Bob, the NSW/ACT Manager. The ride would commence in Byron Bay NSW, proceed to Denham WA and return to Byron Bay - covering over 10,000 kilometres.

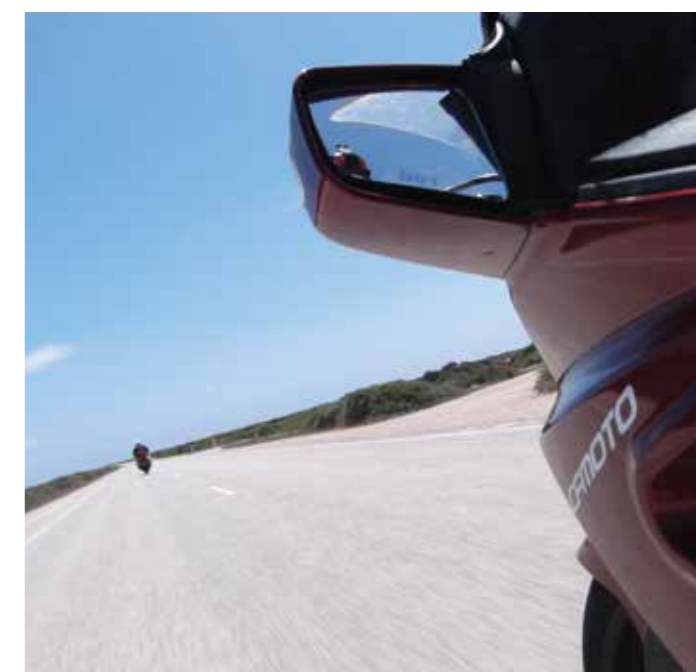
Bob discussed a few features and starting sequence of the bike, I listened intently but I just wanted to take it for a run. The bike had been specced up as requested except for tyres; they were new OEM [original equipment].

I filled the tank to the brim with premium fuel and headed off towards Burrendong Dam trying to determine an approximate fuel range. The actual plan was still uncertain until we could accurately determine that.

I farkled [accessorised - ed.] the bike without aesthetically damaging it. Would have loved to transplant some HID lights, however this was impossible without punching holes in the body work. Three RAM mounts allowed GPS, Spot and Etrex GPS to be fitted allowing us to monitor our progress. One cigarette lighter is available; it is not in an ideal position and so I fitted an auxiliary fused power cable, allowing 3.2 amps to power devices and an electronic kangaroo deterrent.

The transport leg to Byron Bay would occur over two days; stage one was to depart Dubbo at 1700hrs and travel to Armidale. Next morning the final leg would take me to the starting point for check-in at the motel.

Lionel had previously volunteered to be the photographer on the trip and had already booked in; we planned





to go out to tea that night when Craig arrived from Newcastle. In the meantime we headed off to the local supermarket and bought a few supplies for the trip.

Disaster, 1300hrs. I receive a text from Craig, he has broken down at the roadside. I get another text at 1737hrs, the bike is at dealer being unloaded. Craig rings a little later saying a faulty accelerator sensor was replaced, eta 2230hrs. I leave the door unlocked, light on and a snack for him.

Lionel and I go out for Thai and relax for the pending ride, it is an early night and we are starting to get into the mindset of the ride.



DAY 1 (1,951KM)

The alarm goes off at 0310hrs, it doesn't take much to wake me. I jump out of bed in anticipation for the start of this exciting and historical ride, previously been ridden by 'Davo' Jones on his famous GTR in 2009.

Bikes loaded, the three of us head to the lighthouse where Clint, Crappy, Bart and Greg are waiting to assist with witnessing and sign the necessary documentation to validate the ride.

After the documentation is completed, we all head off for a departure receipt from an ATM terminal. I get one from Westpac at 0414hrs, we are about 15 minutes late as we got a bit excited talking to fellow riders at the lighthouse. Off we go, the bikes snaking along the roadway towards Casino then up the mountain towards Tenterfield. I take the lead as we approach the winding section, the TK takes the corners easily with ten litres of spare petrol and both panniers full. The GTR's pannier liners fit nicely inside the fixed TK panniers. I push the bike fairly hard into the corners, it behaves predictably and feels like a sports bike and we make up most of our 15 minutes on the mountain section.



A quick jerry refill at Tenterfield, say goodbyes to our escorts, Clint, Crappy and Bart.

The run into Glen Innes is smooth with very little traffic; we approach Deepwater and are greeted on the side of the road by a Dalek. We continue towards Armidale when a bike approaches rapidly from behind and Tony tails us into the Airport service station.

