



30 Years Ago – What An Impact!

Club Archivist Peter Rakestrow writes about the Pre-Production GL1000 which kicked off the GoldWing legend

In October 1974 Honda changed the world of motorcycling by launching the GL1000 Gold Wing at the IFMA Motorcycle Show in Cologne and at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas (this was a dealer convention). So we are now celebrating 30 years of the Gold Wing name.



*GL 1000 GoldWing
Pre-Production*

All the bikes on display at the two shows were Pre-Production models which differ from the production bike; to look at the pictures of the two bikes together there doesn't seem to be much difference, but in fact Honda changed a lot from Pre-Pro to Production. Altogether there were five Pre-Production bikes, three colours (red, turquoise and yellow) and one had a fairing. According to an American journalist, Jimmy Olsen, each bike cost \$22000 to build, which considering that the retail price in America when the bike went on sale was \$2800 (£1600 in the UK) that was a lot, in today's money that would probably make a Pre-Production GL1800 cost about \$149277 to build!



After the initial prototypes/pre-production models are built, the manufacturer needs to be able to produce the machine in a cost effective way, therefore changes will need to be made, either for cost reasons or ease of assembly. A lot with the GL1000 must have been for cost as the bike was so close to the production model.

We start with the front of the bike, the front discs have chrome centre covers, the right hand side was there to hold the speedo-drive housing in, the left was just cosmetic, hence the production bike only had the right side fitted. The front fender was altered, the brake hoses were attached to it about 2.5" (63.5mm) behind the front forks, with the production bike they were attached to the fender bracket. The water pump housing was a single piece, slightly round in shape with the bottom radiator hose attached, this was altered to a two piece unit, the piece that has the hose attached has a rubber O-ring fitted, so when you remove the radiator you don't destroy





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a gasket. The points cover was redesigned, as were the clips that held the HT leads on top of the carburettors, the right hand bottom rear suspension bracket had one bolt to hold it on to the differential (also the spindle through it), the production bike has three bolts holding it to the differential. The fuel tank was redesigned and corrected as an indent had been put in the wrong place.

The paintwork colours used on the preproduction bikes were maintained as Candy Antares Red, Candy Blue Green and Sulfur Yellow (which wasn't used until the GL1000 K1 in 1976). The pin

striping on the lower part of the dummy tank side was a single stripe which followed the curve of the panel, on the GL1000 K0 it was straight. The side panels were plain with the Gold Wing emblem on them, but under that it said 'GL'; the production bike had 'GL1000'. One thing I think should have stayed on the production bike (which wouldn't have cost a lot to produce) is the emblem on top of the dummy tank, which is the same chrome outlined black emblem, but it read 'Gold Wing GL1000 Water Cooled Honda', the production emblem says 'GL1000 Honda'. The seat also had a change which I think would have been nice to have been left alone, that is, on the back it has 'Gold Wing' printed in gold. The production bike has 'Honda', again printed in gold.



The GL1000 is the only Gold Wing to have all its dummy tank panels able to be opened, the top opened up from the seat (The GL1000 K3/KZ opened the other way) and the sides flap down, the interesting thing about the preproduction bike is that whilst the top opened the same (except the latch was redesigned), the sides, however, opened by way of levers. This is how they work, open the top with the key, remove the tool tray, in line with the bottom of the fuel gauge, mounted in the dummy tank frame you have a lever, pull the lever towards you, which then releases the mechanism (similar to the top) the side then folds down. Complicated eh? Well Honda thought so, too expensive and too complex, so Honda decided to use a simple screw instead. The other innovative thing Honda did on the pre-production bike was to have self cancelling indicators, this worked by using a cable from the speedo to the handle bar switch, again too complicated, so was removed from the production bike.

As mentioned before, one bike had a fairing, it was a small frame mounted unit in white with Honda logos on the sides, the indicators were also mounted through the sides and bolted to the frame. The speedo, rev-counter and idiot lights were mounted in the fairing; the instruments had a visor on the top of them so as to stop reflections in the screen. The fairing itself was not very wide and it restricted opening the dummy tank fully, hence the reason it never went into production.

In the 30 years since, at least two items which were dropped from the GL1000 pre-production bike were used on subsequent Gold Wings. A fairing (although not the same one) which first appeared on the 1980 GL1100 Interstate and went on sale in America on the 1st March 1980. The other was the self-cancelling indicators, which first appeared on all the 1982 models of the Gold Wing.





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It is interesting to note that the 'Official' books about the Gold Wing never seem to mention more than about three changed items, giving the impression the pre-production bike virtually went into production unchanged.

What will the next 30 years bring us? It will be interesting to see and I hope to write the 60th anniversary article soon. They do say the older you get the quicker time goes and it must be true as I cannot believe it's ten years since I wrote a WingSpan article about the 20th Anniversary!



Right: This picture was taken by Bill Delaney and was first used on the cover of Cycle magazine (a U.S. publication no longer published) in April 1975. The GL1000 in the photo is the pre-production model which Cycle used in the test along with the production bike.