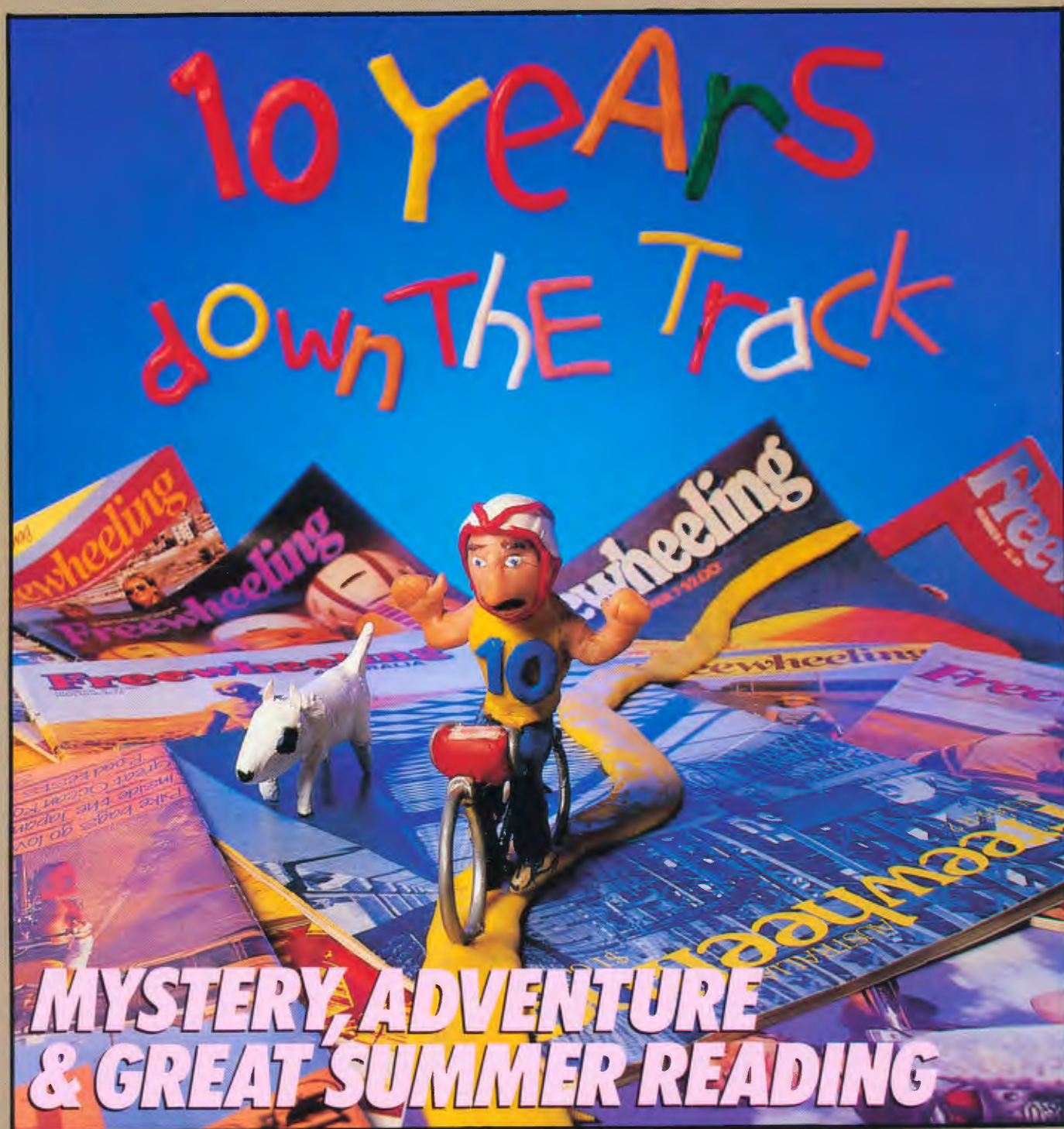


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Freewheeling

Number 45 Tenth Anniversary Issue \$3.00



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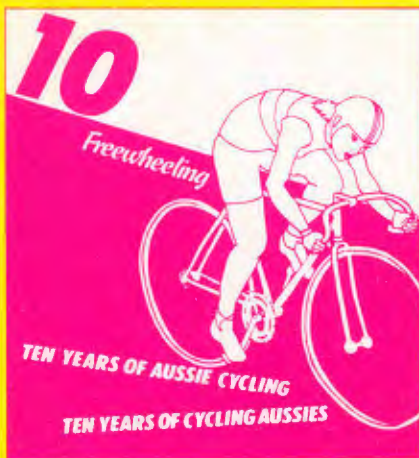


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Freewheeling

Number 45 October/December 1987

Tenth Anniversary Issue

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THIS special issue commemorates the completion of our tenth year of publication. Issue number one hit the streets in late November 1977.

Our sincere thanks to all of the people who have helped produce the forty five issues to date. We thank all of the writers, researchers, layout artists, designers, illustrators, typesetters, cartoonists, typists, editors, sub editors, printers, mail-out workers and the many others who have helped.

Our next regular issue (November/December) will see the return of all our regular columns, reviews and features.

Cover design by Andy Doyle.

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Where is the sport heading?





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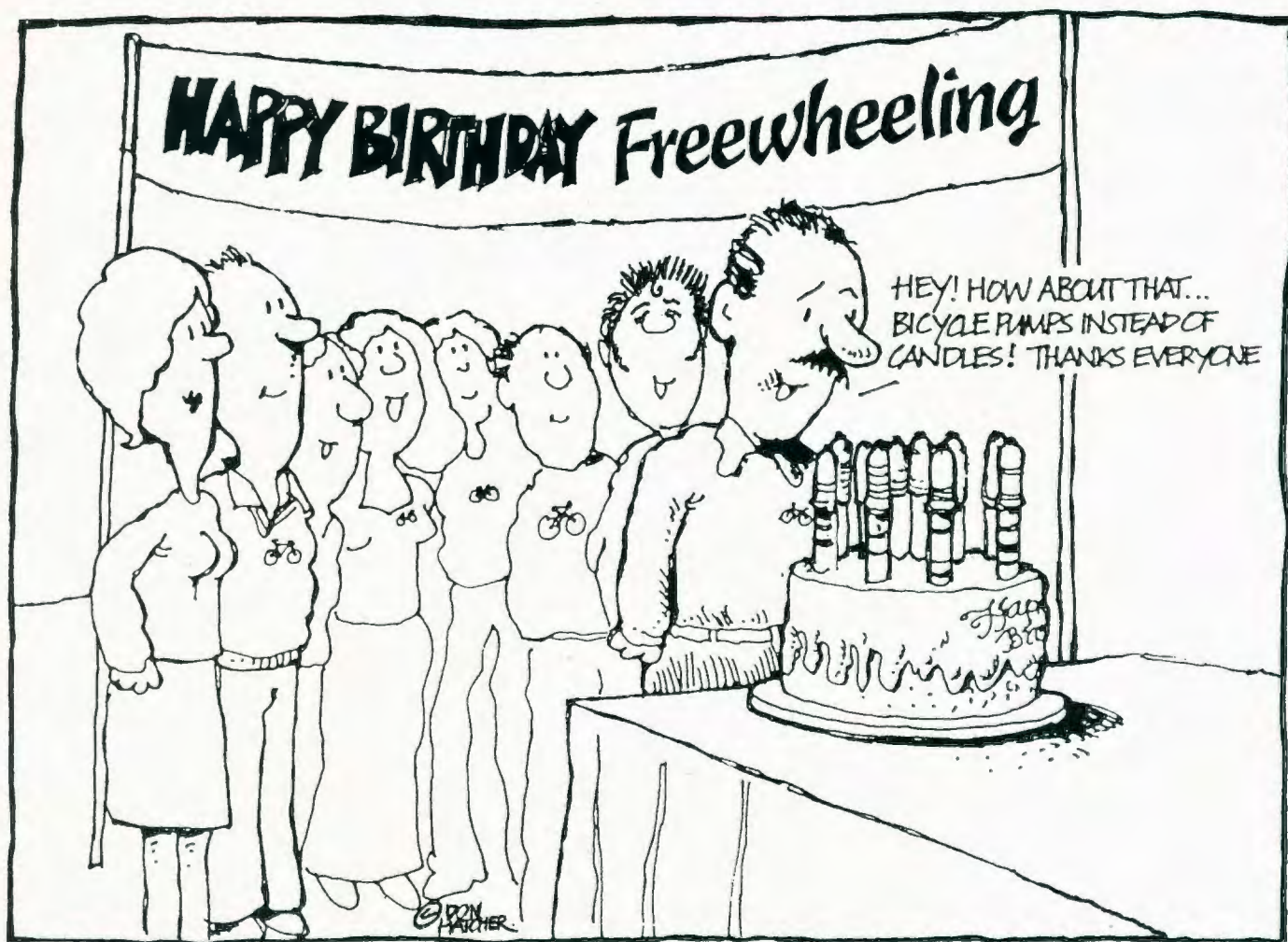
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The Aussie bike that's "Numero Uno!"





Ten years in an amazing century.

WELCOME to our all-Australian tenth anniversary issue; our tribute to a century of cycling in this country. At the completion of our first decade of continuous publication this issue of *Freewheeling* looks at the past, present and the future. We remember two of Australia's cycling giants: star racer, Russell Mockridge and outback adventurer Francis Birtles.

The Birtles piece, by historian, Jim Fitzpatrick, has appeared before in issue number 20 and has been out of print since its publication. It's one of my personal favourites and tells the tale of an Australia long since disappeared beneath the weight of modern society.

In contrast we give our touring and non-competitive readers a treat with a big round up of the touring scene across the country. In the early days we were

always seen by our readers and advertisers as a touring magazine but as the cycling scene has grown we have attempted to develop to embrace this growth and address ourselves to our many new readers.



These days mountain bikes and triathlons are all the rage but just because we provide coverage of this aspect of the broad cycling scene doesn't mean that we have abandoned our original touring supporters. In this issue, at least, the bulk of our content is slanted towards the bicycle traveller. We still enjoy touring but we happen to like fat tyres too.

Our fat-tyre section this issue takes a look at two recent touring events and future directions for the sport. Sales of mountain bikes are booming in the major eastern states and this summer looks like being a mountain bike sell-out. But is the sport able to draw in the new riders it needs to see it develop into a mature activity? It's early days yet but indications are that, given the right form of promotion and suitable events, the

How Kryptonite earned the admiration of the Old Saybrook Police Dept. And the wrath of their Selectwoman.

Officer Rick Swan is a Police dispatcher and a Fire Dept. training officer in the small town of Old Saybrook, Connecticut.

To the young woman who misplaced the keys to her Kryptonite lock, he's a knight in shining armor. But to Selectwoman Barbara Maynard, his armor is somewhat tarnished.

It all started when the keyless damsel-in-distress came to Officer Swan for his assistance in freeing her captive bicycle. He naively grabbed a pair of four-foot bolt cutters and headed for the locked bike. But, as he writes, he could do little more than "...break through the plastic coating..."

"NO DAMN LOCK IS GOING TO GET THE BEST OF ME!", was his battle cry as he headed for the town's rescue truck and broke out the hydraulic rescue tool commonly known as "The Jaws of Life." This tool is

usually reserved for such tasks as cutting through cars, trucks and highway guard-rails.

On his first valiant attempt, the Kryptonite lock jammed the powerful jaws that exert 32,000 pounds per square-inch of pressure. On the second and final attempt, as he puts it, "...the tool's hardened steel cutting edges crumbled to pieces."

"You should've seen us trying to explain to our Selectwoman that we need an extra \$2,000...to



replace a rescue tool..." he continues. "So, whoever designed that lock better not come to Old Saybrook, because I have one angry Selectwoman that would love to get her hands on his neck!"

But, what about the bike, we wondered. Well, according to Officer Swan, they finally did get past the lock—after four drill bits and three and one half hours of sweat.

"LOCK IT RIGHT WITH KRYPTONITE!", Officer Swan now urges anyone who owns a bicycle or motorcycle.

Selectwoman Maynard urges anyone who does to keep track of their keys when they come to Old Saybrook.

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sport can look forward to a fabulous future.

Australian triathletes are also proving to the world that they are up there with the best. John Drummond and photographer, Frank Walsh, present a colourful look at this young sport where winning is often not as important than an

improvement in individual performance.

I hope you will enjoy our tenth anniversary issue. It's not been easy for us over the years but we have worked hard at it and completed our first ten years in excellent shape for the years ahead.

Cyclist of the decade

OVER the years I have always tried to present to my readers a carefully researched and balanced view of the world. Sure I have my bias; but I can't spend my life sitting on a fence. Often it is important to make a stand. So naturally over the years *Freewheeling* has published influential articles on cycling affairs which have, in their way, altered the direction of

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thought and action in this country at least.

I see it as an educational process. When the first *Freewheeling* was published only a handful of people in Australia took cycling seriously and the views they held then are now considered a hindrance to the safety and future development of bicycle use. Since 1978 when the Geelong Bikeplan was released there has been an explosion in knowledge on cycling matters. Governments have entered the field and are devoting their considerable resources to improving conditions for the country's large number of bicycle users.

Our governments, however, are not great innovators or initiators and getting them to move on any new project takes a lot of pushing and shoving. But once they get moving they usually develop a momentum of their own.

Considering that the current involvement in cycling by governments in most parts of the country (the Federal, Queensland, Tasmanian and Northern Territory governments are still dragging their feet) is substantial the question arises: who got it all going?

The short answer is: a few very dedicated people throughout the country. And among that 'few' the one name which commands the most attention, respect, fear and loathing is Alan Parker.

It's no coincidence that Alan was asked to write our very first feature article examining the future direction of cycling in Oz. In those days I was, like everyone else, new to the field. So like the many others seeking knowledge on the subject I contacted Alan for his help. Though there are many people who have gathered huge amounts of detailed knowledge on urban planning for bicycles and bicycle safety issues I still believe that Alan is still streets ahead of the rest.

He is without a doubt Australia's cycle planning expert. And what makes him shine where others only glow is that he has first and foremost the interests of the average cyclist at heart.

Alan has been at it now for much longer than anyone else and through those long years he emerged as the greatest single influence on the direction of cycling in this country. Yet he has received very little public recognition for his untiring efforts.

The reason for this disappointing fact is, I believe, because Alan won't lie down; won't give up; and won't shut up. Once he launches into a political campaign he gets involved in a 'boots and all' way that has not only won him many admirers but has created just as many enemies.

Bureaucrats have often been the target of his attacks and there is hardly a

person in the Victorian Public Service who would care to share a lunch table with Alan in the hope of a pleasant chat.

His aggressive and energetic style has also produced difficulties for him within the bicycle advocacy scene and groups such as the Bicycle Federation, the state Bicycle Institutes and other major bicycle clubs have often struggled to keep pace with him when he launches into action. Earlier this year he resigned from the Bicycle Institute of Victoria and the State Bicycle Committee but still persists with his ultimate aim to make cycling a fully integrated part of modern Australian society.

So, in spite of his long and productive commitment to the bicycle scene, there have been few displays of appreciation. His study at home is crammed with technical reports, charts and books but awards, trophies and letters of thanks take up very little space.

He has given twelve years of his life to see a better tomorrow for many many Australians and there is no doubt in my mind that more in years to come will benefit from his work. But as he says in the headline to his latest *Freewheeling* feature article: "It's been a decade of progress - but we've only just begun."

Yes, there is still much to do and I wish him well - our cyclist of the decade. Where would we be without him?

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Himalaya 18 Speed

Designed for the rigours of all-terrain riding, the Himalaya boasts all alloy componentry to complement the lightweight frame with its Chromo-moly tubing. With components including Shimano L series SIS derailleurs, SR Ovaltech chain-rings, Dia Compe alloy cantilever brakes and Araya 26 x 1.75 alloy rims, this bike not only looks fantastic, it performs fantastically!



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Eclipse

This semi-lightweight package has the works. Chromoly main tubing, alloy front quick-release hub, alloy quick-release brakes, Araya alloy rims and the new Suntour-7 derailleurs. Of course toe clips and straps are standard to assist you over the endless kilometres of cycling pleasure awaiting you.



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APOLLO

BICYCLES



Winds of change

Parallels with the past

WHEN our Editor suggested I join the *Freewheeling* celebration with a retrospective of the sporting side of cycling I found the prospect daunting considering the sport actually started with a bicycle race back in 1869 on bicycles made of wood and cast iron. It was bit like being asked to write the Bible on the back of a postage stamp. Nevertheless on reflection I found plenty of parallels between then, and now, that are of interest to bicycle buffs.

Most of today's "new" ideas had been thought of first by the turn of the century, for the invention of the motor vehicle and the motor bike were still a few years away and the best engineers were engaged in the bicycle industry. Most of the early era racing was conducted on high wheel machines, but bicycle racing really got going with the introduction of the safety bicycle and the invention of the pneumatic tyre on basically the same type of machine we know today.

To control and guide the haphazard development of bicycle racing throughout the civilised world an organisation known as the International Cyclist Association was set up in London in 1882. As a consequence of an ordered racing system professionalism came into being. By the end of the century, and right through the 1920's, cycle racing was the dominant sport and professional riders strode the scene like colossuses.

