

THE PIONEER MOTOR CYCLIST



Association of Pioneer Motor Cyclists. Founded in 1928
Incorporating the Pre 1914 TT Riders Re-union

*I wonder who's getting
the sheep for
Christmas.*



2021 Winter Supplement

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EDITORS RAMBLING'S *Geoff Davies*

Just looking out at the heavy snowfall we have at the moment. Had a long lye in a couple of days ago. Very strong winds possibly taking trees down. Probably one nearby, as our electric supply went once more. So throw a blanket or two over the bed and go back to sleep. Finally had to get out for the usual reason, so got a camping stove out of the garage and filled some hot water bottles and brewed up. Two cups, then back to bed. Whoever went out to repair the power lines deserves a medal. The milkman also was on duty, (yes we still have one round here.). Cheaper in Aldi, but what's a few pence. New variety of the bug just reported, hope it doesn't affect happenings next year, we need to get out and about.

Is anyone prepared to organise a few social runs and lunch next year. Please let me know and I will circulate the details.



A really cracking bike in the picturesque village of Abbott's Bromley in North Staffordshire.

4

Geoff,

Love the article on the Heinkel. My father, a life-time motorcyclist, had one on which he did his rounds as as a rural GP he used this sturdy machine everyday as his transport for making visits to patients, and when we were young teenagers he used to take us on long continental trips on it to France, Austria and beyond. I took it over for a time when I was 17. It was extremely sturdy and well made. But you needed good left wrist skills to change gear cleanly. It would roll all day at 50 mph.



Doctor Bibbings

I remember it with much affection. I still have a little bronze plaque sent by the importers to my father in 1962 when he passed 50,000 kms.

The Heinkel Tourist, the Zundapp Bella and the more expensive Maicoletta were German marques widely related as serious scooters for longer distance work.

Best wishes,
Roger Bibbings



Definition of a flat tanker.

Bonhams

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LOT PREVIEW

bonhams.com/autumnsale

CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES:

Friday 3 September

COMPLIMENTARY AUCTION APPRAISAL

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AN EPIC RIDE.

Would that there had been more from the young explorer's pen, for the modest account of his five months' journey leaves a great deal to the imagination. He is, first and foremost, a motor cyclist; he has made no claims to be a writer. Perhaps for this reason the account rings more sincere than would have been the case had the intrepid pathfinder set out merely to secure publicity. He has preferred to allow his ride to speak for itself.

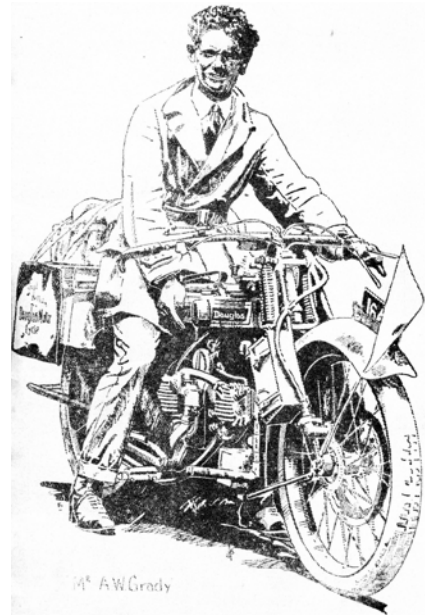
Unfortunately, very few can appreciate fully the magnitude of the achievement, the dangers encountered, and the difficulties overcome, for in this modern world of ours it is hard to realise that parts of an island continent like Australia remain unexplored and are so out of touch with civilisation that failure of the explorer's mount would mean certain death. It is one thing to set off on a journey knowing that, in the event of failure, other modes of transport can be utilised—to continue or return—but it is quite another proposition when the traveller knows that a breakdown may leave no chance of a second attempt.

The achievement speaks volumes for the pluck of the young motor cyclist, who will go down to posterity as the first man to encircle Australia on a mechanically propelled vehicle, and for the qualities of the British motor cycle which he used.

Grady was born in East Freemantle, Australia, on the 20th May, 1901.

He gained his first experience in Automobile driving with a Ford Car, running round for the Cabin Tea Rooms when only 15 \ years of age. At the age of 16 he enlisted and joined up with the 51st Battalion as a Signaller and saw two years of active service. Previous to the historic attempt recorded in this booklet, he competed in many Motor Cycle Races, both with and without success, and is a member of the Coastal Motor Cycle Club, being one of the foundation members.

He is a tall good-looking chap, with auburn hair, and to quote an Australian newspaper—"enough to make the average girl envious"—he is a typical British character.



Mr. A. W. Grady's account of

"The Around Australia Ride on a 2| Douglas."

On the 1st October 1925, I started from Freemantle on what is generally recognised as the longest and most difficult journey ever attempted on a motor cycle-the ride around Australia.

