

two wheels

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AUGUST, 1980

DIRT SHOOTOUT!
Honda XL, Yamaha XT
& Kawasaki KL Thumpers

TONY HATTON
Profile of an
ever-cool maestro

Bathurst Violence
Facts against
the fantasy!



two wheels

Volume 22, No. 6, AUGUST 1980

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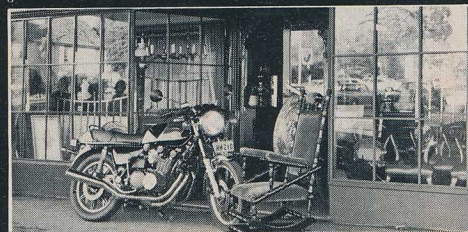
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Remember when that strange, original XS750D was called "years ahead of its time". It might well have been true — then! Many models later it's bigger and still with us. Even innovators are allowed to trail the slip occasionally. . . on page 20.

Editor

Mac Douglas

Assistant Editor

Mark Camm

Back-up and Legwork

Julia Cullen

South Of The Border

Kel Wearne

Road Test Chief

Col Miller

Leprechaun Still At Large

Lester Morris

National Advertising Chief

Les Edwards

Our Artist

Kerry Loss

Production Chief

Bob Bowie with Steve Pickells

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The Night Bathurst "Blew Up"

The 1980 Bathurst race weekend produced more publicity than usual following a skirmish between riders and police on the Mountain on Saturday night. TWO WHEELS believes the time has come to fight the apparent inconsistent media coverage of our sport and files this report surrounding the Bathurst riot — or "non-riot" as it really turned out to be. ROB CLARK reports, with the help of others on the mountain and the MRA Victorian branch.

JUDGED SOLELY on the general media coverage of Bathurst over Easter, the city was virtually under siege by radical outlaw "bikies" rather than host to one of the world's great road-race meetings. The inaccurate reporting of Bathurst's annual "Mountain Madness" raises questions as to where the media sources its information and just how prepared it is to establish what is

factual against mere folklore prior to setting things before the public.

One Sydney newspaper gets the 1980 Prickly Pear and Cow Dung Crown Award for a really off banner headline: "Bathurst Bikies Riot — Two Die". This capsule of knowledge covered both the "riot" and the sad fact that two racers suffered fatal injuries during the practice and races on Friday and Sunday.

The township of Bathurst had a hysterical media response. One thought the town was under siege by Genghis Khan and hordes of Mongols! Yet while the town slept through Saturday unawares of impending doom, so too did most of the mountain campers. Blyth, a member of MRA had no idea of any severe action on the mountain and wondered as did most others about the news on Sunday. He spent three quiet nights there!

The action on the mountain was basically the same as ever; bullrings with doughnut competitions — European and British and American versus the Japanese machines, chicken, flaming football, drags, hillclimbs, skiing behind the bikes, and monowheels among the crowds. All par for the mountain.

However none of the above offered any valid reason to institute storm trooper activity.

What is known is that the Police had set the stage for some comedowns prior to Bathurst with public statements and comments saying that any anti-social behaviour would not be tolerated.

The night of the "mini-riot" — Saturday — became a brisk performance evening immediately following the finish of the Arai 500 Endurance Race. The hill was dry and dusty and a green Z1000 began doing power-slides — for an impressive 300 to 400 metres up to speeds of around 100 km/h! Then he went into doughnuts and was good, attracting a large crowd. The race elixir was still flowing just after the day's racing and there had been no time to disburse. The crowd urged the Kwaka on but he eventually dropped it, tried and dropped it again so rode off.

There were some football games using sheep rib cages for the "ball"; there was a streaker doing doughnuts on an XS11 and wine cask bags refilled with petrol thrown into fires (fire tricks were popular this year) and a beefy fire stoked up under one of the lamp posts! Another group with a couple of solos and a sidecar played chicken through the tent city with two chicks and a guy on the chair. This caused a few camps to move to safer ground.

Meanwhile, the surging crowd around the amenities block and hamburger shed adjacent the police compound set the mood.

"Mini riot"

We can't say what caused it but the dancing girl certainly helped. A lady was having her own trip on the mountain and wanted to do her thing right there. It was perhaps more of a complication for the police than



Was Bathurst really smouldering on Saturday? Here's how it looked in the town early morning. Just good bikes and good vibes.

totally anti-social behaviour.

Well, before she could commit any "act" the police came out to take her in hand. The bikers objected to losing the centre stage and the two police officers retreated in the face of 20 or so bikers. The girl somehow escaped their grasp and appeared on the roof of the amenities block and proceeded to dance along with multiple motorcycle headlights tilted up to and splayed on the area.

The police then proceeded to approach the crowd and arrest people. In all the scene did not last long and many people on the mountain never knew of the "riot" which shows how big it really was. Contrary to the mythology in the media there is no evidence of 1000 bikies attacking the compound.

Rather from what we saw and garnered the action took place between 40 to 60 bikers with a crowd of between 300 and 500 watchers, and 60 to 100 police. At no time did the active "rioters" have more numbers than the police.

To quote our companion Ming and a couple of others: "I've been in better street brawls out front of hamburger joints!"

Reports of more than 90 arrests during the disturbance are nonsense. There were 24 arrests on the mountain on Saturday night. So from the 10,000-12,000 citizens, either riders, bikers or outlaws, there were 24 arrests. Figures like that are matched at football games and cricket matches!