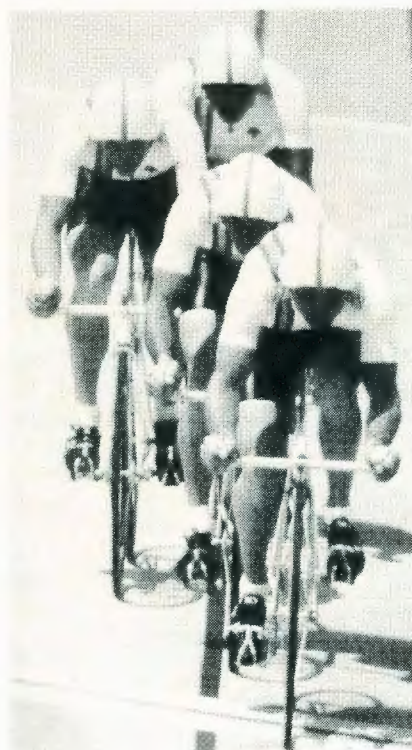
In Australia, with no railway system of any note yet in place, the bicycle opened up a new way of life, cycling clubs were formed to accommodate a pastime. Social activity and organised weekend rides into the countryside were the main objectives. The competitive urge came to the fore and participants raced to be first at destinations. Gradually racing became a part of the scene reaching proportions demanding separation from established clubs.

The first racing clubs were all amateur, but with promotion came professionalism and control.

So was born the beginnings of the Australian Cycling system. Racing was

conducted at gala sporting carnivals throughout the states of the young nation, with both professional and amateur racers contesting cycling events on a varied sporting programme to which the people flocked in their thousands. Gradually betting developed and amateur riders demanded separate events under their own control.

In deference to popular demand the international controlling body for cycl-



The magnificent four: Michael Grenda, Kevin Nichols, Dean Woods and Mike Turtur who returned Australia to Olympic gold after a lapse of 28 years.

ing, now known as the Union Cycliste Internationale (U.C.I.) granted amateurs full autonomy, with links being retained through separate professional and amateur controlling bodies. That system worked and cycling flourished. It still does in Europe to this day.

With the winds of change blowing a gale through the corridors of cycling power by the end of the second World War came alteration to rules, which all went wrong for Australian cycling and we evolved two amateur orientated systems.

The effects of the failure of Australian cycle racing administrators, both professional and amateur, to adapt to change has cost Australian cycle racing dearly. We have no true professional class and our leading professional riders have to reside in Europe if they wish to earn a living at their sport. Amateur cycling has become a paradox. The public has an image problem and the media is confused.

Young cyclists now see themselves as sportsmen and women who have taken up cycling just as they might have taken up swimming, athletics or football.

They tend to stay in the sport for a shorter time than their predecessors which is one reason why the racing clubs are experiencing only marginal increases in membership, despite the increased popularity of cycling.

A clue to where all the cyclists are going can be found in the various state backed bike rides which attract thousands. Although some are attracted to the competitive side, many more just want to ride out into the bush for pleasure, stopping at a pub en-route, very much as their forbears did.

Under the impact of television sport is tending toward an "elite". This trend combined with a reduced intake makes the present Australian position untenable. It is difficult to visualise the long term survival of cycle racing under the present structure. Common sense demands the type of unity we see in Europe.

M. Michael Jekiel, Secretary General of U.C.I. indicated that his committee recognised this truth back in 1971 when he wrote to the President of the Australian Professional Cycling Council, and the Australian Amateur Cycling Federation stating that he had been directed to re-familiarise himself with Australian

cycling, with a view to setting up a single control system.

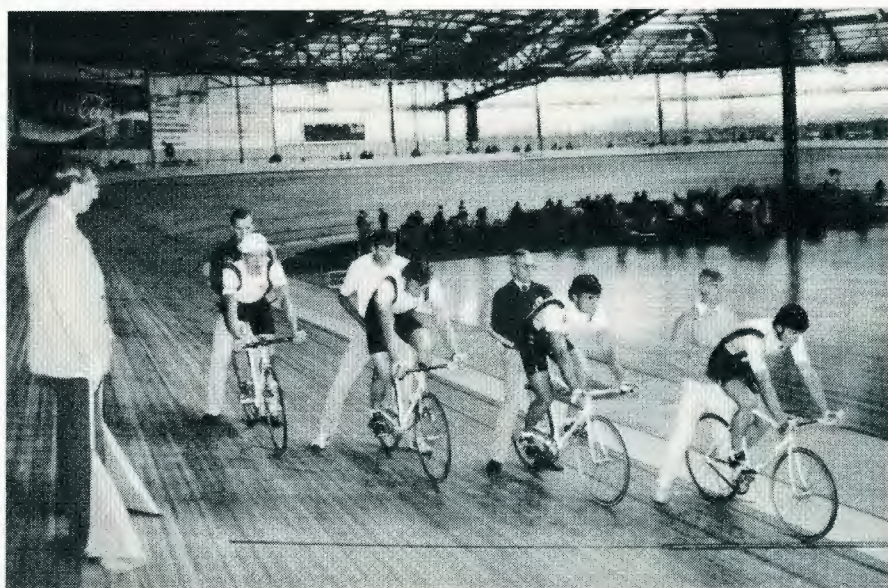
The outcome of a subsequent meeting with M. Jekiel saw a National Co-ordinating Committee appointed. Over a period of four years twelve meetings were held, unity was established and many important decisions were made, including the approval of Pro-Am racing and the acceptance of a draft constitution.

The constitution was subsequently adopted and both the A.P.C.C. and the A.A.C.F. agreed to establish an Australian Cycling Council, which was to be an umbrella under which an Australian Federation was to advance our sport under a single control. Just like the great Federations of France, Italy and Europe where amateurs ride side by side with professionals.

That all happened at a meeting of 17 national and state executive officers from both professional and amateur organisations in Brisbane in 1982. But despite two years of supposed operation, and enquiries from U.C.I. Secretary General Jekiel, no decisions of any consequence were ever made, or even seriously considered. Mistaken attitudes on professionalism and amateurism in Australian cycling, and the reluctance of U.C.I. to intervene, were far too entrenched for a common approach to

changed structures, and the Australian Cycling Federation, the preferred control body of U.C.I., was dissolved by delegates of both professional and amateur administration at a special congress in Melbourne in September, 1985 by a unanimous bar one vote.

That was the worst decision ever taken in Australian cycle racing history.



The South Australian team of "Charlie's Angels", Pat Marucci, Steve Wigzell, Wayne McCarney and Olympic gold medalist Mike Turtur, who won the Teams Pursuit on Tasmania's magnificent indoor velodrome in 1985.

The Australian Cycling Federation was never permitted to function. Impediments in the constitution preventing a



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smooth transition to a true professional class could have been easily made. Australian cyclists can thank the top level politics of cycling control for the backward step that was taken.

The real reason was the result of wrong directions taken in the past. With the relaxation of amateur rules permitting racing for cash, clashing with professional cycling tenets based on money alone, rather than payment on ability, and with both groups possessing anachronistic administration systems the two could not agree to arrangements that would eventually benefit both.

As a result of the debacle professional cycling's fight to survive under changed conditions and amateur cycling is a paradox. Never have amateur clubs been so weak numerically, considering the growth in bicycle use, while the competition so strong at the top.

Whilst the public and the media continue to regard professionalism as the top level of competition in all sports, then cycling across the board will suffer a decline, or even a fall in class by the professionals. That is the dilemma for all cycling administrators.

Meanwhile while the ghosts of yesterday continue to haunt our sport there have been some outstanding successes at world level over the past decade. The greatest of these is the establishment of an Australian International Tour. The Commonwealth Bank Cycle Classic, first conducted from Brisbane to Sydney in 1982 has grown in stature and is now known and respected throughout the cycling world.

Prior to the Bank race Australian cycling lacked a major World classic. Now that has changed and up to 40 odd top rated International amateur cyclists travel to Australia to contest the race. It generates enormous media and public interest and is programmed toward that end.

The 1987 race is scheduled to finish in Albury on 29 October after starting on the Gold Coast 12 days earlier. The 1988 race is an official Bicentennial event and will conclude on the streets of Melbourne on the 29th October, 1988.

Australian Amateur Cycling emerged as the most successful sport from the 1982 Brisbane Commonwealth Games. Just missing a clean sweep of the track events by one event, in which we came second. That success spawned the magnificent performance of Dean Woods, Kevin Nichols, Michael Turtur and Michael Grenda in returning Australian cycling to the Olympic podium after a lapse of 28 years. After six days of Los Angeles Olympic competition in varying sports our cyclists struck gold in the prestigious teams pursuit.

Steele Bishop emulated the legendary Sid Patterson by winning the Professional Individual Pursuit Championship



at the World Championships in Zurich 1983. Dean Woods established his class by winning the Junior World Individual Pursuit at the Junior World Titles in New Zealand in 1984. Australia achieved a total comprehensive cycling success from the 1986 Edinburgh Commonwealth Games in track racing.

Martin Vinnecombe won a bronze medal at the World Championships of 1985 and followed it up with a silver medal at the World's in 1986 in track time trialling topping it off with the gold medal in the 1987 Worlds championships.

Australian cycling and sport generally scored with the opening of the Tasmanian International multi-sports velodrome at Launceston in 1985. It gave cycling its first indoor facility and is acclaimed by the world's top riders who have competed on the track, as unequalled anywhere.

But all these great achievements would pale into insignificance compared with the benefits unity would give to our sport. The Australian Cycling Federa-

Opening prologue winner in the 1986 Commonwealth Bank Cycle Classic was Tom Cordes of Holland from Jack Swart of New Zealand and Stephen Hodge of Australia. Photo: Frank Walsh.

tion should be re-constituted and made workable as a single control vehicle immediately.

The admittance of cycling as the fourth decentralised sport and the fourteenth residential sporting programme of the Australian Institute of Sport was a major plus for cycling, and will do much to close the gap with competitor nations.

The winds of change are inexorable. Unless we adapt to the new racing and administrative structures cycle racing in Australia will ultimately be diminished. All sportsmen and women have the right to become professionals in the true sense of the word, only a single control can ensure that right in Australia. Liaison is necessary by direct action between A.A.P.C. and the A.A.C.F. without the cost and humbug of a paper tiger.

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Brakes: Shimano alloy cantilever, alloy levers
Hubs: Alloy sealed small flange
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Colours: Flame Red/Polar White forks



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Handlebar Stem: Chrome moly M.T.B. style
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Pedals: M.T.B. type with chrome moly axles
Seat Pillar: Alloy
Rear Sprockets: Shimano 14-32T 6 speed
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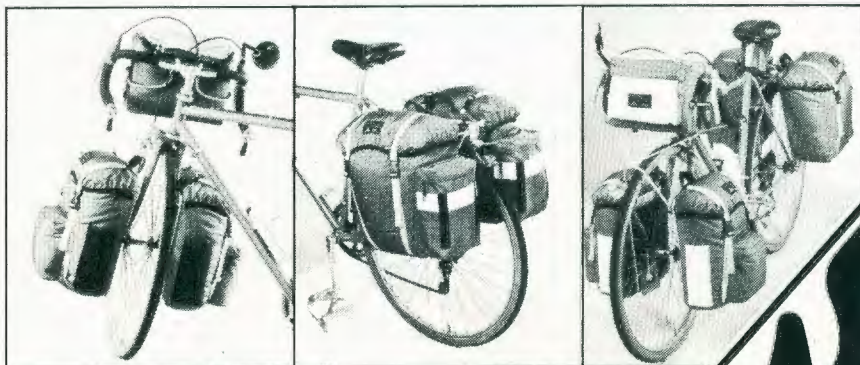
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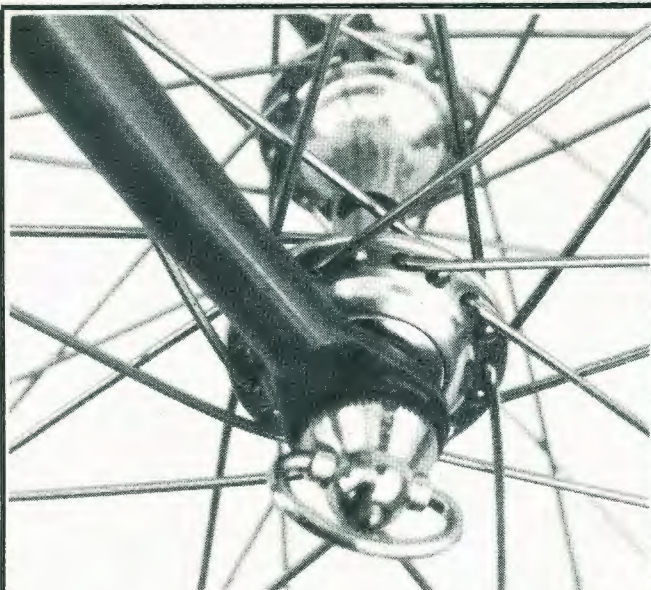
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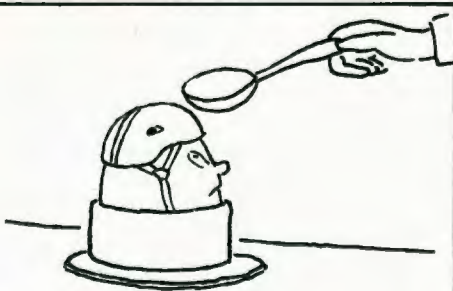
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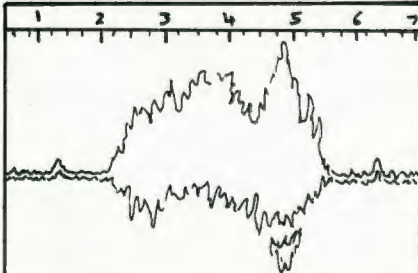
1988 The Federal Government grants \$3 million towards Bicentennial bikepath projects. A total of 4 kilometres is completed while the remaining funds are spent on two thousand billboard-sized signs saying 'Another Bicentennial bikepath'.



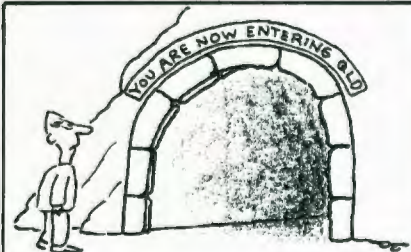
1989 After a misunderstanding over splitting a restaurant lunch bill, limited nuclear war-breaks out between Russia and the United States. During the two day exchange Australia is hit by a single-warhead Soviet missile. Nobody is killed but all 4 kilometres of Bicentennial bikepath are destroyed.



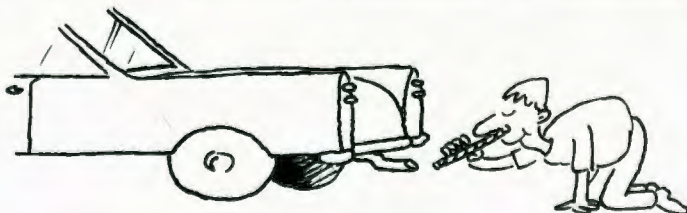
1990 Bicycle helmets are made compulsory but only amongst drunk car drivers to prevent the concussion they might otherwise suffer after hitting a solid metal bicycle.



1991 The country's eastern coast suffers a large earthquake which fractures the National Highway in several hundred places as well as causing massive buckling. No-one notices any difference in the driving surface.



1992 Tandem bicycles are prohibited in Queensland as constituting an unlawful procession of people. Spoke nipples are banned as part of a general crackdown on pornography.



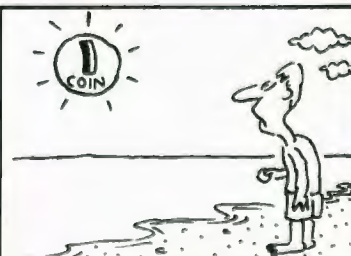
1993 Increasingly strict emission controls on cars and industry result in the complete elimination of air pollution in the major cities. It subsequently becomes apparent that many people have become physically addicted to bad air quality. An illicit trade in smog springs up. High grade hydrocarbons are smuggled in from Asia via the 'Brown Triangle'. The government legalises special medical use by heavy users such as cyclists, joggers and toll collectors.



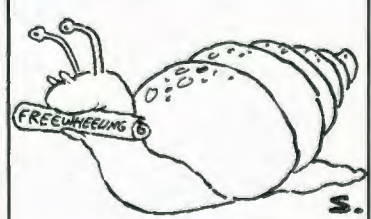
1994 The UN declares 1994 *International Year of the Bicycle*. As a result all existing bike facilities are removed, bikes are banned on trains, bike lanes are torn up and, in some states, cyclists are actively shot by council-hired bounty hunters.



1995 During a Rock Address to the Nation, Prime Minister Garrett announces the compulsory registration and insurance of bicycles. This follows shortly after legislation making compulsory the wearing of gaudily coloured lycra shorts while riding a bike. This in turn follows legislation making mandatory the carrying of a special *Midnight Oil* I.D. record album to facilitate all financial transactions.



1996 The Japanese market the first solar-powered bicycle, gaining record sales world-wide. Later the novelty wears off when Japanese property developers buy the sun and force consumers to pay a monthly levy.



1997 After the development of special space technology, support from Community Aid Abroad and three years of intensive medical research, an issue of *Freewheeling Magazine* comes out on time.



Francis E. Birtles from a picture in the Mitchell Library Sydney. The photo was ostensibly taken in 1912, however the relatively youthful appearance of Birtles suggests that it was in fact taken earlier when he was first embarking on his overland cycling efforts.

The life of Francis Birtles

THE GREATEST OVERLANDER

The history of cycling

by JIM FITZPATRICK

FRANCIS BIRTLES sometime popular hero in Australia for three decades, took advantage of – and, equally, was the product of – that era when adventure and minor fame were to be found in accomplishing ever quicker and more daring outback journeys on both the bicycle and in that evolving device, the motor car.

Unquestionably a publicity seeker, both for financial and personal reasons, his private life and motives are unclear, fascinating and the subject of much discussion and controversy among those who have met and studied him.

He was an itinerant pedallist and motorist extraordinaire. He cycled across the Nullarbor several times, pedalled halfway around the continent once, around it completely another time, and wrote numerous books and articles of his journeys. In addition, he was involved in one of the earliest cinematographic expeditions in Northern Australia (accomplished by bicycle) and pioneered the outback travel-adventure film.