We refuel, have quick chat, a bit slow but this is our first stop and we are still getting into the groove. We depart and proceed towards Coonabarabran and refuel in the town limits on the south side of town leading out. I have found jerry can refills save between four and five minutes over service station refills. If refueling is carried out in the 50 or 60 zones, more time can be saved than doing it in 100/110 km/h zones.

Gilgandra is the start of our regular fuel stop sequence with the Coast to Coast rides; the temperature is about 37 degrees. We arrive, refuel and stock up with water and head off to Cobar through Warren for the next scheduled stop. The bike is responsive, very easy to ride and has ample overtaking power and torque even when fully loaded.

A quick stop as we enter Cobar for a photo. My partner threatened me before I left not to take another photo of the Cobar factory; I laugh to myself as I park the TK and take a photo to add to the collection. 1613hrs is printed on the fuel docket as Craig pays for the fuel with a credit card and obtains two receipts; we settle into our proven refuelling process. I wash visors, headlights and purchase water or anything else as required.

Lionel is riding the Honda ST1300 with greater fuel capacity, greater range and more horsepower and has more flexibility with refueling. He decides to fill at the BP as we take up two pumps at the Shell. We see him relaxing on a bench enjoying some refreshments, pull in and he suggests we continue as he will catch up.

We pass Wilcannia, it's still very warm. I am constantly sipping water

and we refuel north of Wilcannia in a rest area. Craig gestures to fill up in the shade of a road train. We pull over, dump the fuel into the tanks and head off, arriving at Broken Hill at 2000hrs. We are met by a welcoming committee, Kwaka and Liz, thanks guys that was really nice.

We refuel and move our bikes from the bowlers just as Lionel pulls into the servo for fuel. After a few minutes we say our goodbyes and head off to Yunta for a quick meal. During the trip I have in my tank bag muesli bars, dried fruit and barely sugar. This not only addresses hunger issues; from experience I know that I tend to weaken and lose concentration between one and two hours after sunset. To overcome this I slowly eat something and I find this pushes me through the danger barrier, ensuring my alertness and concentration are maintained.

This is our first real meal of the day. We order, enjoy the burger and refreshment, thank the console operator and head out the door as a truckie warns us of kangaroos south of Yunta. He says he ran over six, I thank him and head off.

Lionel pulls his Honda in front, and the road looks like daylight for what looks like at least 500 metres with the light spilling over into the paddocks on each side, and we travel at the speed limit of 110km/h. We ride a tight formation, and rotate positions maintaining formation and maximising available light as we all ride on high beam. Craig passes a kangaroo on his right hand side, he disturbs it, it bounces almost instantly to my right, I attempt to ride around it, but it changes its path again; I align the TK and run straight into it. From previous experience I know that it is important not to brake but maintain smoothness ensuring stability. I don't feel much as I launch over the animal, landing heavily with a 'tank slap'. I struggle to bring the bike under control with slight deceleration and rear brake feathering until the TK comes to a halt. The bike pulls up on the wrong side of the road,

Craig has well and truly gone and his white light snakes into the distance.

My first thought is, 'damn, I can't finish the ride'. I know what damage kangaroos can do, since I have hit several before. Lionel pulls his beast up on the edge of the roadway, I kick the side-stand down, grab my head light from my pocket and do a quick reconnaissance. Nothing obvious is missing or broken; I ride it so it's facing Lionel's bike for more light.

Lionel is as white as a sheet, I ask in an insouciant manner: 'did I run over it?' He replies that I did the right thing, lined it up and just went through it. I carry out a more detailed check of the bike: shockies appear straight, some blood and bits hanging off the base of forks, good movement, and alignment seems OK, fur and dust on front guard but intact, fur and dust on plastics and rear pannier but all seems intact. Craig arrives and mumbles something about me having a habit when it comes to kangaroos; every time I go out I seem to hit one. A couple of months ago after returning from an IBA ride, I killed one while riding a 125cc Honda not far from this location, it hopped straight into me.

The bike seems good; I take the lead, Craig is a few metres behind projecting light on the left side of the roadway, Lionel at the rear spraying the whole area with light. The lights on the TK are far from adequate for long distance night riding. Add a second or a third bike and the area becomes more illuminated and suitable for night riding.

Lionel tells me later, when we discuss the incident, that he worried because if I had fallen off he would probably have run over me.

We refuel at Port Augusta, about thirty minutes inside our plan. The receptionist at the motel opens security doors and we ride our bikes into a secure area. We unload and settle down for the night. I'm still feeling pumped and pretty happy with the bike's performance and front end strength.