Space and weight are strictly limited, so that comforts which are generally deemed necessities, such as blanket, towel, razors, etc., were left behind. My whole "swag" comprised an army oil ground sheet and mosquito net which, tightly wrapped, were attached to the front fork side. Tooth-brush was carried in a pocket. Two gallon cans braced to the sides of the carrier gave me an extra petrol capacity of 3 gallons.

The ordinary tank in the machine held 11/2 gallons; of petrol and 1 quart of oil. An extra gallon of oil was also carried. On top of the carrier was a Nobels cartridge box, which contained spare parts, tyre mending outfit etc. Outside the port petrol tank the 2 gallon water bag was swung.

All on, including myself, we tipped the scales at 450 lbs., a big weight for a little Douglas to carry. I also took a small first-aid outfit with a good supply of fever mixture to combat troubles with mosquitoes and dysentery from constantly changing waters, and for general ailments. A 2 lb. jam tin bolted to the back number plate served as a tea billy. It was often mistaken for a rain gauge. Some hard corned beef, usually wrapped round the handlebar, tea and sugar constituted the cuisine.

Bates oversize tyres were fitted to the machine and, from previous experience of this make, I was convinced they would do good work. I had yet to learn how much better they were than I believed at starting. After uplifting send-offs from Freemantle and Perth, I pushed along for four days, and then leaving the fenced fields of wheat, entered the red soil Murchison district with its surface strewn with millions of "Doublegees." These hard seeds with their three sharp spikes affect the feet of the sheep so seriously as often to prevent travel.

Often my tyre treads were invisible, being covered with a mass of these three pronged seeds, but none succeeded in penetrating to the inner tube.

Next came the Gascoyne district with its numerous rivers and creeks, making travel very severe. These two station districts have some wonderful, well constructed homesteads, electrically lighted and surrounded by gardens of flowers and vegetables, and are eloquent testimony of the profit there is in sheep growing in Western Australia.

In the next district, the Minilya, I have travelled 14 hours a day without changing once out of low gear.

Into the Desert

Deep heavy sand, loose and red, and churned into powder by waggon teams and heavy lorries, constitutes " the road." There are a few miles of good road between Onslow and Fort Ledland, but, with this exception, the 800 miles ahead to Halls Creek was said to be all sand.

From Derby one notices how the stations start to thin out, being from 60 to 80 miles apart. There are less sheep; the countless mobs of kangaroos disappear; the curious emu strides ostentatiously in front to try his paces against the Douglas ; no more flocks of wild turkeys flap their way into the sky as one surprises them, and in their place appears the stubborn bullock with his head arched and horns advanced to welcome you ; the glimpse of a sneaking dingo lurking in the bush or the swish of parted air as a flock of flying foxes flit phantomlike overhead.

Here, the country was in the throes of drought, dead sheep and dead kangaroos everywhere. A carter, whom I met heading South with cart and two horses, told me he had a job at Mulga Downs as windmill expert at £6 per week. As it cost him £3 per week to feed his horses he had to leave. Throughout the Kimberley and Fitzroy districts it is all low gear work through heavy sand.

One night I camped with a teamster, who told me of a sand pull that had cost him £50. His loaded waggon was axle deep in shifting sand and the team of 50 mules was unable to move it. He then shifted on 70 mules and they simply tore the harness to pieces and the waggon had to be lightened by removing 3 tons of the load.

From Halls Creek to Esau's is a distance of 10 miles where lives an old hermit Esau, aged 92; then 8 miles to Palm Springs, a garden amid these stony range where I decided to stay the night, and remarked to the owner " I think I shall camp outside as it will be cooler. " If you do, you will be the first man who has done so for years," he said, " for snakes are very numerous and when I wake at night I can hear them crawling about on the floor." The bunks inside were suspended by chains from the roof so as to be clear of snakes. I slept inside .

Spills

To Flora Valley, 18 miles, the track was mountainous and stony. Along here I took a heavy fall and damaged my leg. This range of mountains continues

for 36 mill known locally as the razorbacks. The upgrades were almost impossible for my mount to scale even with me pushing all out. On top of one of these ridge caps are the remains of a horse balanced with front and hind 1 swinging in the air on either side, his body resting on the summit. From Flora Valley to Soakage Creek is a distance of 60 miles, and here I had a bath. Blackgins carried water for an overhead bucket rigged as a shower.

After dining on tomatoes and securing a gallon of petrol, I started for Burrindoodoo, 65 miles, and the only trail was the track of 2 horses that had gone along 3 weeks before. I was continually walking to distinguish between the horses' tracks and those of bullocks. However, I got along fairly well in spite of the ground being very rough virgin ground with many cattle pads. The surface was covered with Spinifex (prickly tuft grass), Mitchell grass and stumps. However, I arrived at Sweetwater Yards (so named from the water having a sweet unpalatable taste) where the cattle pads split into dozens.