Retiring from cycling, he turned to the motor car. Among numerous motoring journeys (he claimed to have made over seventy transcontinental crossings by 1928) were the first west-to-east Nullarbor crossing, the crossing of the Stony Desert, Darwin-Sydney and Darwin-Melbourne records, and a survey of a proposed central Australian railway line (later completed by aeroplane). In 1928 he expanded his horizons and completed the first London-Melbourne drive, part of it solo.

He took many photographs on his trips and published a number of articles over the years. His book, *Battle Fronts of Outback* (1935), summarized his travels and adventures; the title suggests something of the 'man-

conquers-nature' attitude of his writing and endeavours.

He was born in Fitzroy, Victoria in 1881. After attending a state school he joined the merchant navy as an apprentice at the age of fifteen. Three years later, in 1899, his ship pulled into Cape Town soon after the outbreak of the Boer War. Birtles jumped ship and attempted to join the Australian military, but ended up serving 2½ years in a troop of irregular mounted infantry.

His brief writings on his war experiences tell little. However, they do provide a sample of his descriptions of strange places and events. . . . vultures, gorged to capacity, flop-flopped and rose heavily on lazily beating wings against the yellow dawn. The air that we breathed as we rode on, mile after mile, was polluted with the odour of week-old, jackal-torn carcasses of horses which had met with cruel lingering deaths in a disastrous running skirmish of several days before. Some of their former veldt riders were now sleeping peacefully beneath scattered earth mounds. Later, he referred to a clash with Boers. . . . near to where we lay in the hollow, all was quiet. Cautiously I peered. What was the use of shooting when I could see no living target? A man about twenty yards away from me started to play about. He rolled over on his back, doubled up his knees and, like a kitten, pawed with two grabbing hands at his haversack, which, in the scramble, had slipped around and was now packed on his stomach. He rolled over again, and then lay still.

In mid-1902 he briefly returned to Australia. However, he was shortly back to South Africa, where he served two years as a mounted police officer,

in the Transvaal. Writing of those experiences some thirty years later, he recounted that — *I have arrested a black man in the morning for owning more wives than he'd paid for; a yellow man at noon, for deserting from the mines; and a white man at night, for preaching sedition . . . I have gone out to arrest a rebel Dutch man . . . We found the nest, scattered it, captured the ringleader, and dug up a buried cannon and ammunition.*

Unfortunately, Francis Birtles was prone to exaggerate. In analyzing later events which can be cross-checked with newspaper, archival and other accounts, it is obvious that facts are forgotten and mis-ordered, if not made up. In essence, it is hard to

assess where essay leaves off and embellishment begins.

An edge of racism runs through his writing as well. He referred to the Black African miners on the Rand as 'country-bred niggers', and commented on 'a great problem . . . the black risings'. He noted that — *For every native rising that the world hears of, a dozen occur, though the Press make light of them or suppress news of them altogether. The black problem is one of the questions of the age, and its solution is uncertain; But he offered one piece of advice: . . . if the white rulers govern the black people with a slack hand, big trouble will certainly come.*

Birtles eventually left the South African police force. Some accounts

suggest it was as a result of contracting blackwater fever. Birtles indicated that he simply quit when his contract expired; he had no desire 'to make police duty my life's profession'. In any case, in his years in South Africa he gained experiences and developed interests that profoundly influenced the remaining course of his life. For one thing he had acquired extensive bush survival skills. For another he had undertaken some cycling excursions that had demonstrated the value of the bicycle for travel in harsh, arid environments. As well, he experimented with photography and achieved a degree of expertise. It 'occurred to me that my own country offered opportunities for hard living and

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This Dunlop advertisement was inspired by Birtles' rides. It is a classic of Australian and uses one of Birtles' photos taken in 1910 at the rabbit fence border between Queensland and the Northern Territory.

August 8, 1911*

Camped on Katherine River. Crocodile crawled out on to a sandbank in the middle of the stream; big barramundi in his jaws. Fired a bullet at him; he dropped the fish and dived into the water. I swam across, towed my future meal to the camp; grilled about eight pounds of it for tea, salted the rest. Sweet dreams.

adventurous exploits'. Consequently, he returned to Australia to combine photography, cycling, motor cars, and bush travel in a series of journeys that occupied him for the next thirty years.

Birtles disembarked at Fremantle. On Boxing Day, 1905, he pedalled out of Perth for the eastern states. He intended to ride northeast from the goldfields via Alice Springs, but intense heat and scarcity of water turned him back. Instead, he headed south and then east across the Nullarbor. However, he was not the first to do the trip on bicycle, for men had been riding the route for a decade; one had in fact averaged 103 miles per day between Perth and Adelaide in 1898.

For the next six years Birtles rode his bicycle about the continent, photographed its wonders — and himself standing among them — and wrote about his adventures. His first book, *Lonely Lands* (1909), recounted his exploits on a trip around

the eastern half of Australia. Its 224 pages included 85 photographs and set the pattern for his later writings — plenty of pictures of strange things and isolated places, together with a liberal tale of the difficulties and battles he had in completing the journey.

August 16, 1911*

Riding fast along a cattle track overtook wild bull going down to water. He kept running ahead. I could not get past. Suddenly he stopped short, dropped his head and charged. I sprinted off the track, got past onto my course. Did not have time to look behind. I beat him easily on the 'straight'.

He stated that he cycled across the continent seven times and around it twice. The records are not clear, but in any case he became the most peripatetic overlander in Australian cycling history. The travels are remarkable for the sheer physical effort and mental determination involved in pedalling so many tens of thousands of miles of bush. He wrote several articles for a variety of magazines between 1910 and 1912, with such titles as *Through the Unknown Territory* and *Across Australia by Camel Pad and Cattle Track*. The money from these helped finance his travels. As well, an agreement with Anthony Hordern and Sons proved mutually beneficial; they provided a 'Universal' bicycle in exchange for him endorsing the machine. A sketch of Birtles riding it was included in their catalogue.

During his cycling era, Birtles helped pioneer the outback adventure film. The Gaumont Company sent a photographer, Richard Primmer, to travel with him between Sydney and Darwin in 1911. It was an epic trip in terms of logistics alone. Besides food, water and personal and camping gear, they carried still, stereoscopic and cinematographic cameras, plates and film, and developing tanks and fluids. A contemporary observer estimated that between them the men carried about 250 pounds of gear.

The film was released in Sydney, under the title *Across Australia*, in May 1912. It was 3 000 feet long and

included scenes of emus, crocodile hunting, sugar cane growing, Thursday Island pearling, and shark fishing. It was put on in conjunction with a children's essay competition. Contemporary accounts lauded the film, 'showing places never before seen by a Sydney audience'; it played to a 'large audience which thronged the Lyceum'. In July it ran in Melbourne and Adelaide.

However, Birtles' film debut was in fact three months earlier. He was photographed arriving in Sydney on 1 February, 1912, on his last overland cycling ride. Fittingly, it was capped by a Fremantle-Sydney record; he had covered 3 175 miles in 31 days. Two days later his finish was shown as part of a Gaumont gazette film.

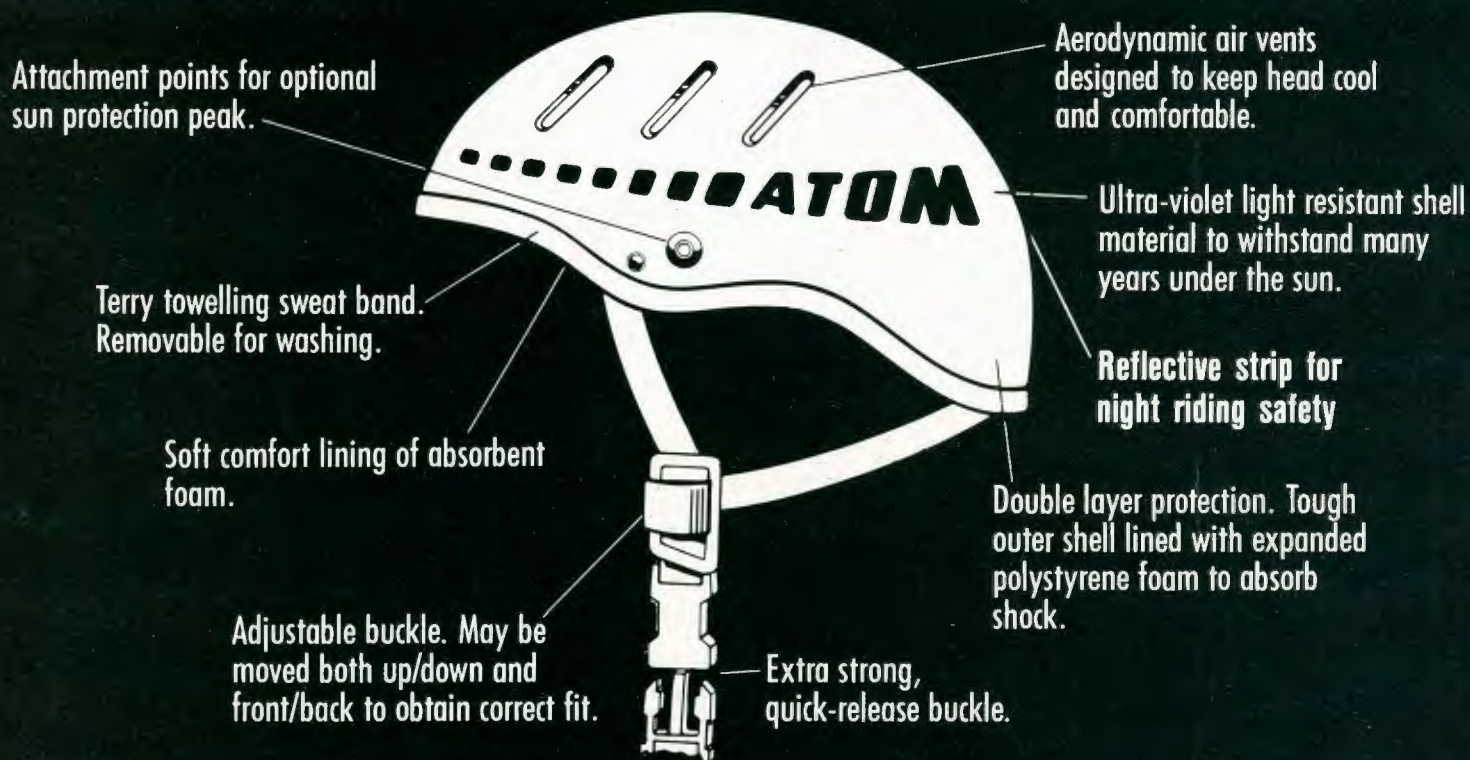
In 1912 he took up motoring and travelled about the bush making three more films in the next eight years. The first, *Into Australia's Unknown*, was begun with Frank Hurley. However, Frank left to accompany Shackleton on an Antarctic expedition and Birtles finished it alone. It was released in January 1915. The following year another film *Across Australia in the Track of Burke and Wills*, re-traced the ill-fated expedition's route.

After Sir Ross and Sir Keith Smith completed their England-Australia flight in 1919, Francis Birtles travelled their Darwin-Sydney leg by motorcar. The film of the journey, *Through Australian Wilds and Across the Track of Ross Smith*, was released in



Above: This photo taken over two decades after Birtles began touring about Australia, shows a leather-skinned man, tough, wiry, and much worn, in contrast to early cycle-trip photos. Below: This photo of the Brush car was made during the first west-east motor crossing of the Nullarbor, in 1912. The effort to show the harshness of some of the travelling conditions was a hallmark of his travel pictures.

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various capital cities between July 1919 and February 1920, to little success. Birtles was trying to scoop his former colleague, Frank Hurley, who had flown with the Smiths from Darwin to Sydney, but had not yet released a film of it. The reviews of Birtles' film were unenthusiastic. The attempt to tie his earth-bound adventure travels to the aura of the great air journey simply did not come off well.

Birtles had taken up motoring in 1912 with the same penchant as he had with bicycles — he headed for the outback and records. His first car was a 10 horsepower, single-cylinder Brush. With Syd Ferguson accompanying him, he made the first west-east crossing of the continent. An *Australasian* writer observed that:

August 29, 1911*

Crossed the WA border. Met a mob of cattle out 'storm hunting'. They were led by an old bull; behind him they stretched out in single column, head to tail, for a distance of about five miles. The dust which drifted to leeward gave the appearance of a large grass fire approaching.

The beasts seemed to be very thirsty and tired, with nostrils almost touching the ground. They determinedly kept to the track, which would lead them to the high tablelands 50 miles away where rain had most likely fallen. The old bull-leaders instinct would not fail.

The car and its contents presented a strange appearance on the road. The body of the vehicle was almost hidden under nearly half of a ton of outfit, including tent, sandmats, shovels, food-boxes, water-bags, guns, a cinematograph camera, and Birtles' bicycle. Upon arrival from Perth there was a mantle of dust 'over the car, baggage and motorists'. They reached Sydney, via Broken Hill, in 28 days, 1 hour and 52 minutes. However, it was only three days faster than he had pedalled across, six months before; and the cycle ride had involved longer route, via Adelaide and Melbourne.

He made innumerable motor journeys about Australia, into ex-

tremely isolated areas and through some harsh conditions. Some of them were for the express purpose of making films, others for whatever pleasures, panacea or results he wanted. He was accompanied by various companions, and carried his bicycle as 'a lifeboat'.

His experiences and publicity resulted in a commission in 1921 to survey an overland railway route between Adelaide and Darwin for the Prime Minister's Department. With Ray Fry he reached the Katherine rail head after three months. With 80 gallons of petrol aboard they turned back south. Near Elsey Station the car virtually exploded. The car, cameras, plates, cine-film, possessions, and survey notes had been destroyed, and Birtles and Fry were burnt. They were taken to the Inland Mission hospital at Maranbay tinfields. Several months later they returned south by steamer.

Birtles completed the survey by air. He flew in a De Haviland biplane, piloted by Frank Briggs, with George Bailey as mechanic. In his inimitable writing style, he described his 'companionship with a new tribe of youthful, capable men, strapped in and controlling a balanced and roaring dragon of the air'. They left Melbourne and, via Adelaide, reached Alice Springs. After two weeks in the

area they returned to Melbourne. For a man who had spent 16 years pedalling and driving about the bush, the trip was a thrill. His account of it represents some of his most eloquent — and relatively unembellished — writing: *'I saw Melbourne mistily dissolving into a series of dull coloured squares, all held together by little streaks of streets, and railway lines'*. He concluded with the simple and powerful observation that they had reached Melbourne *'from the far distant heart of Australia in fifteen hours flying time'*.

By 1924 Birtles made another film, *Australia's Lonely Lands*. It was longer than several of the previous films, and Birtles appeared in person at its showings. However, it received only a lukewarm reception. The audiences were cooling to the straight adventure-travel films, partly from the number having been shown over the past 12 years, and partly because increasingly sophisticated film-goers desired more plot.

Subsequently Birtles began work on his last film, *Coorah*. Although released in 1929, there is some doubt as to exactly when it was filmed. Ina Bertrand, Australian film historian, suggests that it was possibly a composition of extracts from his earlier films and unused footage. There is no clear record of him having made a separate trip to film it, and numerous



This picture was taken near the end of Birtles' cycling career, when he was using an Anthony Hordern 'Universal'. The heavily laden machine and weatherbeaten appearance of the man represented the requirements, and effects, of a round-Australia effort. The dog accompanied him.

August 29, 1911*

Still travelling along the freshly made cattle track, which would take me down to the Kimberley foothills. Track very dusty and worn down to foot deep channel. Run over a small spinifex snake, which bit me on the front of the right leg. Pinched the flesh, cut piece out. Leg puffy and blue; not hurting much; let blood run freely; feel very thirsty.

scenes from *Coorab* fit those described from his earlier films. The difficulty in resolving the matter lies in the fact that *Coorab* is the only Birtles film for which a copy has survived. Like so many early Australian films, prints and negatives seemed to quickly disappear.

His motoring continued unabated. In 1926 he drove his Bean car, named the 'Sundowner', to yet more records, including Darwin-Sydney in only seven days. He financed his travels partly through his writings, films and sales of photographs. He also obtained support from various companies, which he assiduously pursued by keeping a high public profile. He effectively and continually utilised the combination of publicity, daring and accomplishment to finance the next effort. The technique had its risks, however: *'All my life I'd been a battler . . . stroking a reflecting chin over the problem of how to pay my way. I'd been broke a dozen times'*.

Nonetheless, he set his sights abroad and sought support for a drive from London to Melbourne. Shell, Dunlop and others contributed to the journey. After an abortive initial effort, he finally left London in September 1927, in the 'Sundowner'. Both his personal and newspaper accounts suggest that it was indeed an exciting and difficult trip; he was hospitalised in India, and threatened by bandits, among other things. His observation of people in Baghdad is pure Birtles: *A swarm of guides and medicants surrounded the car. I recognised them as the descendants of the Forty Thieves, but they had multiplied exceedingly!*

His rate of travel ranged from the 'certified top speed' of 80 miles per

hour, to a standstill; in southeast Asia he spent days winching the car up and down hills and mountain-sides as he manoeuvred along muddy animal tracks through the tropical forests. He finally reached Melbourne in mid-1928, the first man to make the journey (he had a companion for part of it). The 'Sundowner' was given to the Federal Government, where it is still held, awaiting the time when it can be displayed in a national museum.

He was also a pioneer of a minor facet of Australian culture — the wearing of shorts by men. The earliest photographs of him, both his own and those appearing in newspapers and magazines, showed him in them, a practice he apparently brought back from his service in South Africa. It was some decades before the concept caught on among other Australian workers and bush travellers. For Francis Birtles, it was a then-eccentric touch that graced the illustrations of his adventures.

