

Mega-Klick Brick

It is not every day that one stumbles upon a bike that has covered well in excess of one million kilometres and is still in regular use, but such is the case with this well used and much travelled 1993 model BMW K75RT.



A million k's and looking a million dollars: Rod's refurbishment has the K75 heading towards the double million.

The three cylinder K75 models were introduced by BMW Motorrad in 1985 to supplement the four cylinder K100 series produced from 1983.

The K Series bikes offered new technology and sophistication to the existing premium brand. Refinements like computer controlled fuel injection, stainless steel exhaust, aluminium fuel tank, mono-lever rear suspension, adjustable headlight, high capacity 460 watt alternator, electrical accessory plug-in, self-cancelling indicators, ABS brakes (on later models) and excellent vibration isolation were all aimed at weaning BMW riders away from the venerable boxer twins on which BMW had built its reputation.

At the time of its introduction the base model K75 was also BMW's lowest priced motorcycle. In Australia it was initially offered with either a small 'cockpit' fairing (K75C), a 'sports' fairing and lower bars (K75S) or with a full fairing and panniers for 'road touring' (K75RT).

All K75 models shared the same drivetrain. They were powered by a 740 cc liquid-cooled inline three cylinder, twin overhead cam engine with Bosch fuel injection developing 56KW. The engine was oriented longitudinally and laid on its side to lower the centre of gravity and allow the most effective power transfer to the shaft drive. The triples were curiously identified by their distinctive triangular exhaust outlet (the four cylinder bikes had square outlets). BMW claimed a top speed of 193 km/h and acceleration of 0-100 km/h in 4.6 seconds. The rectangular,

boxed up engine layout led to the K100 being affectionately nicknamed the "brick", and the smaller, three cylinder bikes as the "three-quarter brick".

This million kilometre bike is a K75RT (low seat) version. It was first registered on 28th January 1994 by BMW Australia to supplement its press fleet. The bike was used by BMW for promotional purposes, magazine articles and motorcycle media evaluation.

It was subsequently on-sold with only 3,000km on the odometer by 'Japan Motorrad' (then) of the Sydney suburb of Sutherland in early 1995 to Vince Fletcher (then) of Picton, South of Sydney, and later of Buxton, a little further South-East. Vince was at the time working as a manager with a Homebush and Mascot-based transport company. Each day for the next 15 years he travelled the round trip of 250km to and from work. With work commuting and work-related touring to all parts of NSW and Victoria, Vince and the BMW had clocked up 1.212 million kilometres by mid-2009.

By 2009 the bike was showing adverse signs of its travels and Vince had his eye on a replacement K1200. His decision to upgrade was brought forward whilst travelling to work along the Picton Road. Just past the Maldon cement works he passed a serious motor accident on a seemingly innocuous piece of road, and just as he was wondering what could have contributed to the accident the rear wheel stepped out on a diesel fuel spill. Vince managed to catch the rear slide but when the front let go it ➤

BMW K75

unceremoniously dumped the heavily faired and screened K75 onto the bitumen. The fairings, screen and panniers were all very badly damaged.

Vince went straight to a K1200, but was also stuck with the old K75. However, a near neighbour, friend and well known Velocette enthusiast Allan Dean (sadly now passed under the chequered flag) had been without a bike or project for some years and Vince thought that Allan (then in his early '80s) might like the old BMW as a project. Allan agreed and in May 2009 Vince wheeled the bike into Allan's garage and placed it on the centre stand.

A week or so later Allan's wife Nerida suggested to Allan that he might like to move the bike from the centre of the garage so that the family car could be returned to its rightful place of shelter. It was then that Allan made a new discovery that led to a curious sequence of Velocette-related events and communications.

To his disdain, Allan found that he simply could not successfully manoeuvre the K75 off its centre stand. At 260kgs the bike was just too heavy for him to handle. Allan then thought that perhaps he could swap the K75 for a lightweight Velocette. He knew fellow enthusiast (and sometime contributor to OBA) Andrew (Drew) Duncan had a couple of unrestored LE Velocettes and perhaps he might be interested in a swap. Allan did not have Drew's telephone contact and phoned another Velocette man, Warwick Nicholson, to acquire Drew's number. Unbeknown to Allan, Warwick and the subsequent acquirer of the bike, myself, had been motoring and motorcycling collaborators for some years.

Drew declined Allan's offer of the K75 swap as he had recently decided that he too had moved on from big touring bikes, having recently garaged his Moto Guzzi LM3 in favour of his beloved 1968 MZ



Unique triangular muffler identifies the K75.

250 Trophy and a 50cc Peugeot scooter. However Drew suggested that as a personal friend of many years (and fellow LE Velocette owner) I might be interested in the K75. I have ridden many thousands of kilometres on a sequence of three boxer twins and was currently still riding my much-travelled 1974 model R90/6.

Drew introduced me to Allan and the now very tatty and partly dismantled K75 was loaded off to my home in Bundanoon, NSW in June 2009. The parcel consisted of the bulk of the bike in one piece, with various pieces of ABS computer, ECU and remains of the fibreglass fairings. Fragments of the plastic panniers were rescued from Allan's recycle bin.

My first task was to clean off hundreds of thousands of kilometres worth of road grime and gunk. It was a little bit of a surprise to discover that the wheels were not painted black as first thought, the pressure cleaner revealed the alloy wheels in near pristine condition. The rest of the bike was pieced together and checked for competency, with

worn or damaged items being repaired or replaced as necessary. The many kilometres of freeway motoring had embedded the steering head rollers into the races. I know this is not uncommon on high kilometre touring bikes, but the divots in the races had to be seen to be believed.

The fairing pieces were fibreglassed together, the plastic pannier fragments variously plastic welded and reinforced with aluminium strip and then the whole thing was painted in gloss black two pack epoxy enamel before a new screen was purchased and fitted. The recommissioning of the bike was trouble free, with only the resetting of the ABS computer giving a little grief.

The bike remains in semi-regular service as a tourer and commuter. I have ridden with colleagues from the local Bundanoon social ride group to Bathurst, Cowra, Binalong, Singleton and Canberra as well as 'coffee rides' around the beautiful Southern Highlands of NSW. The bike features with my other black bikes in a book photographer Karen Scrimmes and I launched in April 2012. The book "Short Black; short rides on a black bike" links short motorcycle tours to coffee and preferred coffee shops and has almost sold out its first print run (see review this issue in Eyes Right).

To complete the Velocette connections, I later learned that my very good friend (and master restorer) Ray ('Chappy') Chapman of Singleton had some years earlier bought an overhead cam KSS Velo from Allan. In fact the bike spent a couple of weeks in my garage in the early 2000s when it inadvertently 'failed to proceed' on a club run.

The old BMW triple was recently treated to a brand new, contoured seat by "MJM Motorcycle Seats" of Goulburn. It's fair to say the original seat was simply worn out. Even more recently the tired (non-rebuildable??) rear suspension unit was rebuilt by "RAD Motorcycle Shocks" of Brisbane, normalising the handling.

The K Series 'bricks' remain seriously unfashionable, however, with its flash new seat and rebuilt suspension unit, this K75 is poised to travel many more kilometres. It only needs another 740,000kms to clock up 2 million. ■



Not surprisingly, the original seat was worn out. Replacement by MJM of Goulburn looks the part and is very comfortable according to the owner.