Here I scouted on foot for two hours following pads, which spun out until I eventually trailed the fresh horse tracks. It was at these Yards, the two overlanders, Terry and Yockney in a Ford car, lost the pad and nearly perished in that vast trackless plain. They had a few directions from Inverary Station, but the ground offered no tracks, however faint, and they wandered almost fatally. I had not even their few directions, and had to depend entirely on the compass and the horse tracks. However, I followed these tracks for another 28 miles and the going was so diabolical that at times I doubted if I could be right. At last, to my comfort, I reached the second well, and there spent another hour following pads until I at last saw the few rough buildings of Burrindoodoo on the left of the Sturt River. This River is covered with long cane grass and has a loose scilly bottom with no crossing whatever. After struggling in it for about 15 minutes I decided to get help from the blacks' camp, but on reaching the camp I discovered only a few bucks were in it. Mustered these, and started them pushing the machine across.

All went well until we were about 100 yards from the bank, and judging by their heavy breathing, the blacks were tired. I decided to start up the engine and help them. They were all standing behind having "Blow", when the old bus fired. That finished the relief party, and when I looked round the blacks had covered 150 yards in about 10 seconds and were heading for home; and all entreaties and demonstrations with



regard to its quietness were of no avail. It was devil-devil to them and they stood off at a safe distance to watch me complete the rest of the pull under my own power. After much coaxing I induced one old black to sit on the machine. Immediately he hit the seat, he bounced off with one spring and raced away yelling at the top of his voice. I then discovered he had placed his bare toe on the red hot exhaust pipe. Late that evening Mr. Robinson came home, and during the night we had a tremendous thunderstorm, so I had to trespass on his hospitality for two days until the country was dry enough to travel, and started with the following directions. " Follow the cattle pads heading due East to Wallamunga Lagoon and cross river between second water hole and some bogged catde further down, then follow the creek for one mile and pick up pads and follow for ten miles due East. Cross the Creek and make for the right of a big hill where a faint cattle pad could be discerned, which leads to Inverary, and make for a green tree on the plain.

All went well until I got to the Creek, "Bunda" by name. I looked for the hill and discovered one a little to the left, and making for this, I travelled over atrocious country covered with grass and stumps and crab holes for eight miles, and when nearing the hill I discovered it to be a belt of heavy timber and away on my right appeared another hill, undoubtedly the one I had missed. I decided to return, the very thought of re crossing that dreadful plain nearly bringing tears to my eyes. Going back was more difficult than I contemplated, my tracks owing to the rough country had zigzagged terribly, and I was completely at sea as to how to return. To add to my troubles, the water bag dragging through the long sword grass had sprung a leak, and the water had leaked away. For hours I pushed back to where I thought I had left the creek, and camping at night I had reluctantly to confess that I was completely bushed. Supper with half a jam tin of water saved from the bag, and a piece of sunbaked bread so hard that I had to soak it in my precious water before I could bite it; a mouthful of sickly warm water, then darkness and silence. Everything was hushed and awfully still. I would reflect a little faintheartedly on my journey, solitary and melancholy, in that vast rugged interior.

Mile after mile of dreadful riding, it seemed to be maddening and, I thought on the road behind, it's sand, it's cracks, it's creeks, it's intense heat, it's deep and treacherous gorges, a lonesomeness would fall on me like the falling dusk on the land. I would gaze absently at the blank range of cliffs, at the silent and boundless plain, down the winding rows of scrub and rocks while nature hushed the world to sleep, when suddenly the awesome howl of a dingo split the stillness and roused me out of my reverie.

Water

Tired and weary I rolled my swag around me and sank into oblivion. I woke at dawn and without breakfast returned eight miles, but still the country was unfamiliar and thoughts came into my head that had to be driven out. All that day I plugged along despite the intense heat and maddening mirages, sparing neither myself nor the machine. Heat was rising from the much abused engine in colourless streams, baking my legs and boots. The hot winds blew clouds of fine stinging dust in my face with the long cane grass continually swishing in my eyes. I was filled with a prescience of being trapped by storms, for water, while it meant salvation, could also mean a long imprisonment in that wild land.

When the big wet sets in, all human affairs come to a standstill. The country is one great bog where neither man nor horse may travel. This thought forced me to ride hard all day. About four o'clock I could see a long fringe of timber and knew it to be a creek and water lay about 10 miles further down, but I had doubts as to whether I could make it.

Travelling on foot was faster and more comfortable than riding the machine, and besides, I was suffering with aches from the previous day's jolting. So I broke down a long stick, and mounted my mosquito net on the end as a flag. I erected it by the machine as a guide in case I should come back to find it. Taking the empty water bag I started off on foot, hungry and thirsty and filthy dirty to follow the creek down to water. The falling of night stopped further movement. During the night storm clouds rolled up and thunder started to reverberate over the vast plains and the vivid lightning enabled me to see for miles around. Grasshoppers, beetles and other insects in countless hordes were attracted by the glow of the fire foreboding only too truly the approaching storm. A blinding crash of lightning followed by a blasting crash of thunder and the storm burst in wild fury over the thirsty plain. For two hours it pounded incessantly, compelling me to seek shelter among the thin scrub, until the rain ceased as suddenly as it started.