Francis Birtles was an Australian classic. As he said, 'I had an outback Australian's belief in my ability to meet whatever contingencies might arise'. But like so many kindred spirits, Birtles did not await contingencies, he created them. He established several legacies, but few common reminders of them now exist. Of his five films, a print remains only of the last. Of his two books, copies are scarce. His dozen or so articles lie entombed in now-defunct magazines stored in libraries. And his name triggers memories only in the minds of those now-elderly Australians who once followed his adventures through his writings, films, personal appearances and newspaper accounts.

By 1935, when his second book, *Battle Fronts of Outback*, was published, he had discovered and sold a gold mine, retired to a life of financial security, and had recently married Nea McCutcheon. At the conclusion of his book he wrote: . . . *that is my story. Like most yarns it has a postscript. I am now enjoying being a man of means and of leisure. I've got some of the things I've always wanted — the sort of things a man of my tastes dreams of owning when he hasn't a cracker. There's a motor caravan that has cost me as much as I could have lived on for five or six years in the old days. And there's a little fleet of sporty two-seater models fitted with every possible refinement. I've got a photographic and cinematographic outfit that couldn't be improved upon. It includes everything, and everything is of the*

best. And all the while I am planning to go back. But he never did, in the same way as before. His caravan journeys were but a pale reflection of the difficulties and achievements of his earlier travels. And the material goods, 'of the best', were neither the objective nor essence of his life.

His unceasing travels suggest that he had a fundamental need to be on the move, that he was possessed of an itch that required continual scratching. In the process he both recorded and contributed to the change and ethos of an era. As he recognised in 1935, the outback was a different place from when he first pedalled about it, thirty years before. The motor car had brought 'better chances in case of sickness' and had widened the bush residents' mental and physical horizons. The pedal wireless enabled quick communication and the airplane brought medical assistance. For those not part of the bush, Birtles could take pride in the fact that his 'expeditions with pen and camera had helped to make the interior a reality to the general consciousness'.



Francis Birtles died of heart disease in New South Wales in July 1941. Within seven months such hitherto-exotic Australian names as Darwin, Broome, Derby and Wyndham would be swept into national and international consciousness along with those of Pearl Harbour, Bataan, and Singapore. The passing of Francis Birtles marked not only that of a man but of an era.

September 6, 1911*

Blowing roaring gale from west. Torrents of dust in a blinding, choking, yellow stream. Atmosphere like a furnace. Camp at foot of some basalt cliffs. Plenty of "organ grinding" lizards about. Little fellows which run about in a great hurry, stop suddenly, and then work one arm violently around and around — procedure repeated indefinitely.


*Quotes are from Birtles' diary of his final overland cycle journey published in the magazine *The Lone Hand* June 1912.

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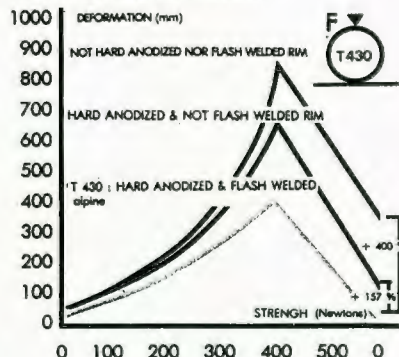
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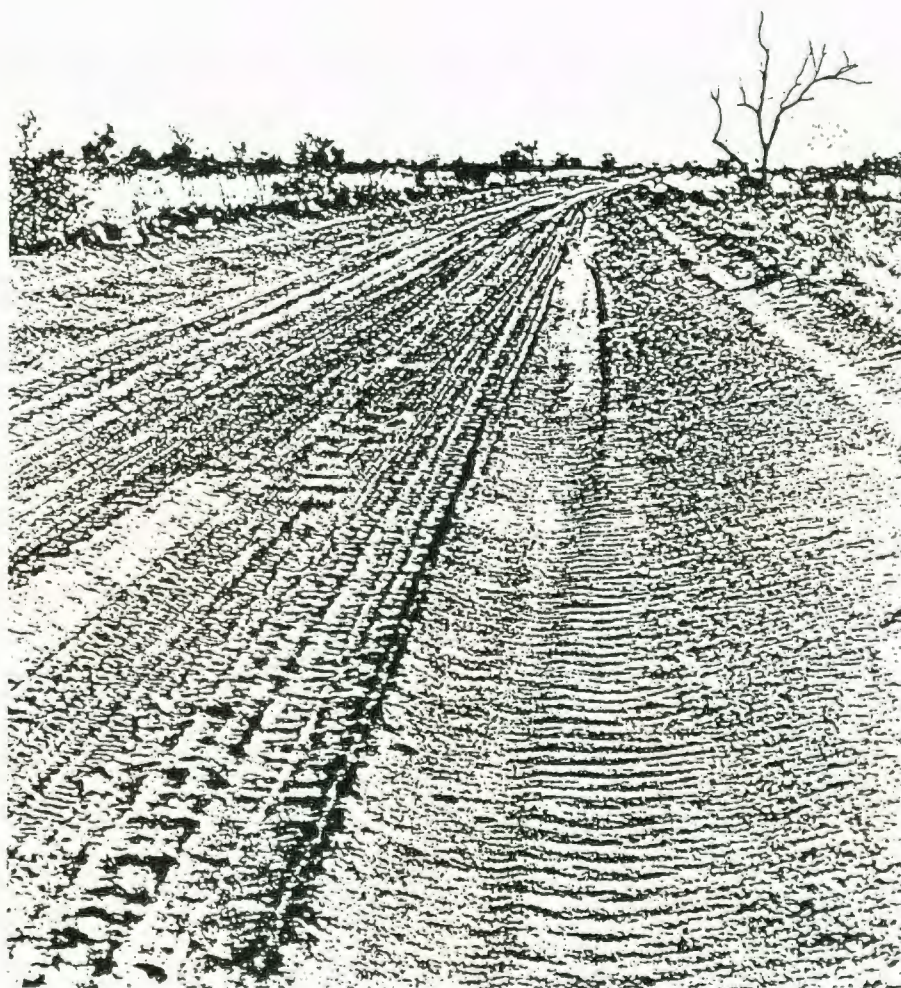
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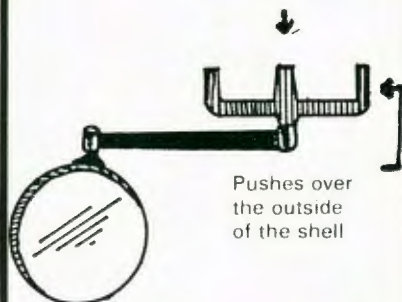
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THREE years ago I cycled across the Nullarbor Plain in a fit of youthful naivety. Along the way I met an elderly gentleman who was spending his autumn years travelling the empty spaces of Australia. He spoke to me about a desert I'd never heard of before – the Tanami Desert. A cycling jaunt through that desert appealed to my sense of adventure; or was it rugged romanticism, (at the time I couldn't tell which).

The bottom line of my dreams entailed travelling to Alice Springs. From Alice I cycled North on the Stuart Highway to a turn-off heading due West. This marks the beginning of the Tanami road which stretches across 1100 kilometres of desert terrain, uninterrupted by human habitation, bar two locations – Yuendumu and Rabbit Flat. Understandably the area lends itself to a sense of isolation and adventure on a solo bicycle.

Less than 200 kilometres of the road was sealed, the remainder being for the most part, not even graded.

It was no Sunday afternoon waltz into the bush. I had made some careful calculations in regards to water, food, permits to enter Aboriginal land and the conditions of the road. Headwinds were something I had not counted on, but at least the scenery was stunning enough to take the edge off the monotony of cycling. Emerald green shoots of new growth speckled ochre-red plains with the nut-brown McDonnell ranges as a fitting backdrop to this rustic landscape.

Upon reaching Yuendumu, all my preconceived ideas about the aboriginal community came to nought. I encountered brick veneer buildings, street lights and live rock music performances; whereas, my perceptions had been more along the lines of traditional living with

the barest of concessions to white culture.

"Midnight Oil", a widely acclaimed rock-music band, gave a memorable performance before an enthusiastic crowd of people, aided at times by Charlie 'Hook' McMahon (a one armed yet skilled didgeridoo player) who summoned a haunting sound out of his hollow log. The unlikely duet was a stunningly successful combination of the modern and ancient sounds.

Yuendumu, I discovered is one over 300 aboriginal communities throughout Australia referred to as 'Out Stations'. The aim of these out stations are to re-establish aboriginal communities under traditional leadership in a way which gives the aboriginal people their own culture, their own dignity and the flexibility to accept some elements of the white man's world on their own terms.

In the morning light, the contrast between the 'old ways' and the 'new ways' stood out like a red bull in a lush green paddock. The concrete basketball courts and modern supermarket appeared incongruous with the bark humpies scattered about. Upon reflection, though, there is nothing surprising about desiring a slice of two worlds.

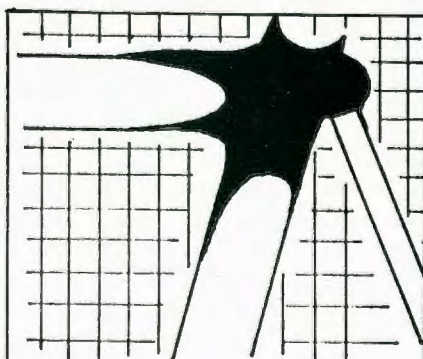
The track North was remarkably smooth and quick so I moved on in the afternoon's cool. The variety of fauna was extensive in this area, especially from the vantage point of a slow silent push-bike. Dingoes skirted across my path as did a few ruffled emu's.

Birdlife was noticeably prolific: box kites; soaring wedge-tailed eagles; falcons; pink cockatoos in their thousands; wrens; honeyeaters; butcher birds; mistletoe; finches and the extremely rare wild turkey bustard. Today the Tanami desert wildlife sanctuary, which was returned to the aboriginal people in the 1980's, preserves this dry spinifex terrain which supports numerous desert birds and some marsupial species extinct in other areas.

The countryside after the rain was in an exceptionally good state. Everything was green, bright and at its best. July seems to have been a good time to travel in this area, unlike the summer months when the temperatures soar regularly into fifty degrees heat. Testimony of the desert's dangerous qualities are the recent tragic deaths of two young jockeroos, who mistakenly turned off the Tanami road and perished at the height of summer.

Two English cyclists narrowly escaped a similar fate several years ago, when they became distressed and disoriented several days travel from the nearest living soul.

There are well timbered areas of desert gums, bloodwood and Stuart bean tree but the huge expanses of land were predominately covered by the straggly



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and bare looking scrub wattle which gives one an impression of dryness. Creamy trunks and limbs of ghost gums in dry creek beds stood out gleaming here and there. Curious bush herbs, creepers and grasses sprawl along the ground amongst clumps of jaundiced spinifex and patches of luxuriant bunch grass.

Scattered dense patches of mulga, also occasional belts of she oak (casuarina), are interwoven by an eye-catching feature of the landscape; termite mounds. Billions of them, grotesquely shaped and rising to two metres in height.

After three days of travel the road became increasingly treacherous. Bulldust, (a buildup of fine red dust sometimes three feet in depth) was hell to cycle on, even with the aid of fifteen gears and wide tyres.

I walked hefty distances in dry clear heat cursing my romanticized visions of a desert.

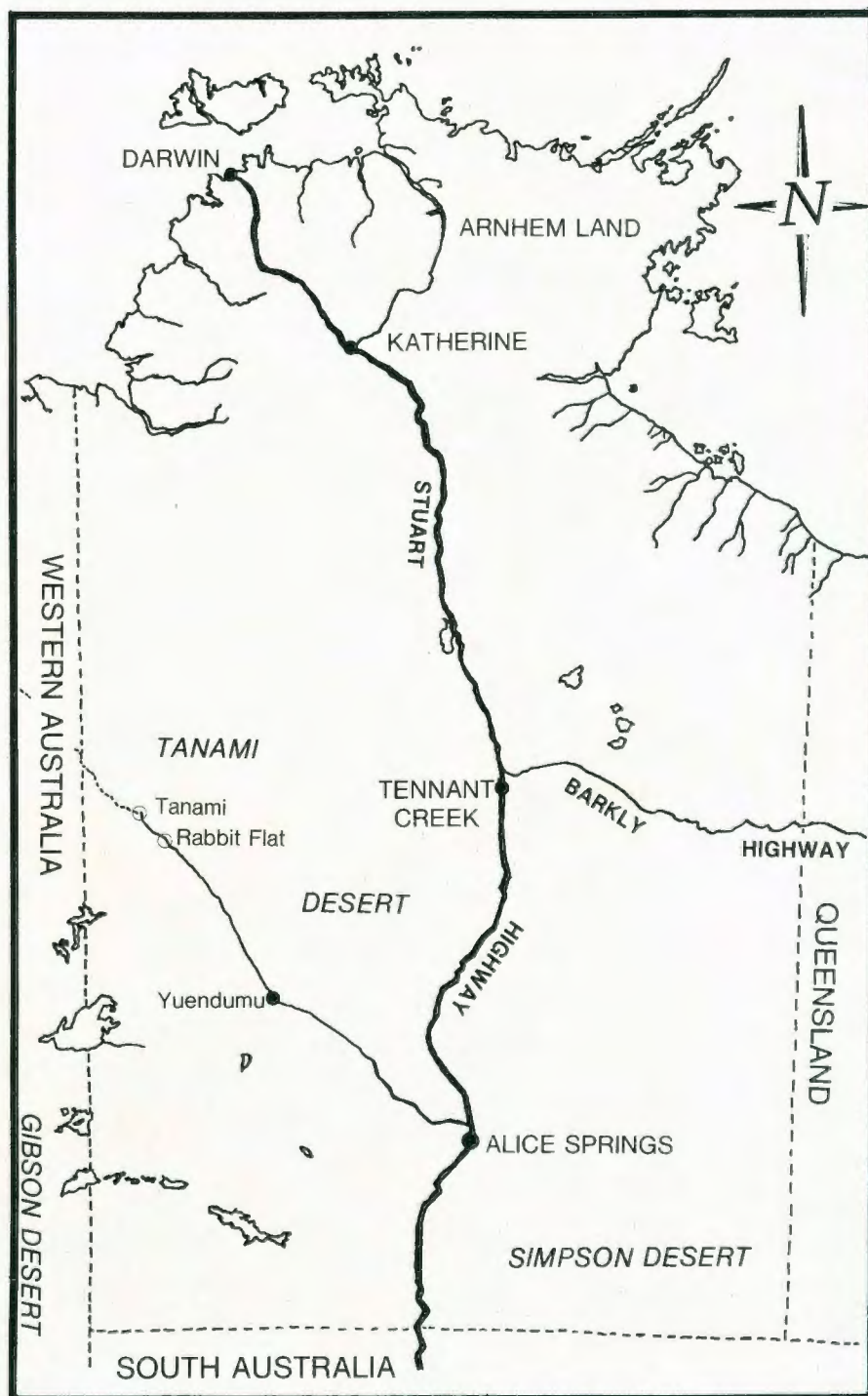
The nights were perfect however, still and cool. Stars shone with a wonderful brilliancy, as a mysterious flourish of animal activity in pitch black bush spooked me whilst I tended my campfires fiery red coals.

The now abandoned Tanami homestead was the highlight of my trek. Tanami was 'discovered' by Alan Davidson, the leader of a prospecting expedition in August, 1900. The place was afterwards visited at different times by several prospecting parties who were forced to retreat northward when water gave out or heat and sickness became unbearable. Oddly enough the word Tanami is understood to mean 'water never dies'. In the midst of the 1930's depression, a group of miners are reputed to have survived lean times by eating rats!

A thirty minute walk the following morning took me through patches of spinifex looking remarkably like waving oat fields. This led to Granite Hill, a fantastic jumble of large granite tors and boulders piled up any old how; most of them with sharp angles and looking like a load of Brobdingnagian bricks which had tumbled down from the sky.

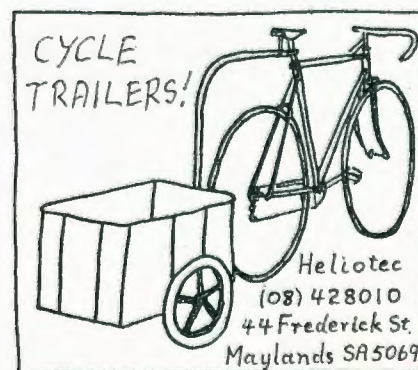
Rabbit Flat, the most isolated fuel outlet in Australia was a surprise; an enigma of the Australian outback. It is frontier land - it's not a happy picture. Racial tension runs high here, the shotgun scars on the gum trees shading the building bear truth to this fact. Nobody wanders through the general store buying goods at their leisure. Instead, you speak through an iron mesh screen to a faceless shop assistant, who in my case happened to be the store owner's ten year old son.

Later that evening I pulled up a chair in what is effectively a 'whites only' bar, fortified by steel-plated walls (no win-



dows), numerous latches, a gun behind the bar (which has seen use) and assorted locks. Aside from its odious fortress-like display, it is a typical of outback pubs. Jack Absalom prints hang here and there, tasteless souvenirs and the indestructible-type furnishings (which guarantee minimal material damage in the event of brawls).

"The track up North is rough as guts", two prospectors grimly told me. It may well have been 'rough as guts' in their clapped out old Ford, but on a pushbike, it was in a word: arse busting! The corrugations were every cyclist's nightmare, and the powdery sand drifts



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that sucked me up like so much quicksand were an extension of that nightmare. The fun and adventure of my journey waned, as the effort needed to cycle on such a torturous track sapped my morale and precious water supplies to a low ebb.

