

## **Ben's CBR954 vs CBR1000 Comparo**

It is exactly two months since I bought a new 2011 Honda CBR1000 Tricolour and it now has 7,500 km on the odometer. Time to put pen to paper before I forget what the old 954 was like!

I picked the new bike up from Peter Stevens 13 days after the crash late Friday night, pouring rain, tram tracks, brand new glazed tyres, all new stiff clobber, ribs still giving me grief. What could possibly go wrong? Nothing, thankfully.

The immediate impression was that the new bike had less bottom end power, and was geared lower to compensate. On the 954, 5000 rpm is 124 km/h; on the 1000 it is 119 km. Less than 5 % difference, but still significantly lower geared given its increased capacity. That first impression has somewhat tempered: the 1000 is so smooth and sweet handling, it *feels* like it is slow and under powered. I now think I was deceived. It is lower geared, but it does accelerate rapidly. I am forever looking at the speedo disbelievingly, but a run under the Geelong Freeway speed indicator looked to be pretty spot on and the reading aligned with the 954.

Around town, two up, going to and fro to work, I must short shift to stay vaguely near the speed limit, and it does it easily. But the throttle is very sensitive, the motor seeming to run very lean at low speeds, with the barest of throttle openings required. The motor seems much happier with some load, 4500 rpm and more. The plus side is that the fuel economy is sensational compared to the 954 and I regularly get 300 km out of the tank including on Club rides. The tank nominally holds 17.7 litres with a count down reserve of 4.0 litres, according to the book. But when I fill up and check the fuel, it looks like either there is only 3.7 litres on reserve, or the tank holds 18.0 litres. The only way to work out exactly which theory is correct is to run the tank dry.

It took a while to get used to/ignore the slipper clutch. Again, at light throttle openings, there are strange clicks and sensations through the clutch lever. Under load, all of this seems to disappear.

The clocks on the 954 were bigger (and the 929 bigger again) compared to the 1000. The 1000 has an extra trip meter, but no gear indicator, which would be handy around town with the ratios so close between 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> gears. Ian Payne has fitted an aftermarket gear indicator to fix this "problem". On the 954 you could see both the trip odometer and the instantaneous fuel consumption; on the 1000, it is one or the other. On highway sections, monitoring the fuel consumption (around 19 km/l) relieves the boredom. I use one trip meter to measure the km per tank – so I know roughly when to fill up. Alas, as soon as reserve arrives, the trip meter immediately switches to the count up to 4.0 litres (or 3.7 as mentioned above), starting at 0.0. It took me a while to get the hang of this "feature". Other bikes count down, eg 10 km till empty.

The 954 didn't have a pressurised airbox, the 1000 does. And I never wanted one as it clags up the air filters very quickly – Paul Southwell cleans his air filters every 5,000 km. And as we have just observed, a pressurised airbox has a propensity to suck in large amounts of water and kill the engine. Whereas once I could plow through deep water on the 954, not worrying about a bow wave coming over the top fairing, now I must travel very slowly to avoid such a bow wave being ingested through the snorkels.

The 954 is physically lighter (167 kg claimed dry) but feels heavier than the 1000 (198 kg wet). Either the marketing was very optimistic, or the "mass centralisation" technology shift in 10 years is amazing.

I'm on to the second set of tyres, the original rear Dunlop Qualifier lasting about 4,200 km. The original front is not worn out; it was swapped out for Towong with a Michelin Pilot Power, currently with about 5,000 km on it. Lets say I expect to get 4,000 km out of the original front. I am running a 180/55 on the rear at the moment which seems fine. The bike feels even lighter and steers very sharply, but not dangerously so.

Steve Mudford fitted a TTX shock to the rear and Ern bought and fitted the old 954 Ohlins shock to his 954 with good results. The TTX, with Steve's special modifications to make it more suitable to

the road, works fantastically well. He tuned it on a run out to Ringwood and back and I'll probably never touch it other than more hydraulic pre-load two-up – which I forget to put back for Sunday rides anyway. The ride quality is sensational. Steve described riding the bike as “effortless”.

The 954 didn't have a catalytic converter (saving 10 kg at least), but it did have an Exup valve in the exhaust, the same as the 1000, and a flapper valve in the air box. The 1000 seems to have moved these intake flapper valves into the fairing. And the 1000 has an extra valve in the muffler, opening at 4000 rpm (94 km/h in top) at which point the exhaust note becomes noticeably more noisy. This valve pays homage to our Australian Design (ADR) noise rules. Nothing else.

The 1000 runs perfectly on 91 RON unleaded, just like the 954 did. It can be made to ping if the throttle is opened wide at 2,000 rpm, with a pillion. But generally it picks up very cleanly from about 2,200 rpm in any gear. Having said that, the injection seems slightly fluffy around 2,800 rpm under low loads.

Overall, the two bikes are remarkably similar in construction: both fuel injected, inline, 4 cylinder, 4 valve head, double over head cam, thermatically controlled water cooled motors. The 1000 just has 10 years of incremental development such that everything is just that little bit better: even the blinker switch works better. It did take me a while to relocate my left hand to avoid hitting the “pass” flasher which didn't exist on the 954. The 954 has a marginally better horn – the 1000's is really... cheap! It emits a kind of chirp.

I'm underwhelmed by the quality of fairing fasteners on the 1000; miniaturisation can only go so far. At some point the fasteners become “use once”; ie disposable. That is where we are with the 1000. Misho suggested I get a bag of the quarter turn plugs from Autobarn and be done with it, and judging by the finicky belly pan removal, I think his advice is very sound.

White wheels! Okay if you never ride the bike or lube the chain, though Billy thought they were actually easier to clean than black wheels. Given the state of my spare black wheel – very high mileage, severely sand blasted, tyre change scarred, at this stage he is correct. But white wheels only look good as far as the end of the street! Note, my black wheel is off my 929 and has at least 300,000 km on it. Could be time for a new one!

Modifications to the 1000 include fitting of the TTX Ohlins shock absorber, rack, tank pad and most recently a Geelong Carboncraft carbon fibre rear hugger and chain guard combo. It is designed to keep the water off both the bottom and top shock eyes, and hopefully reduce the rear wheel water spray. It fitted well and easily, though took a month to be manufactured and delivered.

The old 954 was blowing smoke on high rev down changes. No loss of power as the smoke was likely only the valve guide seals allowing oil to pass, not unexpected on a 10 year old motor. The 954 is a story in itself, the chassis doing 251,000 km, the motor changed at 172,000 km. Maybe next month.

I ride the 1000 every day and every day I marvel at just how good it is, and what a pleasure it is to ride. The mid-range power is oh so seductive. I read it does the quarter mile in 2.9 seconds. That's fast!

After proof reading this, Julie notes the following, comparing the two bikes from a pillion's perspective.

“I lost a bit of real estate when we moved from the 954 to the 1000. The pillion seat is narrower, thinner and shorter. At first it felt like I was sitting backwards on the edge of a high diving board, perched up over nothing. I probably am, but you soon get used to it. The 1000 isn't as high as the 954 making it easier to get on and off. And yes, I have to agree with Ben about the smoothness of the ride and ease of acceleration on the 1000. I just can't give you actual figures (for legal reasons!).”

**Ben Warden**