I welcomed the dawn, soaked through but happy in my salvation and relief from the intolerable thirst, and, on inspecting the road, decided to return to the machine and wait till the following day before attempting to travel. Then, being well rested, I started up my ever willing Douglas and pushed on East until I stumbled over a heavy cattle pad on which were the faint tracks of a buggy wheel. I had actually struck the track. On following it, I could plainly see how I had become lost. After crossing the Creek, the track instead of crossing these downs had swung away to the left and followed round the

edge of the desert. After taking a good drink and filling my water bag, I travelled on towards Inverary. Pulling up at the bank of a creek, I could see through the rocks and trees a solid stream of flowing water. Climbing down the rugged sides I waded in and found it was above my waist. Anxious to push on, I decided to cross at all risks, so started to prepare the Douglas for a submarine passage. Collecting a few handfuls of grass I stuffed them tightly into the exhaust pipes and, with a piece of fat, kept for lubricating the chains, I greased the carburettor and magneto and plugged up the end of the carburettor with a piece of greasy cloth. Then smearing grease over the petrol tank cap, I cautiously started across. In mid-stream the handlebars were just visible and I had to strain to win out and up the opposite bank. Another trip across and my small but important stock of perishable goods were over ; the plugs were withdrawn, and the grand little machine started up with a healthy roar.

Directions.

On arriving at Inverary, I rested the remainder of the day and on the next morning started onward again with the following directions : "Six miles out due East pass a water hole on right. One mile ahead the track cuts over the toe of a little flat topped spinifex hill and turns sharp to left. Proceed North-East for 10 miles and strike a creek running North and South. Follow the creek for 3 miles, then cross it at the bottom of a large stony hill and follow base of hill around to small rocky gorge. Cross the gorge and make for a group of Pindamus trees to the right growing at the foot «of a range of low hills. Cross another heavy stony bottomed creek and run along the edge of a desert until black soil plains are reached. Cut right through the plains due East to an old yard called " 29-mile yard."

To those North bushmen that description was concise and ample, but to me it was confusing owing to the several meanings of words that differ from what I am used to.

For instance; "desert". The desert country was the red soiled lightly timbered land and the great expanses of sand and dry grass were called plains. Then came the " downs," and they were the grassy dry black soil country, a mass of knotty grass stumps and spinifex honeycombed with crab holes. So, nothing daunted, but not overconfident, as my directions were not too plain, I started off. Stopping every half mile, I examined the ground comparing the notes with the lay of the country. I would discern an ant hill crushed at the base by a wheel and would then feel as though I was on a macadamised road. Through the downs I followed where the long grass was slightly knocked

down by horses, and on to the timbered lands where the sight of a piece of bark knocked off' a tree by a wheel hub would make one feel confident I was on the right track.

At last no signs whatsoever appeared, and I was beginning to get a bit faint hearted. Nothing tallied with the instructions. Mounting the top of a little bald hill, I eagerly searched the horizon for land marks, but only the wide boundless plain met my gaze; no hills or low strips of timber marking the course of a creek, not a bird or beast to be seen. A few scattered scrub trees dotted the landscape looking as big as ancient oaks, their size gradually diminishing on approach. Often I have been deceived by small trees no more than 4 feet high, which at 6 miles, appear tall and large, and I have even mistaken them for the welcome windmills. A sheep on the horizon looks the size of a buffalo.

Appreciation.

Far away to the left could be seen the creek I had recently crossed, winding its way through the plains until diffused into the hovering mirage. Setting my compass, I picked out a spot due East, and kicking the old bus up, plunged into the long grass and wretched crab holes. I often reflected on the staunchness and willingness of my little mount. Never once did the Douglas refuse duty— always ready to push on—inde-fatigable and yet I had often cursed and sworn at it as I struggled up the sides of those antiquities sandy creeks, the engine crackling like a machine gun through the short open exhaust pipes. She deserved no such return from me, whom she carried through that vast wilderness.

Five miles I travelled, long thick grass preventing the wind from cooling the sweltering engine and the heat and smell of burning oil ascended to my head. At last I emerged from the undergrowth of cane and wood and gradually ascended until I could see the rough outline of the barren gorge. Somewhere ahead now I should find water, but of the creek and the old yard there was no sign whatever. It was about 2 p.m., and the track to the hilly rugged gorge was covered with large stones, so, preferring to walk rather than be jolted to death, I unhitched the water bag and started afoot for the big hills about 11 miles distant in order to command a good view of the country. Scrambling to the top, I sat on the stones and let my thoughts wander aimlessly.