At one dessicated river bed, I dug into hot soft sand in several spots on the off chance of finding water. I held out little hope but walked on regardless. To my delight (and surprise) I discovered human footprints, which remarkably led to a deepish hole with cool water in it that rivalled the finest French champagne. I left the river bed and continued on my trek, feeling slightly envious and decidedly curious about the kind of person that walks barefoot and alone in a harsh terrain.

On this expedition, there was the exciting prospect of seeing first hand the Wolf Creek meteorite crater; fourth largest crater of meteorite origin to be discovered on the Earth's surface. Some time during the last million years a huge meteorite hurtled to planet Earth, penetrated far into the ground and then exploded, throwing out debris and leaving a circular hole some 850 metres across and 61 metres deep that looks astoundingly like a moon crater. The sheer face of the crater walls peppered with yellow and red wildflowers was astonishingly beautiful and was complimented

by the almost perfect symmetry of the crater rim.

The last leg of my bicycle journey was accompanied by sub-tropical clouds; black and pregnant with storm. A Luna Park ride ensued over a jumble of roller coaster hills situated at the foot of the Kimberley mountain range.

Nightfall, like a starters gun signalled a downpour of rain. Rain fell unabated for the entirety of the evening. Squatting next to my hard won fire which hissed complainingly at me, it became painfully obvious that: 1, the water level would soon submerge my camp; and 2, the track would fast become a sea of impassable mud.

Grudgingly, I packed my sopping wet belongings onto the bike and fumbled my way through to the slushy track. I cycled all that night, blindly pedalling in the darkness, thigh-deep across swollen river torrents. Quite terrifying at times.

I passed two stranded trucks up to their wheel arches in mud, silently yielding to the unrepentant rain. I was damn scared that I too would become isolated, so I cycled onward to 'Highway One', which I knew to be not far away. A bitumen surface never felt so good!

Looking like an ungodly mess, I proudly rolled into Halls Creek. Home in windswept Warrnambool was mine to dream. A 6,000 kilometre trip via bus, hitching and train catapulted me there.

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BICYCLE TRAVEL IN OZ

Bicycle touring feature

The best places to ride your bicycle in Australia.

by WARREN SALOMON

THE huge Australian landmass offers bicycle riders every kind of touring location from forested coastal ranges to the dry flat interior. Since organised bicycle touring began in the late seventies there have been many local guide books written to help two-wheeled travellers find the right path. Over the past ten years Freewheeling has published many articles and guides detailing touring routes throughout the country. In this special roundup of touring in Australia our publisher/editor looks at the information available to help you plan your next trip.

New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory

The best year-round touring areas in the state are the coastal regions surrounding the capital Sydney, and the north coast and border ranges areas. Australia's first ever long distance bicycle route links Sydney to Brisbane and can be comfortably travelled in two to three weeks. The Pacific Coast Cycle Route uses scenic back roads and is sealed for almost all of its 1100 km. A detailed guidebook describing the route has been published by its sponsor the touring organisation Bicycle Australia. This group is also developing other long-distance routes throughout the country and is currently

preparing a guide book for the Southern Cross Bicycle Route linking Sydney to Melbourne via the Snowy Mountains (summer alternative).

Excellent year-round touring is available in the far north coastal regions and Border Ranges. *Freewheeling* has published many articles describing the recommended routes in this area. These have been listed at the end of this section.

In the south the Snowy Mountains area gives cyclists an exhilarating summer alternative to the heat of the coast and the interior. The recommended circuit via Cooma, Thredbo, Khancoban and Kiandra is accessible from Tumut, NE Victoria and Canberra. Low gears are advisable as some of the continent's longest climbs (and descents) are located in this area. January and February are the best months.

The Canberra region and the adjacent Southern Highlands are good for touring in all but the coldest winter months. There is an abundance of quiet sealed roads, accommodation and eating houses.

Guide books

Cycling Around Sydney published by the Bicycle Institute of NSW, Sydney, 1984. Available from the Institute's mail order service or Sydney region bicy-

cle shops. 22 tours described. Published jointly with the NSW Department of Environment and Planning. \$5.85

The Blue Mountains: A Guide for Bicyclists by Jim Smith. This delightful book covers the Blue Mountains region and is also suitable for mountain bike trail riding. Published by the author in 1980. 27 tours no maps (use CMA Blue Mountains Tourist map. \$2.50

A Guide to Cycle Touring in the Southern Highlands and Adjacent Coastal Area of NSW by R.D. Kenderdine. As the name suggests this guide covers the excellent touring region between Canberra and Sydney. 1985. Available from book shops, M/O or R.D. Kenderdine (048)91-1151). 24 suggested tours. \$5.85

Touring Guide to the Mid-North Coast (Macksville to Wingham) this guide also by R.D. Kenderdine. P&S((048)91-1151). Richard Kenderdine is an excellent companion to the Bicycle Australia *Pacific Bicycle Routeguide* book. Published in 1986 and available from book shops or the author. 25 tours described. \$7.85

The Pacific Bicycle Route by Heather Nesbitt, Warren Salomon and David Wrathall, 1986. Describes the route in 20 sections with full colour pull out map section. Available from bicycle shops and BA mail order. \$15.00

Discovering NSW Rainforests by Jeff Angel, Angela Raymond and Raymond Ritchie. Though this book is principally about NSW rainforests it offers a number of bicycle tours in the more accessible locations. 1986. Available from book shops. Published by Total Environment Centre and Rainforest Publishing. \$10.95

Canberra Cycleways This coloured map is the official guide to Canberra's extensive network of cycleways. It is available free from most Canberra bike shops and tourist centres. Published by the National Capital Development Commission, ACT, 1985.

Forty Bike Rides Around Canberra and Southern NSW by Pedal Power, ACT. A good guide book to the touring regions surrounding the nation's capital. Available from bike shops and some book shops in the region. \$5.90

Articles published in *Freewheeling*

The issue and page references are given at the end of each listing with the issue serial number first.

Canberra: Canberra's cycle paths Max Nankervis, 19:15

Snowy Mountains: Biking up the Barry Way Doreen and Peter Moore, 36:42 **The Alpine Way** David Martin, 12:12 **To the top of Australia**, Chris Belamy, 12:15 **Touring Australia's high country**, Warren Salomon, 33:21

Border Ranges and North Coast: Days and nights in the rainforest Warren Salomon, 35:23 **The valleys of the Scenic Rim and the Border Ranges**, Warren

Salomon, 35:18 **The Border Ranges** Warren Salomon, 2:20 **Big rivers and border ranges**, Warren Salomon, 6:15 **Mountain magic**, Warren Salomon, 7:27 **Crossing the border on the Lions road**, Warren Salomon, 35:26

Western and Central West: Plain sailing, Fiona Kennedy, 34:39 **Murray River encyclopaedia** Ray Peace, 38:70 **Keeping up with the Joneses**, Neil and Janette Jones, 13:20 **Bush bashing**, Ian Taylor and Phil Ireland, 16:33 **Onward to Cowra**, Ian Taylor and Phil Ireland, 9:32 **In which three of us make a find**, Janet Scrivener, 3:28 **Climbing the crooked mountains**, Wayne Kotzur, 11:26 **Another View of the Warrumbungles**, Jim Scarsbrook, 11:31

Southern Highlands: Southern Cross Cycle Trail, Michael Burlace, 14:25 **A fun-poisoning weekend in Australia**, Frosty Wooldridge, 35:32

Sydney region and the Blue Mountains: Forbidden fruits, Jim Smith, 6:34 **Following the railway to Newnes**, Jim Smith, 7:32 **Return to Newnes - a fat-tire adventure**, Warren Salomon, 32:21

Mid North Coast, New England and the Hunter Valley: Pacific Cycle Trail 3, Michael Burlace, 10:17 **A wet tour of the Watagan mountains**, Jim Scarsbrook, 15:28 **Sydney and the Bush**, Warren Salomon, 4:19 **Beyond the Black Stump**, Nigel Jenkins, 18:31 **Myall lakes tour**, Jim Scarsbrook, 28:29 **Beyond the 'Pub With No Beer'**, Joss Davies and Jamie Benyei, 8:28 **Armidale to Urunga**, Daniel McNamara, 2:28

Victoria

Almost all of this state is good touring country throughout the year. The most interesting areas are the Central Highlands area, Gippsland, the south west coast, the North East and in summer the high plains area around the ski resort of Falls Creek.

Guides

Geelong-Otway Bike Tours published by the Geelong Bike Plan, 1981. This excellent collection of tours is now hard to come by as it was distributed free and, to our knowledge, never reprinted for sale. Bicycle Victoria has a copy in their library for photocopying.

Peaceful Cycle Tours of Victoria and More Peaceful Tours of Victoria both by Ray Peace describe a number of popular tours (34 in total) throughout the state. The books are available through some shops in Melbourne and through specialist mail order. Both books cost \$7.40 each.

Melbourne Bike Tours published by the State Bicycle Committee of Victoria. 20 tours throughout the greater Melbourne region. \$6.40 from bike shops, book shops and specialist mail order.

Golden Triangle Bicycle Rides published by the Shire of Bet Bet. Published this year and selling for one dollar this

booklet describes four tours in this central highlands shire.

Melbourne Bike Paths Book published by the State Bicycle Committee in 1986 this book offers access to all of the major bikepaths in Melbourne's suburbs. \$4.95 from book shops, bike shops and specialist mail order.

Bicycle touring maps. This set of six maps uses motor club maps as a basis for a regional approach to touring in all regions of Victoria. They may be hard to read but they are free! The map titles are: *Central Highlands*, *North-Eastern Victoria*, *Bairnsdale to Pakenham* (Gippsland), *Geelong to Warrnambool*, *Great Ocean Road*, *Grand Ridge Road & Wilsons Promontory National Park*.

Articles published in *Freewheeling*

North East and Gippsland: Melbourne to Sydney via the coast, Viola Wiedmann, 26:47 **The Grand Ridge Road**, Peter Sigorini, 5:35

Western and South Coast: Great ocean road, David Martin, 11:11 **Ocean road odyssey**, Gaye Sprenglewski, 24:29 **The Geelong-Otway Century**, Ray Peace, 21:43 **A great ocean road**, Ray Peace, 21:36

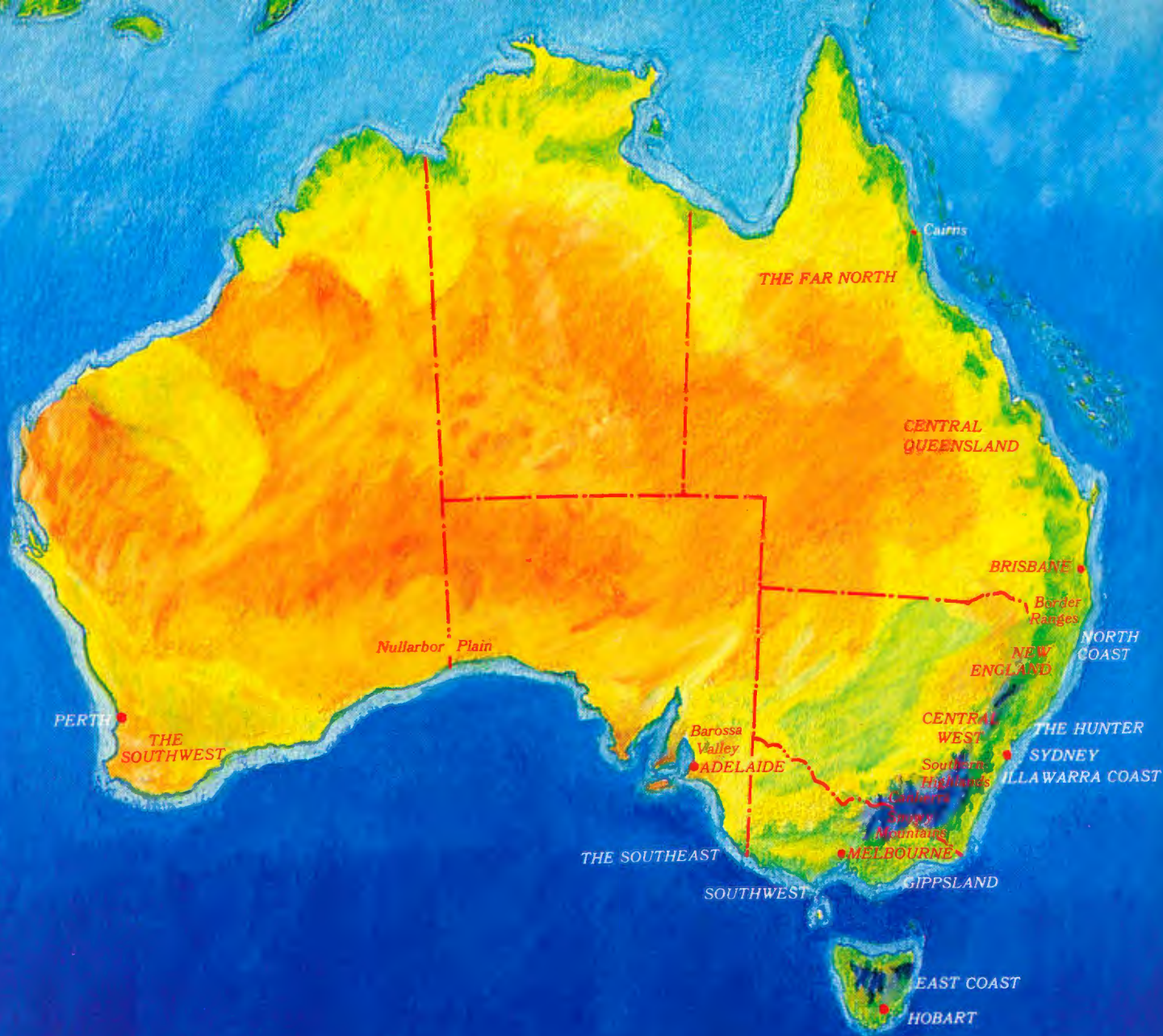
Central and Melbourne district: Rushworth again, Ray Peace, 18:39 **Melbourne to Beechworth**, Michael Burlace, 12:17 **Melville Caves**, Ray Peace, 17:47 **Cycling through Victoria**, John Pilgrim and Jane Quin, 13:36

South Australia

Cyclists have been very active in the past few years and with government support have almost completed an ambitious project to produce coloured touring maps of the state by region. The maps are based on the 1:50,000 topographic series (2 cm = 1 km) and even have contoured elevation markings. All maps offer a number of suggested tours and have trip notes printed on the back. It may not rain very often in SA but if you are caught with these maps you need not worry as they are printed on plastic. Titles in the series are: Barossa Valley; Fleurieu Peninsula; the South East; Riverland; Yorke Peninsula; Lower Mid North; and Kangaroo Island. All maps cost \$7.30 and are available from SA Government Map Centres.

The South Australian Tourists Association also produces a handy guide to touring in the state. It lists important resources and local customs. The *Cyclists Handbook of South Australia* by Evelyn Gray, Margaret Heal and Michael Doube for the South Australia, 1987. \$4.80.

Over the past decade a number of local touring leaflets have been produced in South Australia. They mostly describe short tour routes in and around Adelaide and its suburbs and small towns adjacent. Here's a selection from our files: *Enjoy Adelaide by bike*, Life



Touring in the land of Oz

Much of the continent of Australia is desert. The greener areas on the map indicate the wetter, cooler regions best for bicycle touring. The major national highway (number 1) circles the continent following close to the coast. It is an all-weather road with a sealed surface and is not recommended near heavily populated areas where usually a good alternative route is available.

The eastern coastal regions and the South West of WA offer the best touring conditions throughout the year. Tasmania, the Snowy Mountains and the High Plains areas of NSW and Victoria are best in the hot summer months while Queensland is fantastic during winter.



Be In It, Adelaide city. Unfortunately this one is out of print but you may be lucky to pick up a copy in a tourist centre in town; *Historic Gawler*, describes a bicycle tour around this charming country town; *Bike about Noarlunga*, tours in the outer Adelaide suburbs; *Unley Heritage Bicycle Route*, Unley is an older suburb of Adelaide.

Articles published in Freewheeling

The Murray: *Tracing the Murray and travelling light*, Ken Dyer, 33:65

The Nullarbor: *Diet, drivers and desert*, Neil Jones, 5:20 *Nullarbor revisited*, Neil and Janette Jones, 16:26 *Nullarbor crossing*, Denis Montalbetti, 3:17

The North and the Northern Territory: *Cycling the Oodnadatta Track*,

Riders enjoy the rolling countryside of Gippsland during the 1987 Caltex Bike Ride.

Richard Flanagan and Ian Grayson, 32:71 *Riding to the Red Centre*, Melissa Johnson, 38:19

Queensland

Half of this state lies north of the Tropic of Capricorn and is unsuitable for summer riding. Most coastal areas are good for touring but the lack of quiet sealed roads is a problem. North of Rockhampton there is no alternative route to the busy Bruce Highway.

Articles published in Freewheeling
Far North: *A tropical bicycle holiday*,

Warren Salomon, 38:44 *Tropic tablelands*, Warren Salomon, 1:21 *Over the top*, R. Hume, 20:49 *The last road north*, Pamela Newport, 25:25 *Riding a road not long for this world*, Melissa Johnson, 39:22

South East and Darling Downs: *All in a days ride*, Warren Salomon, 29:27 *Brisboys to Binna Burra*, Julian Barry, 8:27

Central and Burnett: *Bicycling the Burnett – an alternative to the Big Bad Bruce*, Kathi Beck, 30:53

West Australia

The populated south west corner of this state is best for touring and offers tall eucalypt forests and unspoilt beaches and the beautiful city of Perth. Most of the northern areas are sparsely populated and have an extreme climate. The central and south east are desert.

