

Ged Balk – Kawasaki ZR-7 Thumb Brake

Back in 1998, I had a 1200cc Laverda Jota 180 triple that I used to hoon around on like an idiot. One day I failed to negotiate a roundabout on it, but did succeed in trashing my legs... and the bike!

Surgeons tried to save my legs and I ended up with a contraption round my right leg that made it look like an offshore oilrig. My wife was struggling to visit me in hospital and take care of the two kids, and with the prospect of many more months, or years, of hospital in front of me, I decided to have an above knee amputation on my right leg so that I could literally get it out of the way and start getting my life back on track again.

I'd made a decision during those months of lying on my back that I was going to knock biking on the head for the time being, and would only return to it when I felt good and ready.

I would idly speculate on what bike I would get back on the road with. I already had a 550cc Kawasaki Zephyr at the time of the accident, and I'd whizzed up and down the road on that a couple of times before I sold it, so I

always knew that riding was definitely a possibility from a physical point of view. I had a couple of Nortons back then as well, but there was no point keeping these – my kick-starting days were long gone.

My main concerns about getting back on the road were to do with falling off the bike at traffic lights or when pulling up, or just manhandling the thing in and out of the garage. Then in 2007 a neighbour offered me his tatty old Kawasaki GPZ 500. It needed some work to get it through the MOT, but I felt that this would be ideal. If I dropped it, it would be no big deal, and the thing was compact and light enough to make manhandling it fairly easy.

The big problem was that it had a 'drum' back brake, and I couldn't see an easy way to make it work, what with having no right leg. Anyway, the bike had wet my appetite, but there were a few things wrong with it, and it was still pretty tatty. I decided that a new bike was in order. I duly found a lovely Kawasaki ZR-7 in my local bike shop, Pendle Motorcycles in Nelson, Lancs.

By this time, I had seen copies of the NABD magazine "Open House" at Preston Clinic, so I knew that there were experienced people who could talk me through the options and come up with a solution to my braking problem. I joined NABD, and duly applied for a grant to have a left-hand thumb brake conversion for the rear disc. I nominated Pendle Motorcycles to do the work and NABD were very quick to supply the brake kit. This was a Demon Tweeks unit. There was some delay because there was an adaptor in the kit, which was okay for Hondas but not Kawasakis apparently.

I discussed the matter with the NABD's Adaptions Coordinator at the time and he was a great help in getting everything sorted. Having got all the correct bits, the brake was fitted, and I think it looks quite smart.

When the kit arrived, I was talking to John Uttley, the proprietor of Pendle's, when a Yammy R1 rider pulled up and walked in the shop. Spying the brake, and not realizing that it was to serve as an orthopaedic device, he instantly declared that he wanted one for his bike because it looked cool. I sniggered, but it made me feel happier to have it fitted on my bike.

I splashed out on some crash bars in case I lose my balance wheeling the bike about, and am really pleased that the modifications possibly make my bike look better.

Bear in mind that I spent many years on chops and my inclination on getting any new bike is to junk as many bits as possible, so actually adding bits on was a bit of a novelty and totally out of character. The brake itself certainly works a treat and I can lock the back wheel up if I feel so inclined.

Thanks to NABD, I've enjoyed some good riding this year despite the inclement weather.

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N.B. Though we have supplied a number of Demon Tweeks thumb operated brake lever units in the past these have now been superseded by the Whoever thumb brake units which were designed specifically for the NABD and are generally far more versatile and better suited to the purpose. However this does not mean the Demon Tweeks kit cannot be included in an NABD adaption grant if that is the preference of the member concerned.

R Hulse

**This NABD grant
of a Demon Tweeks
thumb brake
plus £100.00 fitting costs
was sponsored
by a donation from
"Small Plant Services"**



Thumbbrake Lever

For more information on Pendle Motorcycles see;
<http://www.pendlemotorcycles.co.uk>

For more information on Demon Tweeks see;
<http://www.demon-tweeks.co.uk>



Thumbbrake Master Cylinder Position



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