Vague apprehensions crept into my mind as I gazed at the remains of some unfortunate calf that had wandered. I tapped my bone-dry water bag and its hollow sound chilled me. Then I began to think of lagoons and rivers I knew of, thoughts that almost turned my over-taxed and unbalanced mind into

delirious ecstasies. Presently a foul stench from dead cattle reached me, and shaking off my lethargy I prospected among the gorges and found a pool of beautiful clear water. After a good night's sleep I decided to return to Inverary, for to go on meant certain defeat.

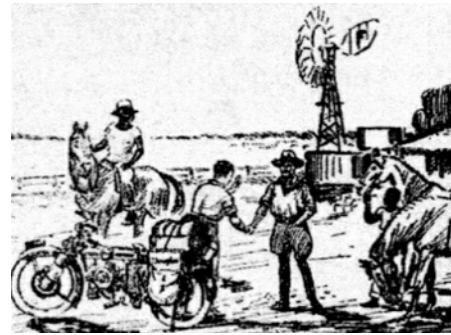
After an arduous struggle, I got back to the station. It was at this point that the generosity of Farquahson Bros, was made clear to me.

At every station I had passed through, the Farquahsons were noted for kindness and munificence, and with me they never hesitated, but immediately volunteered to lend me a guide with a spare saddle horse and two pack horses, for I had not enough petrol to make Ware Hill, and the spare saddle horse

was for when I ran out of petrol. So, with the guide and provisions, we hit the trail for Ware Hill and camped first night at Swan Waterhole, 30 miles out.

The ground was covered with dry pandanus leaves, which cracked like breaking glass as I rode over. Next day, we proceeded to Grave Creek where the going was indescribable, the mode of travelling being the guide going ahead and when he was about a quarter of a mile away I would ride up and stop until he got on again, and so on, but as this black had never seen a motor cycle before, his idea of roads was what the horses could get along on. As it was all cross country travelling and short cuts, I could hardly keep pace with the walking horses. Several times I had to stop and take off the footrests to enable me to cross the stony bottomed creeks, and when I would look ahead there would be no sign of rider or horses, and I had to scout round and pick up the tracks and by and by catch him up again. When the ground was too stony for tracks, I just sat down and waited for him to return wondering what would happen if he took it into his head to desert me and "go bush." At one point I was dodging along among some boulders when the footrest hit a stone, and bending back struck the gear box sprocket, buckling it dangerously, at the same time locking the wheel and sending me sprawling among the stones. I had to make a liberal use of the iodine.

After dismantling the chains and sprocket, I lit a fire and, selecting a large flat stone, pounded the sprocket back into shape once



more. The time taken was about an hour and no sign of the guide. Presently I heard the thud of hoofs and he appeared around the bend.

That night we camped at Grave Creek and at tea time I noticed that, as on the previous evening, George, the guide, was not hungry, so I asked him what was wrong. "Oh nothing," he said, "all day mine been eatem bush plum." As we always went without lunch, I had a sharp appetite in the evening. I said "Where you gettum bush plum." So after tea we wandered round and he showed me the plums. They were like small apples and tasted like a cross between a guava and passion fruit and were certainly very palatable. Once he bent down and picked up a small round nut. "See that" he said, "When you see that it show where good food come from tree called sugarbag". I at once wanted to be shown, having doubts about his statement. He went from tree to tree placing his ear against the trunks until he found the one he was looking for. "Plenty sugarbag," he said. I asked him why he placed his ear against the trunk, and he pointed above, where, from a hole, a number of bees were flying in and out. Placing my own ear against the trunk I could plainly hear the hum of bees. Taking the tomahawk, he commenced slicing the bark for about 2 feet, and when he had cut into the inner hollow he laid it bare and scraped the contents on to a flour bag. The stuff was like wax with the flavour of honey and was very nice to eat. After this he showed me some Congo berries and dug up some wild potatoes, growing on a river bank. The blacks are never short of food in the bush and will find it where a white man will starve.

Next day we travelled over similar country and crossed numerous rocky bottomed creeks until we reached our next camp on Blackgin Creek. Every now and then, George would suddenly leave the trail and gallop off with his eyes glued to the ground and would sometimes be absent a quarter of an hour. On returning he would tell me he had been following wild buck tracks. At this camp the petrol petered out, so, leaving the bus, I climbed on the spare horse and we rode 40 miles to Ware Hill for petrol. I made notes of the track as I had no guide when I returned.

At last we crossed the Gorge about half a mile across the steep banks, testing the powers of the horses. George said this was the regular crossing place, knowing no motor cycle could get across, I scouted up and down for an easier place without success. It was evident the old bus would have to be carried over in pieces. Satisfied on this point, we proceeded, and camped at Bow Hills water hole, and next day arrived at Ware Hill. On receiving a gallon of petrol there, we returned with the horses to where the bus was left,

having ridden 40 miles that day with the sun at 114 degrees, and camped at the creek.