Articles published in Freewheeling

The South West: *Through the South West*, Neil and Janette Jones, 17:54

The North: *Two wheels across the top*, Denis Montalbetti, 4:44 *Bull-dust in the Kimberleys*, Neil and Janette Jones, 19:58 *Through the Pilbara*, Neil and Janette Jones, 18:39

The Nullarbor: *A Nullarboring Ride*, Ron Shepherd, 29:21 *Unicycling the Nullarbor*, Greg Thayne, 14:33

Tasmania

Because of its cold climate touring in Tassie is not advisable during the winter months. However, its mild summer climate makes it one of the most popular touring destinations for mainland Australians and international visitors. The East Coast road should not be missed.

A Tasmanian touring guide book was published in the early 1980's but is no longer available. Elsewhere you may find the odd guide leaflet on selected individual routes and localities.

Articles published in Freewheeling

General: *Taking Tassie solo*, Greg Bousfield, 5:28 *Touring Tassie*, Carmel Rider, 40:65

The East Coast: *Riding Tasmania's East Coast*, a ten page guide by Warren Salomon, 8:15 *A Tasmanian Tale*, Frank Richards, 33:70

Bicycle Australia plans to eventually publish guides to all of its routes spanning the country. Write to them for preliminary details.

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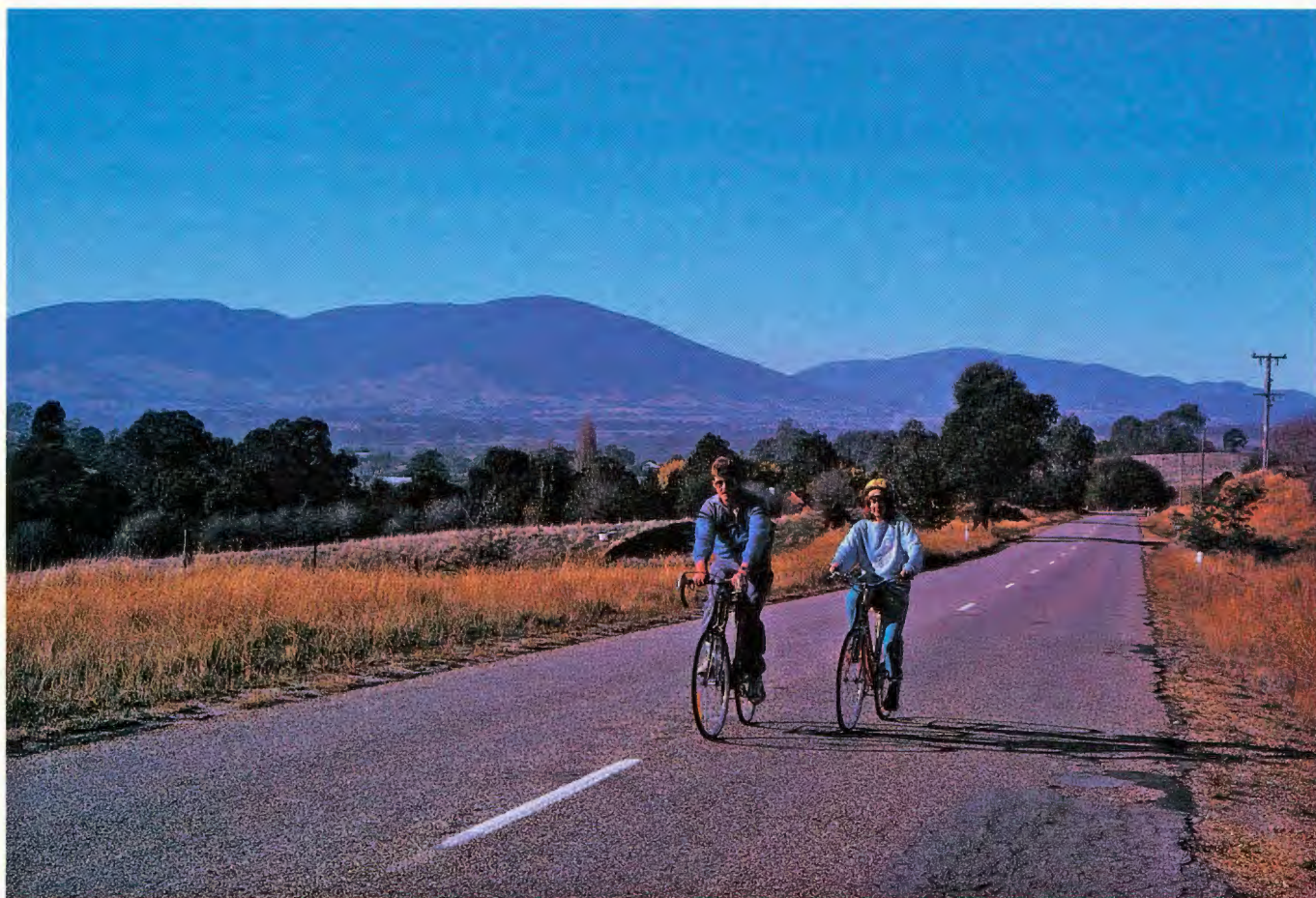
Bicycle Australia: PO Box K499 Haymarket NSW 2000:- Send two dollars for catalogue (this is refunded on first order).

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ADVENTURES OF A PEDALLING PALATE

Bicycle travel

A gourmet's tour of north eastern Victoria.

by WARREN SALOMON

Morning, and two members of the Bogong Jack group climb the gentle hill out of the NE Victorian town of Yackandandah.



Gourmet touring in NE Victoria. Clockwise from the top: Riders enjoy the superb views and fresh autumn air before plunging down into the Indigo valley on their way to Chilton. Yackandandah is a beautiful town and its streets are planted with avenues of deciduous trees. In Autumn the town is ablaze with colour and is one of the stops on Bogong Jack's other longer tours called aptly: The Golden North East. The last evening of our tour was spent in this historic hotel in Rutherglen. Cyclists travel on their stomachs and picnic lunches were always a treat provided for us by our hosts Andrew and Carol Stenhouse. Wayne and Kim are the lucky ones tucking into the food. Photos by the author.

It was mid afternoon as we emerged from the forest at the top of the Baranduda Range above the historic town of Yackandandah. In front of us the road sloped gently downwards to the town. Further on, across the valley, the forest clad hump of Mt Big Ben marked the beginning of a succession of mountain ranges that rose higher and higher to eventually become the Victorian Alps.

I had passed this way six years ago and as we rolled down through the avenue of European trees on High Street a flood of memories spilled into my consciousness. I shouldn't tell you this but Yack' (as the locals call it) is my favourite Australian small country town. I'm a city boy at heart but if I ever moved to the country to live it would have to be Yack.

The High Street is lined with modest brick buildings, nothing too flamboyant, and all with wide awnings pushing out towards the plane trees which line the main shopping block. Opposite the 1861 brick Post Office is the Memorial Gardens where I had lunched with friends on the well kept lawns during my original ride through the area.

The town had changed little since then. Some of the buildings had been renovated and given a coat of paint and the main street had recently been resurfaced but otherwise the town remained much as I remembered it. This visit I had more time to discover its secret delights.

We checked into the Hotel Yackandandah (the bottom pub) and were shown to our rooms by our Bogong Jack guide Andrew Stenhouse. The hotel had a friendly relaxed feel to it typical of many of the timber country pubs which, fortunately, have not been ravaged by march of twentieth century progress.

By now it was 4 pm and the rest of the group had left to explore the town. I followed, but my interest that afternoon was photographic. Many of the larger street trees were at their colourful best and in fading golden sunlight I moved quickly to capture on film the best of Yackandandah's autumn.

Yack was never a large town (its current population is 800) and it is remarkable that almost all of its half dozen streets have been planted with avenues of magnificent deciduous trees. How could this have come about?

At dusk I found a cafe in the High Street which also served as the local tourist info centre. There, over a reasonably good cup of coffee, I discovered a leaflet which provided me with the answer. It seems that the original designer of Melbourne's Botanic Gardens had influential relatives in the town and was responsible for the plantings. I could think of no better gift to the future than Dr van Muller's magnificent trees.

Later that evening our group reassembled in the front bar of the hotel and from there we walked up the deserted main street to the Cafe Yackandandah. There we were met by our hosts Fay and Greg Love who had moved up from Melbourne some months ago. Greg is a chef by profession and so the Cafe Yack' is the realisation of an old dream.

Our tour of the North East was billed as a Gourmet Bicycle Tour. We were not disappointed and that night, in tiny Yackandandah, I was delighted to discover that even fine food can be found in an Oz country town. (There's hope yet for Kempsey, I thought).

For main course I ordered trout. The North East is renowned for its trout and mine came to the table immaculately presented and cooked in a blanket of pastry. The accompanying vegetables were also done to perfection.

By the end of a magnificent dinner I was ready to take up residence in Yackandandah but tomorrow we were promised even better visual and culinary treats. "Andrew, can it get better!" By the next evening the answer to my question would be a resounding yes but by then our tour would be almost at an end. Perhaps I should really start at the beginning.

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\$475 - 28 Sep, 12, 19 Oct, 9, 16, 30 Nov, 1987
\$503 - 11 Jan, 4, 1 Apr, 9, 16 May, 1 Sep, 10, 17 Oct, 7, 14 Nov, 1988
\$553 - 9, 23 Jan, 20, 27 Mar, 10, 17, 24 Apr, 1, 8, 15 May, 1989

CYCLING THE GOLDEN NORTH-EAST (B) 5 days/4 nights
Similar itinerary as above but with pub meals. Departures ex Wangaratta coincide with the 'golden' months, wattles blooming in springtime & the brilliant colours of autumn for which the area is famous. Visit Wangaratta, Murrumbidgee, Yackandandah, Beechworth & Rutherglen.
\$374 - 21 Sep, 5 Oct, 1987 \$411 - 18 Apr, 2 May, 19 Sep, 3 Oct, 1988
\$452 - 10, 24 Apr, 1 May, 1989

CYCLE NED KELLY COUNTRY (B) 7 days/6 nights
In 1880 Australia's most notorious outstranger Ned Kelly was captured at Glenrowan. He & his gang roamed this scenic country on horseback - we rediscover their haunts by bicycle departing Wangaratta and visiting Glenrowan, Greta, Porepunkah, Mt Buffalo plateau, Bright, Towong, Yackandandah & Beechworth.
\$490 - 5 Oct, 2 Nov, 1987
\$520 - 16 Apr, 2 May, 31 Oct, 1988 \$562 - 13 Mar, 3 Apr, 22 May, 1989

ALPINE PANORAMA (B) 7 days/6 nights
We drive to Falls Creek to commence an exhilarating 230 km circuit of Bogong National Park on mountain bikes. Spectacular views, rustic cottletten's huts, summer waddlers & the magnificent silence of camping out in Victoria's highest alpine country. Last night luxuriate in the outdoor spa, pool & well-appointed accommodation in Mt Beauty, then drive to Wangaratta to conclude Visit Falls Creek, Omeo, Dinner Plain, Hotham & Mt Beauty.
\$504 - 1, 29 Feb, 21 Mar, 1988 \$155 - 6, 27 Feb, 1989

OVENS VALLEY MEANDER (A) 5 days/4 nights
One way cycle to the foothills of the Alps, fine views from start to finish. Lodge & pub accommodation, transportation back to Wangaratta. Visit Murrumbidgee, Porepunkah, Bright, Wandiligong, Harrietville.
\$374 - 26 Oct, 23 Nov, 1987 \$411 - 14 Mar, 25 Apr, 23 May, 24 Oct, 21 Nov, 12 Dec, 1988 \$452 - 13 Mar, 17 Apr, 15 May, 1989

RUTHERGLEN WINERIES WEEKEND (A) 2 days/2 nights
Two days of fun sampling fine wines (the area produces some of Australia's best muscat, tokay & port). Two nights at the historic Victoria Hotel in Main St. Picnic lunch Saturday, 'belly beer' on the banks of the River Murray. Sunday a delightful outdoors gourmet hamper lunch in the fine historic setting of Pfeiffer's Winery by Sunday Creek (dinner Sat not included).
\$168 - 2, 23 Oct, 6, 20 Nov, 4 Dec, 1987
\$180 - 4, 18 Mar, 8, 29 Apr, 13, 27 May, 23, 30 Sep, 21 Oct, 11, 25 Nov, 2 Dec, 1988
\$195 - 20 Jan, 3, 31 Mar, 21 Apr, 5, 19 May, 1989

MILAWA WINERIES WEEKEND (A) 2 days/1 night
Our easiest itinerary, 10 am start Saturday in Wangaratta, lunch at the Old Pough in Tartarowie, visit craft gallery, tour & tasting at the famous Brown Bros. Winery. Before a swim & spa at our overnight motel. Dine on fine Swiss cuisine at the Old Emu Inn (cost not included). On Sunday visit a mustard farm, pottery gallery & small wineries at Oxley concluding a leisurely weekend by 4 pm in Wangaratta (Optional First Accommodation \$20).
\$105 - 19 Sep, 17 Oct, 14 Nov, 5 Dec, 1987
\$115 - 16 Jan, 26 Mar, 16 Apr, 7, 21 May, 19, 29 Oct, 5, 19 Nov, 3 Dec, 1988
\$130 - 14 Jan, 18 Mar, 8, 15, 29 Apr, 13 May, 1989

BOGONG Jack's five-day Grand Bicycle Tour of Victoria's North East was originally dubbed the Gourmet's Tour of the NE by its participants of some years ago. The Tour is one of a number of one-day, weekend and week-long tours run by the adventure

travel business Bogong Jack Adventures. The business is owned and operated by Andrew and Carol Stenhouse from their cottage in Oxley a small village on the outskirts of Wangaratta.

I arrived in 'Wang' on a cloudy Monday morning in May to meet my four touring companions. Our tour was the last cycle trip of the season so the group was small: two couples, Michael and Shirlee from New Zealand, Wayne and Kim from Sydney; Andrew Stenhouse and myself.

On the first day out Andrew set the routine for the rest of the trip. Our mornings would start with a look at the maps and a brief description of the ride. Then we would set out to our agreed meeting point with Andrew following along somewhere in the background.

Our first day on the road was to be an easy warm-up of 34 km consisting of a loop out to Milawa and back. By mid morning after an easy ride we arrived at the Brown Brothers winery in the tiny settlement of Milawa. We were met by one of the Brown Brothers' sales staff who also happened to be one of their small-farm suppliers.

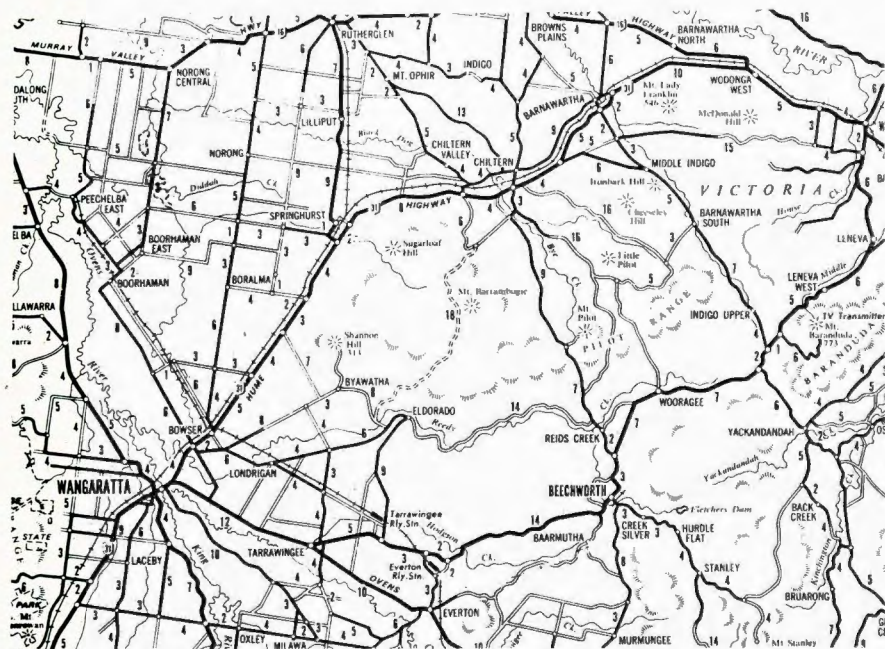
Following a tour of the winery we were shown into a private tasting room and given a taste tour of their range of fine wines.

Now I don't regard myself as a wine connoisseur and my only previous experience of a winery 'tasting' had been in the Barossa valley where I had been shuffled through a cavernous building with hoards of bus tourists, given cheap swill to be drunk from horrible plastic imitation wine glasses.

The Brown Bros tour came as a surprise. I even felt afterwards that I had learned a great deal about wine. So by the time we settled down to the barbecue lunch prepared for us in the picnic area by Andrew I could tell the difference in taste between Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay.

One of the most delicious privileges of our private tasting was to be able to compare the thick honeyed taste of a limited release Chardonnay, which had been matured in German oak casks, with its counterpart matured in French oak. Though the Brown Bros winery seemed to be a very professionally run establishment I got the impression that the Bogong Jack groups are given extra red-carpet treatment. Needless to say I have since spent time searching the bottle shops of Sydney looking for the now familiar Brown's label. It just goes to show; if you make high quality products and you don't treat your customers like cretins they will support you in the end.

We returned to our motel in Wangaratta on dusk. I realised that afternoon that one of the major benefits of having Andrew shadow us in his 4-wheel drive support vehicle was that I didn't



have to limit my fine wine purchases to what I could safely carry on my bike.

That evening we dined well at Peter's Cellar 47 restaurant in Wang. Bogong Jack tour participants are usually given a special menu which generally consists of selection from three of each of the courses. In some cases we had the full menu to choose from and always the standards were high.