What is also relevant is that many of the

arrests came about through grabbing the watchers, people who just happened to be there and checking out the mountain operations.

Jenny's story

Jenny is a trainee teacher. She was standing with her guy at the scene of the mini-riot when police rushed across and grabbed her guy, Trevor. As he was bundled off a Sergeant said "better bring her too". So she was hauled off and thrown into a divvy wagon at the compound. Inside was a girl bleeding heavily from a severe cut in her temple. Jenny, not used to this situation, called for the police to take the girl to hospital.

At the police station Jenny was charged with three offences; (a) Causing Alarm and Affront (same as Offensive Behaviour), (b) Resisting Arrest and, (c) Assaulting a police officer.

While she was being fingerprinted the injured girl was brought back from the hospital and given a cup of coffee. Then her boyfriend came storming in. He was a deaf-mute and very agitated about a hearing aid which had been ripped off the girl during her arrest. There were five officers outside the counter, three with the boyfriend, two with the girl and about five or six behind the counter, plus the one fingerprinting Jenny. When the agitated and upset deaf-mute became too much to handle Jenny claims he

was beaten to the floor. During which time the girl threw the coffee into an officer's face and thereupon was also beaten and thrown face first to the floor. The officer doing the fingerprinting is alleged to have looked at Jenny and shook his head.

Jenny was then taken to a cell where a distraught girl was held; naked except for a blanket.

By the next morning Jenny was terrified. She had never before even been into a police station. At the court she pleaded guilty to everything (through terror or lack of awareness) and then had to give her story to the magistrate. The magistrate dismissed the latter two charges (resisting arrest and assaulting a police officer) but found for the first and fined her \$180. He then told her never to return to NSW again!

The allegations that police just ran to the crowd and grabbed spectators is backed up by all people we spoke to who were there at the time.

Accidents

Apart from the usual run of incidents there were various stories of a serious accident with two bikes playing "chicken" and another story about a girl in a ute running over two guys on a bike and driving off into town. These stories proved inaccurate.

The only major accident was on the dirt road down from the mountain and involved a flathead Indian with WA plates and a



Mountain dew and doughnuts too.

Lotsa others came to see the actual racing.

Triumph Bonnie with SA plates. All of the guys involved were hospitalised.

The results

There is no doubt the Bathurst publicity has harmed the image of motorcyclists still further. There is also no doubt that the general media coverage was not "fair and reasonable". There are serious discrepancies between the official version, the media hysteria follow-up and the way it all went according to those who make up the mountain.

There is also no doubt many anti-social actions take place on the mountain, but it is a special place for a special part of the year for letting off steam.

The real question is how such a small incident became a national scandal for riders.

Perhaps one answer to the mountain urgings at night would be to have a rock concert/show; to stop all four-wheel travel at night; to provide more amenities and to run full road drags up the straight under supervision — get the action and energy out in the open and make it part of the scene like the incredible action at the Daytona week with beach races and all!

The mountain did not attract many positives this year; most guys criticised the amenities; no showers, little water with only a few taps around the area, no washing facilities and lousy toilets. The fact is that the general public wouldn't stay at the

mountain during the night anyway because of the poor conditions. One reason why so many arrests both this year and last year were indecent exposure stuff came from having to make the most of what's around when nature calls.

Cleaning up the backyard for motorcycle image during the remainder of this year will be impossible following the witches hunt on bikers instigated by the media and backed by the police actions during and after the Bathurst weekend.

Finding fact from fiction is hard enough. Getting a balanced coverage in the media to help even out the stories is virtually impossible. It would seem that only action by the motorcycle rider groups such as the MRA, Bikers Ltd and AML will bring any pressure on the media and the NSW Police to limit the unjustified persecution of those who choose to ride the two-wheeled steeds.

Getting home

After the mass coverage of the Mountain scene the trip out of Bathurst became a dodgem ride. We cannot speak for the trip east but for those running south through either the Newell Highway or Olympic Way there were more police blockades and patrols than ever seen.

Having ridden the Newell so much fellow-traveller Rob took the group he was with back that way, hoping to avoid any hassles on Monday. There was Rob on his GS850,

Lance and pillion on his Z900, Dennis and pillion on the TWO WHEELS test Jota 1000 he bought and Steve on his Triumph Tiger 750, plus they picked up a guy on a Honda CB400.

It had taken only nine and a half hours going up despite the peak exit traffic through Victoria and the inexperienced long distance riders (apart from Rob). It was a 12 and a half hour ride south. North of West Wyalong the group was warned by a trucker of a complete blockade — at the site there were two trucks and a fork lift and an unloading procedure going on but there were four Highway Patrol cars parked behind the trucks going for all bikes!

The group used back roads to bypass the trap then worked on the Z900's electrics for an hour before heading off again. But another detour was necessary as the township of Finley was also blockaded by police with the let's-get-Vic attitude!

But despite missing these the group got sprung on the Goulburn Valley Highway north of Seymour at night when a Candy Car pulled past the lot and booked them all for exceeding the speed limit and so it was \$50 all round thank you very much and three points on (licence that is).

The publicity surrounding Bathurst this year was of greater intensity than on the 1977 weekend, probably the most violent for many years.

Was 1980 really that bad? No way!