At dawn next day I said good-bye to my guide and travelled in the opposite direction, feeling a little despondent at his departure, for he was an excellent guide and very interesting, but after listening to the last hoof beats of his horse I struck off for Ware Hill and on reaching the Gorge decided at once on the plan of action. First taking off the loaded carrier, I carried it over to the opposite bank and then realised for the first time the load the little machine was pulling. Next I unbolted the engine and carried that over. Finally the frame and wheels were brought along and the whole machine re-assembled on the other side, but not without breaking two radiating fins off the front cylinder.

In striking for the big hill, I had noted on the previous day that we followed the base for some 10 miles until I could see the timber marking the course of the river and struck for the middle of two peaks where I knew was the sandy crossing at the "29-mile yard." The previous day a light fire had been burning, but we had taken little heed of this. Now, as I rounded the bend of the hill where the vast plain stretched before me and through which my way lay, I saw thick volumes of smoke rising above the that. The fire, which had grown into a raging mass of flame was sweeping over the great expanse leaving the ground glowing with hot ashes and the air was filled with black smoke almost to obscurity as the leaping flames lick up the grass and sunbaked trees.

Charred and smoking logs had fallen across my track and the pad was quite obliterated. Then it was I congratulated myself on having closely noted the feature of the landscape, which made me independent of horse tracks. Not more than 50 yards on my right the fire was raging, so I had to keep on the edge of the plain and go round where the flames were in my direct path. Dodging around the fire, I made my landmarks every time I left the pad and, when chance offered, cut the pad again. In this manner I forced my way along, the smell of burning wood mingled with the fumes of heated petrol; the burn ground radiating intolerable heat and with tears blurring my vision, I eventually made the creek and soon after arrived at Ware Hill.

While at the station a 40 lb. Barramundi was caught in one of the big water holes. The flesh of this fish is very much prized.

In this country I was forced to use a special brand of lubricating oil. I made it myself and any motor cyclist is free to use my recipe. It was a mixture of 6 bottles of Castor Oil, half a gallon of Beef Dripping— which in this country

is always liquid—and 2 pints of Windmill Oil. The Douglas, if it noticed the difference never complained. I also travelled 73 miles on Kerosene (paraffin) in place of Petrol.

Often in this treeless, pathless, waterless place one has to stop when a water hole is reached and then spend a considerable time tracing the tracks one has been following for the tracks lay in the cattle pads which are the tracks used by cattle coming in to water, and they radiate from a waterhole in star fashion. Anywhere near the water the cattle obliterate all other marks, so the quickest method of re finding a track is to make a circuit about a mile out from the hole, and when a trail is seen, watch the direction in which it bears and if correct, follow it.

The following morning I left Ware Hill at dawn and arrived at Pigeon Hole in time for breakfast. Leaving there I followed rough tracks to Victoria River Downs where they received me like the Prodigal Son.

This station is undoubtedly the largest in the world. It embraces an area of 14,000 square miles, larger than the whole of Scotland. From Victoria Downs I was descending a very rugged and stony gorge and thought I saw a movement behind a tree, but the track would not permit me to look round. On reaching the bottom I cast a glance sideways and again caught sight of movement. Pulling up short, I shouted out and a black appeared with several spears and a tomahawk. What puzzled me most was that instead of being black he was a dirty brown and, as he came up, I could see he was covered in brown muck This was because he had been stalking kangaroo and use the mud as camouflage, the mud being the same color as the ground enabled him to crawl close to his game.

Thirty miles further on I came to a steep creek, a halting on the bank—experience had taught me never to take the bus in unless I could see a path out—I walked down and across the river bed looking for an easier place to cross. After a little searching I decided to go back and cross a little lower down, so turning round to return I was surprised to see four bucks and three gins and some picanninies standing right behind me, all smothered with the same brown mud. They were well armed, and, as one could speak a little English, I learned they were out of the bush and travelling West for food and game. They had quite a collection of spears, tomahawks and boomerangs.

I was surprised in a similar manner about 80 miles out of Maronby when travelling along a road fair! heavy after rain and coming on a large pool of water in the track I circled round it and just as I regained the road my front wheel did a wonderful skid and shot me clean over the handlebars. On

regaining my feet, lifted the machine up and was about to start when I hear< laughing and giggling, and looking round, there were two bucks about 10 yards from me, evidently tickled to death and thinking I was stunting for their entertainment The way these blacks can appear without sound is almost magical. One moment they are not there, and the next they are. There is no doubt one is under closer observation than one is conscious of.

The unusual noise of the fast running open exhaust engine undoubtedly attracts them to have a peep at this strange visitor in their wilderness, and I had convincing evidence of their wonderful powers between Marranboy and Mataraks. I had laid in a good stock of provisions— jam, biscuits, salmon, bread and beef, strapped behind. I stopped at a waterhole to fill my waterbag, only a few yards away, and on turning again to the machine, my bag of provisions was gone. It must have been taken almost immediately by some watching bucks who feasted while I starved.