I couldn't help comparing this tour with a similar trip I had done in Northern Queensland the previous year. I had combed the Atherton Tablelands looking for a 'reasonable' coffee shop. I didn't find one. Even in Sydney it is not an easy task but in the deep north; impossible. Though our Bogong Jack itinerary took us to the best eating houses even the local cafes along the way were more cosmopolitan and catered for travellers in a better way than those in the so-called tourist traps of the deep north.

The next morning found us out on the open road under an immaculate blue autumn sky cycling towards the old gold mining town of Beechworth. By lunch time we had begun to tackle the foothills of the range which sheltered the historic town and Andrew decided it was time to pause for a break.

I will never forget that lunch. There we were sitting on our fold-up stools under a giant gum tree with the whole of the Ovens River valley spread out at our feet as we tucked into home made cream of celery soup and wholemeal sandwiches filled with interesting things such as: tomato and mint; avocado and chicken; and curried egg and sprouts.

I was beginning to think that the remaining 12 km to Beechworth would not be enough to work off the food I had been consuming. Nobody else seemed to mind and as I was the only one who cycled on a daily basis I was probably

regarded as being a trifle obsessive about the low daily distances.

Incidentally, Bogong Jack's seven-day Bushranger Cycle Tour better caters for the fitness oriented rider with daily distances of between 50 and 80 km. The trip covers more of the beautiful North East too.

We arrived in Beechworth and were taken to our rooms in Tanswell's Commercial Hotel in the main street of this National Trust preserved town. After I had changed out of my riding clothes I set off around town to see as much of its beautifully preserved buildings as I could before dark. I had been in Beechworth during the Easter holiday break six years ago and at that time of the year the town was crawling with visitors. This time of the year the only crowds on Ford Street and Albert Road were the hoards of Stackhatted kids cycling home from school.

After my tour of inspection I found a coffee shop and sat in the fading sunlight by a window writing postcards to friends and drinking endless cappuccinos. Ah, bliss!

Evening and the dining room of the Commercial brought more blissful moments. The piece de resistance of my evening was the desert: a bombe consisting of vanilla ice cream (with a chocolate centre), covered in cake crumbs and smothered in a rich butterscotch sauce. By this stage we were well educated in the art of fine wine selection and this meal, as with all other dinners during the trip, was accompanied by a bottle or two of the North East's finest.

Breakfasts usually consisted of cereal followed by bacon and eggs and the like. Food in good quantities was always available but, compared to our sumptuous dinners and delightful picnic lunches out on the road, our pub breakfasts were always low-key affairs with

our group members often the only occupants of sleepy dining rooms.

We had a morning to spend exploring Beechworth before Andrew joined us for lunch in Victoria Park so Kim, Wayne and I set off on a cycle ride along the Gorge road. There is a lot to see in Beechworth and on this trip I realised fully how little I had seen during my last visit.

Victoria Park in the centre of town is a wonderful place for a picnic lunch and this fact was not missed by the many bus tour operators who visit the town. Consequently we shared the park with a half dozen bus loads of tourists. We kept to a far corner and basked like seals in the warm sunshine while Andrew served up fresh quiches, Greek salad and home made cake washed down with tea and coffee from a thermos.

The road to Yackandandah was not difficult (its mostly down hill) and by mid afternoon we were settling into our hotel in the main street of this sleepy little town.

Day four began with a slow climb back up the range in bright autumn sunshine. On top we paused for a drink break (lemon barley water drink was the favourite of the tour) before setting off down a deserted bitumen road into the picturesque Indigo valley. As we headed further to the north the countryside broadened out and we had left the hills and mountain ranges well behind by the time we reached our lunch stop at Chilton.

Here we had lunch by a National Trust house (originally the residence of the novelist Henry Handel Richardson) which overlooked an artificial lake near the centre of the town. The main street of Chilton basked in the hot midday sun and seemed to us like the set of a turn-of-the-century movie as we cycled through bound for our evening stop over at Rutherglen.

IT'S almost sunset now and as I sit on the top balcony of the impressive Victoria Hotel in Rutherglen the sky to the east is changing colour from pink down to a powder blue. I can just see the dark blue bulk of the Baranduda Range rearing up from flat plain like a sleeping giant and somewhere beyond that the township of Yackandandah is bedding down for the night.

Tomorrow is an easy (and flat) ride back to Wang via more wineries and quiet back roads. We visited a small Rutherglen winery on the way into town today. By this stage of the trip our group was showing signs of 'winery overload'. There's a limit to every thing, I thought.

Soon it will be time to leave for dinner at the Shamrock restaurant, a short walk down the main street. Andrew says it's one of the best eating houses in the state and after the experience of the past four days who could doubt him. □



CYCLING THE VALLEY OF LAGOONS

Bicycle touring

Great touring in northern Queensland

by STEPHEN HUNT

WHEN German naturalist and famed explorer Ludwig Leichhardt discovered the headwaters of the Burdekin River in 1844 he called it "The Valley of Lagoons". Leichhardt, who vanished on his subsequent expedition, was moved to write of this valley, "is beautifully grassed, of great extent, and well provided with water."

Such favourable description eventually led, in 1861, to the declaration of the district of Kennedy, the entire catchment of the Burdekin River being available to squatters for the selection of leases.

The unsurpassed Valley of Lagoons selections (1270 square miles) were held in partnership until 1864 by District Commissioner, George Elphinstone Dalrymple. Then under Walter and Arthur Scott, the lease was stocked and developed at the cost of great financial and physical hardship. In the 1870's they were forced to sell off large portions of land in an ultimately vain attempt to recoup debt. Such a parcel, "Gunawarra" (Aboriginal for little house), was taken up by James Atkinson.

It had been my burning desire to explore the Valley of Lagoons by bicy-

cle, and in April this year I managed to talk my wife, Susan, and our friend Bob Pohlmann into joining me.

Little more than a day's drive took us and our bicycles the fifteen hundred kilometres from Bundaberg to Gunnawarra Station. After a pampered overnight stay in the century old homestead, we set off on our loaded "treadlies" (as Bob, who had no cycle touring experience, put it).

Our hosts, Delphie Atkinson and her son Bim, were much less skeptical of our plans than I had expected, and said other cyclists had passed this way through to the coastal town of Cardwell. Along this route Blencoe Creek drops 400 metres into the Herbert River Gorge.

Rather than do this, we took a turn off heading south through the heart of the Valley of Lagoons. This road was designated as the National Horse Trail. For Sue and I it was our first experience of cycle touring on natural road surfaces, in remote areas with very little traffic.... only a few cars per day. All my expectations were exceeded, the weather was pleasantly overcast.

We made good time on sometimes corrugated roads and found other road users (none of them tourists) friendly and helpful. Above all else the attraction is the natural environment, which appears not to have changed much despite a century of cattle grazing. For a lover of eucalypts it is heaven, and I appreciated the beauty of open gum forest as I have never before. Monotony did not arise as the forest offered a continual variety depending on soil and the abundance of water.

Aiming for Walter's Plains Lake, beside which I had once spent a memorable night camped, we were disappointed to find it now dry. We were forced to continue to Wairuna Homestead on the Burdekin River to obtain water. We arrived at dusk, after cycling the last few kilometres downhill through glorious forest in top gear. The homestead, situated on a knoll, is surrounded by lagoons; a breathtaking position. We obtained permission to camp and then cooked dinner. After dinner we star-gazed before retiring to sleep soundly after the days 86 kilometre ride.

On waking, the landscape was ablaze with early morning sun. The black swans and reflections on the lagoon were magic. A small helicopter used for mustering lifted off.

We could now see two options, either to return to Gunnawarra, or head further down the valley to the road junction, turn east and travel to Ingham. Bob was complaining of a sore bum, our supplies of food were low, and we were booked on a rafting trip in two days. So we returned to Gunnawarra rather than attempt 170 kilometres to Ingham. En-

route we dropped in at Minnamoolka Station, which overlooks a vast swamp teeming with bird life.

A week later Sue and I returned to cover the rest of the valley by bicycle. Having driven over three hundred kilometres from Cairns, camp was made beside the Burdekin on Reedy Brook Station (permission obtained).

Under the full moon the landscape was mysteriously illuminated and appeared as it must have before the coming of white man. No artificial feature or light could be seen beyond our own camp.

Cycling next morning soon brought us to a large lake, with black swans. On the other side was the Valley of Lagoons Homestead complex. Despite our curiosity we chose not to intrude and pushed on over a bit of range quite



thickly forested with tall ironbarks. At the turnoff to Wairuna we came across a road grading team who had driven from Charters Towers that morning (four hours). It was nice to know there was someone else out in the wilderness and after a chat our enthusiasm was renewed.

The afternoon sun was beginning to tell before we reached the Burdekin Plains. Between beautiful stands of Moreton Bay Ash and Bluegum coursed several channels. We stopped on a log bridge to dangle our feet in the deep cool water. Other channels were dry or almost dry and unbridged. We were forced to walk our bikes through the soft sand.

Soon we reached Wairuna. The elderly caretaker invited us to dinner and later two men, contract bull catchers, dropped in for a yarn. We listened to

some riotously good stories until it hurt too much to laugh.

To our surprise the next morning greeted us with dense fog which hung over the landscape. Thick dew lay on the grass and soaked the sandy surfaces which were more easily negotiated now. Six hours later we reached our car in the mid afternoon heat. The cool waters of Reedy Brook gave instant relief. That afternoon we drove back to Ravenshoe to do some cycling on the Atherton Tablelands.

Access to Gunnawarra and The Valley of Lagoons

We arrived at Gunnawarra by car, but it is within a day's cycling distance from the railhead at Ravenshoe (85 kilometres away). The railmotor leaves Cairns on weekdays at 9 am and travels via Kuranda and Atherton. The train carries bicycles. Accommodation is available at Ravenshoe and there is good food at the "Popular Cafe".

Follow the Kennedy Highway to Mt Garnet township, detouring to see the Millstream Falls. Gunnawarra road turns off 4 kilometres west of Garnet. Food and accommodation is available at Mt Garnet and Innot Hot Springs enroute. Lakeside camping is available by prior arrangement at Gunnawarra.

Alternatively, Bim Atkinson will pick up homestead guests from as far away as Cairns or Townsville. This is expensive but inclusive of food and alcohol, etc. Finally, the twice weekly bus service from Cairns to Croydon passes through Mt Garnet and Mt Surprise.

Gunnawarra to Ingham via the Valley of Lagoons is approximately 250 kilometres. Only the last 50 kilometres from Mt Fox (an extinct volcano) is sealed. This includes a very long winding and steep descent of the precipitous Seaview Range. An alternative, longer route from Mt Fox via Wallaman Falls is unsealed, less steep, and passes through dense rainforest. Wallaman is Australia's largest and most beautiful waterfall.

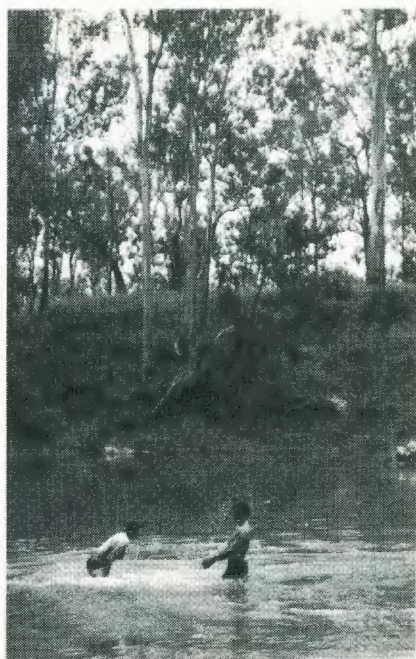
Ingham is 110 kilometres north of Townsville on the Bruce Highway and rail line. All facilities are available, except a specialist bicycle shop!

Gunnawarra to Cardwell via the Herbert River crossing and Blencoe Falls (good camping spots) is 155 kilometres mostly unsealed. Gradients are gentle. Cardwell has most facilities and is a departure point for reef and island trips. The regional office of the National Parks and Wildlife Service should not be missed.

Owing to remoteness and harsh road conditions only experienced cyclists on durable touring or mountain bikes, with appropriate spares, should attempt these routes. May to September are the best months, bearing in mind the nights are cold in June and July.



Above: Setting up camp at dusk in the Valley of Lagoons. Below: Cooling off in the Herbert river. Opposite: the spectacular Blencoe creek falls which drop into the gorge formed by the Herbert river. Previous page: Some of the good earth formation roads used by the author and his friends during their tour of the Valley of Lagoons area. Photos by the author.





"Holy grit," thought Georgie as she lay hidden by the roadside in a modest blouse, watching the whirring machinery. "What are they doing to the road?"

**THE MILDLY RECOGNIZABLE FOUR
IN
THE MYSTERY
OF THE
CYCLING
HOLIDAY**

A cracking good holiday adventure

by Phil Somerville

“WHY is it all red, Sparky?” Sparky Ovaltines’s clean, manicured fingers held down the yellow curling edges of the Robinson’s map of Australia as the three young people huddled about the kitchen tabletop studying it with excited eyes.

Known as ‘Sparky’ because of his passionate interest in science and an intuitive gift for invention he was usually the object of his friends’ continuous inquiries. His hungry mind was part of his inheritance. His father was Sir Nipper Ovaltine, respected founder of Ovaltine Techno-Biotronics, the well liked chemical conglomerate and hamburger chain. From as early as the age of six Sparky had been initiated by his dad into the magical world of smelting and vivisection.

“That means it is part of the British Empire. This map’s a trice old but essentially good enough for our purpose here,” Sparky explained.

“Gosh!” rejoined Tubby. “Do you really think we can bicycle right around Australia over the summer hols? I’ve heard it is full of long distances....”

“A few Tubby. However, much of it is exaggerated by a well meaning but unfortunately corrupt press. Certainly we can do it. We’re young and most of us can read.”

Tubby Grimes’ face was covered by a comforted smile followed closely by several avocado and mayonnaise sandwiches, an endless supply of which ushered from one of the fathomless pockets circumscribing the baggy khaki shorts he wore everywhere.

The two lads had been chums since early schooldays at Clearasil High School where Tubby, slightly fitter then, had played scrum for the year seven pie eating team. Though occasionally separated by flatulence the boys had shared many adventures ever since.

Bicycling was their binding passion. They had seen many parts of the district on their faithful machines, enjoyed many challenges together and not infrequently aided the local constabulary in the fight against crime by picking up a thick brown envelope from the racetrack each Sunday evening for their good friend Sergeant O’MacRafferty.

“Well, I’m glad you’re both so confident,” interjected Georgina. “But what about me? I’m a girl. What if my hormones muck up or something during the ride?”

Tubby flushed scarlet. He had never quite gotten used to the raw, open talk of contemporary young women and usually felt awkward and annoyed. Tim rescued his chum from the jaws of the uncomfortable pause with a quick response.

“No need to worry, Georgie. You’ve always managed the pace on our previ-

ous adventures. You’ll be swell!” “Heck, thanks Sparkers.”

Georgina was the only daughter of civilised English parents. Her father was Nigel Swaithwaite-Hyphen, the renowned Sussex earthworm magnate. He had brought his family out to the antipodes ten years ago and with a modest stipend purchased 5,000 acres in the area which he eventually built up into a successful worm stud.

Georgie had grown up on the property with the bracing health and unpretentious handwriting that only life in the rural outdoors can offer.

She was trim and boyish of frame, with close cropped black curls and an unpainted, fresh face. She was jolly and energetic. All of which, in fact, main-



Tubby feverishly tore open his mail while Sparky stood back with correct posture. “It’s mayonnalse!” he whooped.

tained for the two lads the comforting illusion that she was a boy. It was only one of these straight-talking sallies that jolted them from the fantasy.

“Don’t forget,” she reminded, “We’ve all got to be back in March to commence invaluable tertiary education. And, Sparky, you’ve got to return in time to take over the laser and surgical appliances division of your Dad’s company. Remember, punctuality pays!” “Two weeks will be plenty of time,” assured Sparky. “I’ve worked out a route schedule on this laptop computer I built yesterday before breakfast. Barring any punctures, rest days or unnecessary toilet stops, I calculate we can do it with 14 hours to spare.”

Sparky enunciated the route casually with a deftly moving finger upon the unfurled map.

“Looks spiffo!” whooped Tubby. “But do they have mayonnaise in the Northern Territory?”

Georgie interrupted. “Spider wants to come.”

Spider was a dark horse to the others. He was tall and gangly with deep set eyes and spiky hair upon which small birds occasionally impaled themselves. He spoke in short words, grunts and wheezes. He had been abandoned by his parents who, shortly after his birth, had their door locks changed. He was later ward to a State orphanage where he lived for twelve years until it mysteriously burned to the ground.

Mr and Mrs Swaithwaite-Hyphen adopted the misbegotten youngster. Soon he and Georgie became close pals and looked out for each other.

“Is he sure he wants to come on the ride, Georgie?”

“Yes, Tubby. He’s been in the doldrums ever since his Shetland pony mysteriously burned to the ground last month. This sounds just the tonic for him!” “Fine,” rounded Sparky. “Then it’s set. Now there’s plenty for us to get ready before we leave tomorrow – panniers, tool kits, food and maps, full dental check-up and lots of hot baths and brisk toweling!” And, before anyone suspected, it was dawn the next morning. The four gathered at the cattle grid near Mill Pond crossroads.

“Grand to see you Spider,” Sparky expostulated hoping to put the pale youth at ease.

“Shnorph!” came the answer.

“Tubby, have you got the compass?”

“Right here.”

“Great! I’ve got regional maps of our route which I surveyed, drafted and hand printed last night after cricket practice.” He pointed his well scrubbed arm north.

“Off we go then!”

THEY mounted their two wheeled vehicles and pushed off with powerful strokes, their collective polished white teeth glinting off the sun’s strengthening rays. Spider’s one tooth reflected what it could.

In what seemed like only one paragraph the quartet of chums arrived on the southern perimeter of a great metropolis.