Craig and I share a room; we both

had initial reservations about sharing facilities due to the tight time frame and the need to be efficient. Without trying, we work in synergy, no time is wasted, everything is done and we are settled in our beds. Thirty minutes later I am plagued with leg cramps. I was adequately hydrated during the day, and had ample electrolyte support. That doesn't seem to matter; I have to walk the leg cramps out in the car park. It takes close to thirty minutes to clear them and settle back into bed, and I have to sleep on my back otherwise they creep back. Craig says that I snored during the night; I didn't hear a thing and slept well.

DAY 2 (1,856KM)

The alarm chimes, we are dressed, bikes packed within 30 minutes and we head towards Kimba at 0655hrs. We spot a couple of stray kangaroos but they pose no threat. I have been running an electronic animal repellent that arrived from America about two weeks previously. The device is designed to attract wildlife's attention and make them look around; it has a range of approximately 250 metres. It is hard to determine if it actually works, but anyway when wildlife is on the run it won't stop them. We arrive at Kimba and take a few photos. Kimba is halfway across Australia and neither Craig nor I have fond memories from numerous rides through the town.

As we approach Wudinna, Craig pulls in for a quick photo of the granite sculpture: he usually passes through in the dark of the night, and has been after a photo for a while. The sculpture represents early settlers in the region; it is eight metres high and took about 17 years to create.

We pull into Ceduna fresh and refuel both bikes and jerry cans. Purchase more water and off again not looking forward to the 42 degrees expected during the day. Craig and I have previously travelled this area when it was close to 50 degrees, I can assure you it is not pleasant and appropriate hydration is so important.

The ride into Penong is relaxing and my mind starts to drift, in no time we are passing through town. The first thing that visitors notice is the dozens of windmills placed on your left side as you approach from the east. More windmills are peppered throughout the town. It should be noted that the Caltex is now open 24hrs a day; apparently it had been open for some time. I have previously passed by at night and seen lights on with occasional semitrailers parked out the front but always presumed it was closed. The restaurant/takeaway shop adjacent to the Caltex, however, is not open 24hrs.

I find the run from Penong to Nullarbor Roadhouse a little boring. At night I have often seen dead wombats scattered from about twenty kilometres out for a further thirty kilometres. No problems with visibility during the day. We pass Nullarbor Roadhouse, I avoid stopping here, their premium fuel never gives me the range of premium fuel purchased elsewhere and time is wasted due to the need to surrender your driver's license before the attendant turns the fuel pump on. We fuel a little further up on the side of the highway. There are several roads leading to the cliffs which are worthy of investigation as the scenery is absolutely wonderful.

As we approach Border Village we note that the entrance is a badly worn dirt road peppered with potholes and gravel, caution is needed otherwise it is easy to bottom out the suspension or possibly come to grief. Border Village is the gateway to Western Australia from the east. Lionel has already refuelled. Craig and I refuel, the bikes' tanks only take about 15.55 litres when empty, they are rated at 17 litres but the side stand has the bike leaning fairly well over making it impossible to fill the tank to capacity. The other issue with the bike leaning over so far is that when it is fully loaded, it can be difficult to lift to the neutral position when in the saddle. We go inside for a bite to eat and we are about 30


minutes ahead of schedule. It is often suggested that refuelling at Eucla is better since fuel is about 10 cents a litre cheaper. Unfortunately there is limited pump space, refuelling can be slow and they have no premium fuel. I also find that driving off the highway I may lose my rhythm and this always takes time to get back.

We head off again; it has cooled down and riding is very enjoyable. We pass a few road trains and the TK has ample power to punch past them safely; the wind shear has minimal impact except on fuel economy as we push the bikes past the long road trains. The rider is often subjected to contrasting air movement, often you are leaning towards the ocean counteracting the gusting winds, but as you pass the semi-trailer the bike is dragged into a neutral or opposite direction and when you get past the semi the bike has to be quickly leaned into the wind again, otherwise you find yourself on the edge of the road on the left hand side of the highway. This can be really hard work on any bike, especially when it rains.

I am riding a LAMS approved bike and find it has more than enough power and torque to satisfy the need of any long distance rider even though I have both panniers fully loaded and am carrying ten litres of fuel on the rear rack. I find the posture on the TK excellent; slightly leaning forward, no back strain, and the ergonomics of all the controls suit me.

We are mindful that night is nearing; we stop at Caiguna, refuel with liquid gold at \$2.22 a litre, purchase more water and head off. Darkness approaches and encompasses us, we arrive at Coolgardie at 0200hrs, fifteen minutes outside our schedule. We settle into the motel, Craig and I share a room, a quick shower, focus on our tasks and settle down for five hours' sleep. Lionel has the luxury of a room to himself...

Things have gone well, except for that one... unfortunate kangaroo. Are the wheels going to fall off in the next, and final episode? (To be continued...) ●



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