On reaching the Victoria river, which was flowing strongly, I decided to ride across, for they told me the bottom was flat and smooth, and tackled it fairly fast on low gear, plunging straight into the swirling waters. Almost immediately the bus left me and plunged me headlong into the swift river. Springing up, I struggled to the machine and tried to lift her, but helplessly, until by letting the water wash it against a big rock I managed to stand the machine up. The fall was caused by the green slime with which the bottom of the river is covered, and on this slime the tyres had no grip at all. After two more falls we got across to the far bank.

On approaching the Wickham river, I discovered the far bank was very steep, as the river flows all the year round. Profiting by previous experience, I got across without a fall and proceeded to scale the bank. This necessitated running the engine flat out with me pushing flat our also. Near the top the bank went nearly straight up for about 10 feet, and by exerting all my power I counted on doing it with a little luck.

Crossing the stream, of course, left my boots full of water, and as I was putting in some last desperate pushes, both feet slipped out of the boots and I was hurled clean down the bank on to the rocks below, expecting the machine to land on top of me. On recovering from the fall, I looked for the bus and there she was just where I left her. The footrest dug into the heavy soil had anchored it on the spot.



From this point I am going to move ahead fast—on paper—for a detailed description would only be a repetition of the rough riding story, which would weary my readers.

The next station touched was Delamore, and in 100 miles the most northerly point, "The Katherine," was reached. Once again I was in touch with the world by telegraph, the dreaded stretch from Halls Creek was passed, and I was still alive and kicking. The little Douglas seemed as fit as when she left Freemantle, and the wonderful Bates tyres were practically unmarked and actually unpunctured. Many times had I reason to bless the grand workmanship and material of these two great firms, for my life depended on them.

From the Katherine across the King river—infested with alligators—is 100 miles. Then to Marranboy 40—Hateranka 46—Daly Waters 125—Newcastle Waters 110. From Katherine I followed the Adelaide—Darwin telegraph line, which runs south-west to south, and it was a great comfort to have the line for a guide.

From Newcastle Waters I struck east to Anthonye Lagoon—180 miles—then 60 to Brunette Downs, and followed the rough stock route on through Alexandria and Rankine to Camooweal. At this last town I said "Good-bye" to the terrible Northern Territory and stepped on to Queensland soil, my troubles at an end. From now onwards I was on known roads and civilisation. I simply followed the inland route to Brisbane. My reception at the various Capitals—Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide—was of a most flattering nature, and while I thoroughly appreciated the kindly wishes behind all the receptions, I was glad to have done with them and set my face toward home.

The track from Adelaide to Perth runs through the wilds, but it is a known road and has been travelled many times by motorists and motor cyclists. To me it was a comparatively easy run, and the Douglas purred along contentedly day by day until on the 14th March I had the the great pleasure of riding down the streets of my native town of Freemantle, and the Douglas registered the last beat, after millions of beats, in front of the Town Hall, which I had left 5 months and 14 days before.

The great journey is finished, and I am quietly satisfied with the honour of being the first to do it.

To the Douglas and Bates Tyres I cannot give too much honour. Not one spare part was used on the machine which never once failed me and Bates Tyres never once punctured.

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Thunderbolts & Lightning. Vol 1&2 Hailwood to Vincent

It has to be said that when it comes to marque and model histories, most major makes and models have several volumes already on the bookshelf, including BSA and the unit construction twins that are the subject of these two books under review. So when a publisher announces a new book covering subject matter already heavily in print, one tends to be a little sceptical and think it is just rehashing what has gone before.

If that thought has crossed your mind in relation to both these two new hardback tomes from a new motorcycle publisher, Wideline books, then think again. Author Peter Crawford has not tried to rewrite history, or put words in people's mouths, instead he has let those who were part of BSA staff and directly associated with the machines and involved in the development tell the story and just laced the narrative together to provide continuity.

Over eighty ex-BSA staff have been interviewed and it is their story that is documented in over 250 pages in Volume 1 which covers the twin unit construction road (A50 & A65) bikes the company produced. Starting with the bikes gestation, the various chapters move through the building of the prototypes, engine development, testing, the comp shop, drawing office staff - in fact anybody who had a hand in the bikes leaving the factory and heading for the dealerships has had an input to the book.

Crawford skilfully moves the story on past the factory gates utilising tales from dealers and those who bought the bikes from new, as well as getting the views of those who rode them professionally – the police, stunt riders and racers specifically – to help paint a three dimensional portrait of the machines.

The well laid out text is easy to read, dip in and out of, and is well supported and illustrated with period documentation, drawings and images, many of which have not been seen before and these themselves absorb reading time and really add to the historical content.

Originally, the author was intending just to produce a single volume on the road bikes with maybe the odd chapter or two on the competition successes of the various models. However, he ended up with so much material that Volume 2 was the order of the day and an excellent companion to the first book.

As the author quite rightly points out, 'a list of classic competition machines

from the golden age of British motorcycle racing is unlikely to include the BSA A65/50 - which is odd, as it won seven British National championships, a TT and the coveted American AMA No.1 plate among other titles.'

In the same style as the first book and understandably reusing some of the material to ensure continuity and maintain the facts, he lays out a very impressive competition history mainly overlooked because of the success of the three cylinder machines. But, big names like Hailwood and Vincent (hence the sub title) show that the twin was also a formidable and successful power plant.

Both volumes easily stand alone and you do not have to have both, but I found it helped complete the overall picture. What I also found was that it also gave another insight into how the British motorcycle industry was allowed to fail by poor management, and lack of judgement and understanding by those at the top of what was by then a massive company in charge of many historic brands.

It is clear that given the quality and the way this story has been presented that we can expect many more excellent tomes from Wideline who are going to break the mould of just rehashing marque and model histories and come up with refreshing alternative tomes that are historically accurate. Both books cost £25.00 each and are worth every penny!

ISBN: - 9781838 133603 and 9781838133627 respectively.

Available from all good bookshops or direct from the publisher Wideline at www.wideline.co.uk

From The Other Side of the Tracks – life with a Racing Motorcyclist

Another excellent and unusual soft-bound book from Wideline telling the racing story of privateer Clive Horton from a very different perspective, that of being a wife - having started off as a girlfriend - of man once tipped by MCN to be a world champion.

Written by Sue Horton, it charts life in the paddock and pit lane as they travel the world as part of the dying embers of the once flourishing Continental Circus.

In over 200 pages, Sue talks of the sacrifices she and her children made as Clive battled against works riders and the sometimes hand to mouth existence they lived as family. Apart from a brief interlude with Armstrong, it was a

case of funding the family team themselves and relying on good friends to allow them to compete against the works teams and occasionally beating them by Clive's sheer talent and riding ability.

It is a fascinating read from start to finish and it is so well written that you feel that you are just sitting there having a cup of tea with Sue as she tells you the story of her life and how it is linked to some of the stars of GP and Isle of Man in the seventies and eighties. There is humour, risqué moments, and tears, all recounted with warmth and no bitterness, or regret. The only tragedy being the very last chapter is written by Clive himself after she passed away in 2020.

It is an excellent read from start to finish and I ended up wishing I had met Sue as she comes across as the perfect partner for somebody who was driven to win on two wheels! You certainly will not regret spending £10.00 on this excellent book!

ISBN:-978183813610

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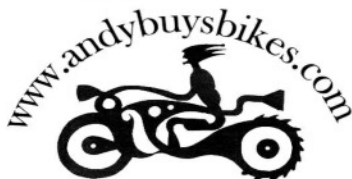
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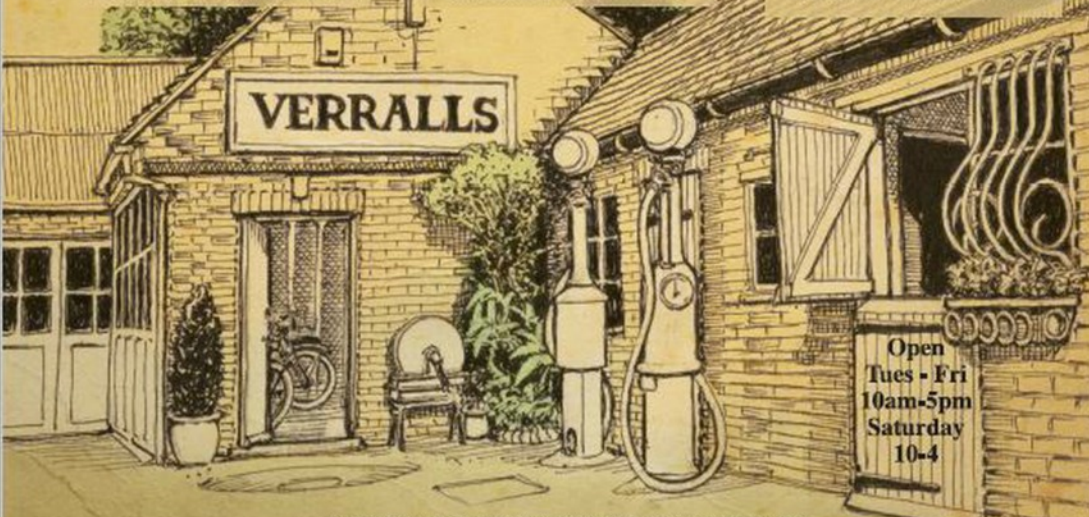
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*A Douglas Dragonfly is much sweeter tempered,
but probably not so much fun to ride.*



I wonder what Petrol cost back in those days. I can only remember the fifties, when it was about three shillings a Gallon.