“So, this is Sydney!” chimed Georgie. She glanced at a newspaper hoarding slanted against a shop front nearby

FOUR MORE JUDGES CAUGHT IN MEDI-REAL ESTATE CHILD PORN RING!

Weather: Fine to mild, Max: 32, Smog: Low

"Right. We've got to catch a train to get through Sydney. Let's make it to the nearest station." exhorted Sparky. "And be careful of the smog."

Switching on their front lamps and tapping the pavement ahead with sticks they walked their bikes onward until eventually they reached a railway.

"I'll purchase the tickets," chirruped the redoubtable Tubby. He loped off across the concourse.

"Where to, kid?" spat the ungroomed vendor behind the grill.

"Four adults and four bicycles please, sir. We want to get well out of the Sydney district going north."

"Right, that's four to Brisbane then."

"No," explained Tubby, "We want to see some of the country on our bikes."

"Fine. Try Maitland. That'll be \$483.40. By the way, you can't take that pet onboard," the ticket seller admonished pointing across the way in Spider's direction.

"Oh no, sir, you're mistaken. He's my chum. The four of us are cycling around Australia."

"No kidding? I did that myself last Easter holidays. Hope the weather's good. Here's your tickets."

Ensnared in the No Smoking carriage they watched the scenery sweep by in a blur of changing brown, blacks and

greys. Soon they alighted and skipped excitedly to the baggage counter to reclaim their bicycles. The attendant wheeled out four twisted tangles of hammered metal tubing and fused spokes.

"What in heaven's name happened?" blasphemed Tubby.

"Must have been jolted a bit going round the curves," offered the ungroomed employee. "Sorry, but it ain't our responsibility. You should have let a little air out of the tyres."

Not wishing to embarrass the unfortunate man with cross words, the youths salvaged their possessions and left.

Sparky repaired matters with a few quick phone calls, accurately reciting the number on his MasterRace credit card. Within hours replacement bikes arrived by surf rescue helicopter and, spirits replenished, the gay foursome span north along the snug sealed road.

That evening, huddled around the neat fire that lit their first pitched camp, Tubby surveyed the day's progress.

"We did about 320 kilometres, this afternoon. I can't believe it."

"I know," perked Sparky, "But it will take a few days to find our fitness. Then we can look forward to some headway."

The jolly crew turned in early.

"Don't forget to floss after brushing, people. Oral hygiene is everyone's busi-

ness," extolled Sparky before disappearing into his tent.

During the velvet black night the four youths slept tranquilly. Georgie turned several times at some unknown hour, vaguely aware in the momentary half sleep of clinking metallic sounds and guttural whirrings of something mechanical. She placed it in the domain of dreaming and dozed calmly.

The new day dawned salmon and gold. The merry pals arose to see it, breakfasted heartily on porridge, tea, toast and jam, then packed up their belongings neatly and moved off.

"Say, that's funny," observed Georgie. "This road seemed pretty keen yesterday but now it feels a lot rougher."

"Yes, there certainly are a good deal more potholes all of a sudden," concurred Sparky. "We shall have to keep the speed down to sixty I'm afraid."

The morning calmly segued to noon as the foursome effortlessly shifted their gears.

"What does *segue* mean?" asked Tubby cocking a quizzical look in the writer's direction.

"It doesn't really matter because there's Brisbane up ahead," Sparky asserted in dominating but approachable tones. "And this is our first scheduled mail drop."

Let's check the city post office." Skillfully using sextant and slide rule they

12 out of 14 International teams chosen to wear



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made their way through the labyrinth of freeways and feeder roads occasionally taking time to admire the still beauty of massive concrete pylons and rusting abandoned car chassis.

Georgie bounded into the old colonial stone Post Office while the others waited outside patiently. Tubby absently studied the local newspaper's financial pages for fluctuations in his avocado shares while Sparky rebuilt both his wheels.

Soon she emerged clutching a small cache of mail to her unassuming bosom. There were letters from home for both she and Sparky. Tubby tore open a small stapled jiffy bag to reveal a fresh jar of mayonnaise. Spider perused a postcard which he had written and posted to himself in Maitland. "Shnorph!" it said on the back.

A loud percussive **thud** behind broke their attention. A large steel ball on a cable arced gracefully into the side wall and bullnose roof of the Post Office. Stone fragments splintered past their heads.

"Oi!" yelled a masculine voice from a crane's cockpit. "Out of the way, you kids. We're knocking this place down for a new freeway toll booth. Now, bowl ya hoops!" "Hurry, we mustn't provoke progress," Sparky advised judiciously. "Let's continue our journey inland."

In a short time, after a balanced lunch and a brisk toweling, the testy teens were pedalling efficiently along open plains and over forested ranges alike. At twilight they pitched their tents amidst the steamy sentinels of a tropical rain-forest.

Dusk lowered and presently the contented smacking sounds of youngsters enjoying scrumptious servings of mayonnaise fritters echoed about the forest's loins.

"This trip makes me realise what a swell land we've got for ourselves," waxed Tubby in mellow voice.

"Yep, it's a heck of a neat place," Sparky harmonised. "Fields and valleys, forests and rivers, freeways and a conscientious national postal system!" He wiped a wayward tear from the corner of his eye. "C'mon, you scallywags, time to hit the hay. We've got a big day tomorrow if we're going to make Darwin. Good night."

"Night," came the sleepy chorus.

As she lay snug in her sleeping bag drifting towards sleep's arms Georgie's head jockeyed with events of that day. She sank back into her non-allergenic pillow. At some unspecific moment in the night she could hear the crane in her dreams. She awoke. The low muffled sound of machinery continued.

Finding some sensible shoes and a modest blouse she left her tent, follow-

ing the direction of the disturbance. She edged along the roadside and around the first curve, coming upon some low brush. As her eyes found their night vision she could make out two or three large vehicles with hydraulic machinery attached. There were several dozen men also. They seemed to be digging at the road, doing something fevered yet methodical.

"Holy grit! They appear to be..." But before she could finish her thought an unseen furtive arm swung behind her. The black ink of unconsciousness drenched her young body.

It was 6.45 and an unflinching dawn was rolling out blue to all corners of the sky before the boys were up and organising breakfast. Spider was the first to make the discovery.

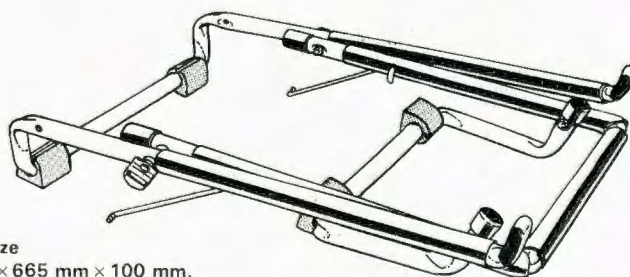
"Georgie! Georgie, gone, urpflit brzzp..." he expostulated, waving a wiry arm at the open flaps of Georgie's puce and cyan tent. The others darted inside.

"Great Jove, there's not a trace of her," yelped Tubby.

"Somethings up. Its just not like Georgie to completely vanish into thin air in the dead of night without telling us first," vexed Sparky.

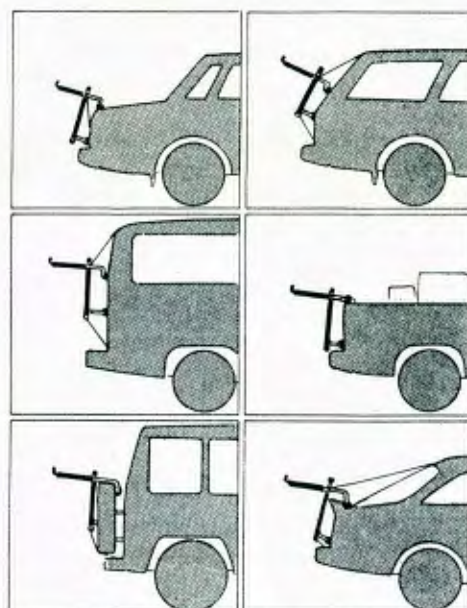
"You're right. He's in real trouble!" "She. C'mon! Let's check the road for clues."

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The aroused lads scoured the area of the road.

"Hey, this road sure is in bad shape. Look at those potholes and all that-" "Wait! I've found something," interrupted Sparky. "It's a piece of dental floss. It's Georgie's, I know her brand."

"And look over here, Sparky!" gasped Tubby clutching a large brass jagged-toothed pinion cog with a two metre drive shaft attached. Sparky surveyed it carefully.

"Well, this certainly isn't Georgie's. Her's is iron. Wait, here's an address stamped on the flange. 163 Capricorn St, Darwin. Right, our first clue. Hurry, fellows. We've got to get to Darwin before the next sentence!"

"He's kind of pretty, eh, boss?"

"She, you fool. Yes - pretty and meddlesome!" "Look, I think she's coming around."

Georgie regained consciousness as if slowly hoisting herself from a deep pit. Her eyes gradually focused on two menacing figures half draped in sickly yellow light from the open doorway to an outer room. Her hands and feet were firmly bound by her own dental floss.

"Where am I?" she inquired blearily.

"In the belly of the dragon, you might say," came the baritone yet unattractive voice. Georgie's head cleared.

"Talk properly. Who are you?" she demanded.

"Very well. Those who are about to die have the right to dine on a little knowledge. I am Count Ooze Phlegmly. I head the Policy and Planning Section. You are in a dank cellar within the Transport and Works Department."

Georgie stared and listened in slowly emerging horror. Phlegmly was tall and gaunt. His oily hair was parted in the middle and fell to both sides like industrial runoff. He moved like a cobra.

"And this is my amoral assistant, Carson Noma," he continued, pointing his riding crop at a squat balding man almost bent double beneath a hump that appeared to move at random within a putrefying black coat.

"Why have you kidnapped me?"

"Well, my dear, the night crew made that decision for themselves. It appears you stumbled across our humble activities by accident last night. You saw this Department's employees implanting new potholes in a section of the highway. They were also doing a little surface cracking and shoulder degrading."

"But why? Why are you ruining the beautiful roads that our governments are building?"

"Because, naive one, we are simply carrying out government policy. The Department's day crews lay and repair motor routes, while its night gangs put

in holes, cracks and chasms so as to justify its own existence and to guarantee its future survival. It's how all the state road departments operate. We work with each other. In fact you caught our people doing a little disheveling for the Queensland MRD."

"You unhygienic fiends!" Georgie stormed. "You'll never get away with it. The public will revolt."

"Not while there's television quiz shows. Anyway, that's why we can't risk letting you reach your next birthday." He turned on his heel casting a sideways glance at his lackey.

"Do your unsavoury work, Carson," he cackled evilly.



Sparky quietly crashed through the window and onto the floor poised like a cat, horrified to see his chum trussed up with her own dental floss.

The misshapen cohort reached into a hessian sack, withdrawing a cage of Welsh ferrets and an electric arc welding tool, when suddenly an adjacent window exploded in a shower of glass. The clear eyed faces of Georgie's three chums were framed there and in a trice they were in the cellar poised like cats.

"Drop those tools of misery, you badly postured rogue," Sparky insisted politely. "The jig is up."

The two criminal public servants jerked their heads incredulously.

"Where did you lot come from?" hissed the Count, spittle flecking his coarse beard.

"From sound schooling and a wholesome homelife. But the time for banter

is over," snapped Sparky, judiciously trimming the last of his toenails, "You two villains are going to be put away where there's cold bricks and very little sunlight for a long time."

"If you think you're sending us to Melbourne you've got another think coming, kid. You'll have to kill us!" A creak of the door signalled the entrance of a new player to the scene. A pukka voice broke the tension.

"Or perhaps *you* four busy bodies shall have to shuffle off this mortal coil!" Sparky's tanned head turned. His mouth froze in shock.

"I'm truly sorry it had to be you who found us out, son. I shall always grieve as much," said Sir Nipper Ovaltine.

"Dad! But why are you here?"

"Someone had to mastermind this operation. I set this up years ago with the various roads departments. A little hard sell here, a little money there and everyone was agreeable. It's good for them and it's better for me. Most of Ovaltine Techno-Biotronics' income these days comes from government contracts to build black and yellow signs saying, 'Caution - Road Works Ahead' It's a multi-million dollar turnover and not even my own offspring is going to upset this gravy train. Sorry, son, it's nothing personal. It's money."

All the happy memories of shared moments with his boy smelting and vivisection were pushed to the back Ovaltine's mind as his brandy soaked finger began to squeeze the trigger of the Luger. At that moment something hard nudged his spine.

"I suggest you put that on the sideboard, Sir Nipper," came the soft brogue of Sergeant O'MacRafferty. "Nice and easy now."

"You? But how?" demanded the twisted master villain.

The policeman took the gun and fed it to Spider.

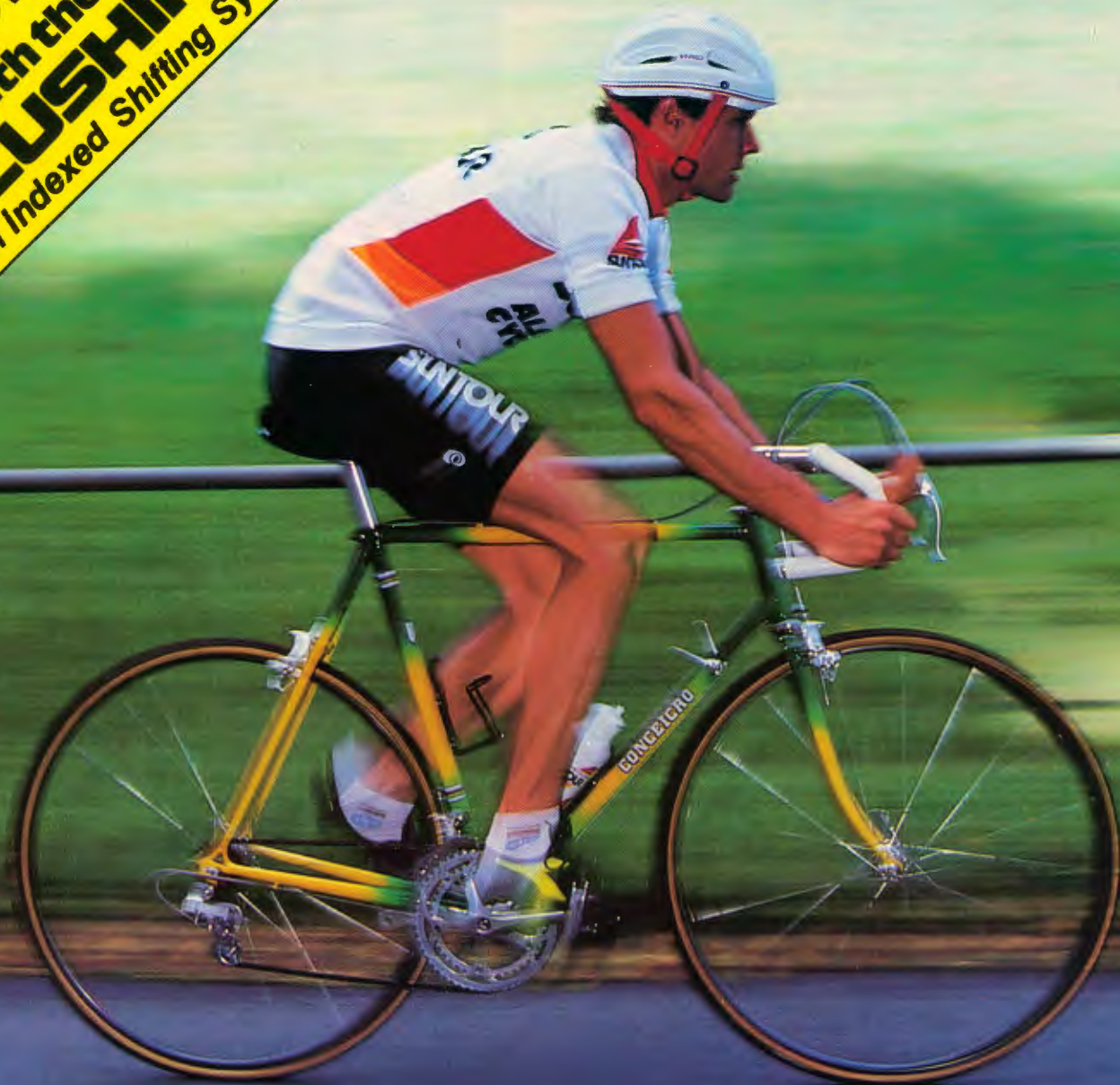
"Simple. Tubby had taken several library books on the preparation of mayonnaise with him for the trip. They were a week overdue and I was sent to apprehend him. In the light of the subsequent events I think we can forget the fine," the sergeant winked. Tubby blushed.

It was a clear, blue morning as the four adventurers pumped their bicycles with herculean strokes along the Stuart Highway. A slight northerly breeze tousled their protein enriched hair.

"There's one thing I don't understand," puzzled Georgie. "How did you three get one thousand kilometres from our campsite to the cellar in Darwin in four hours?"

"Simple. We took the back way." They chuckled in unison as they wheeled off into the vast red landscape of Northern Australia.

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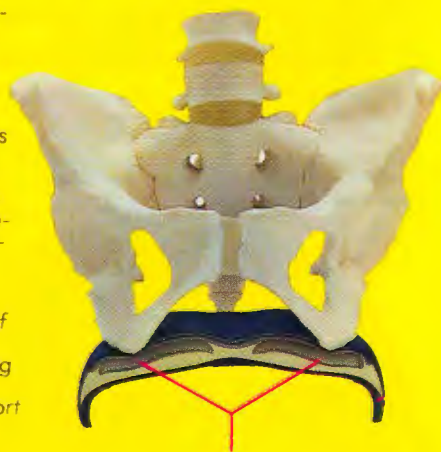


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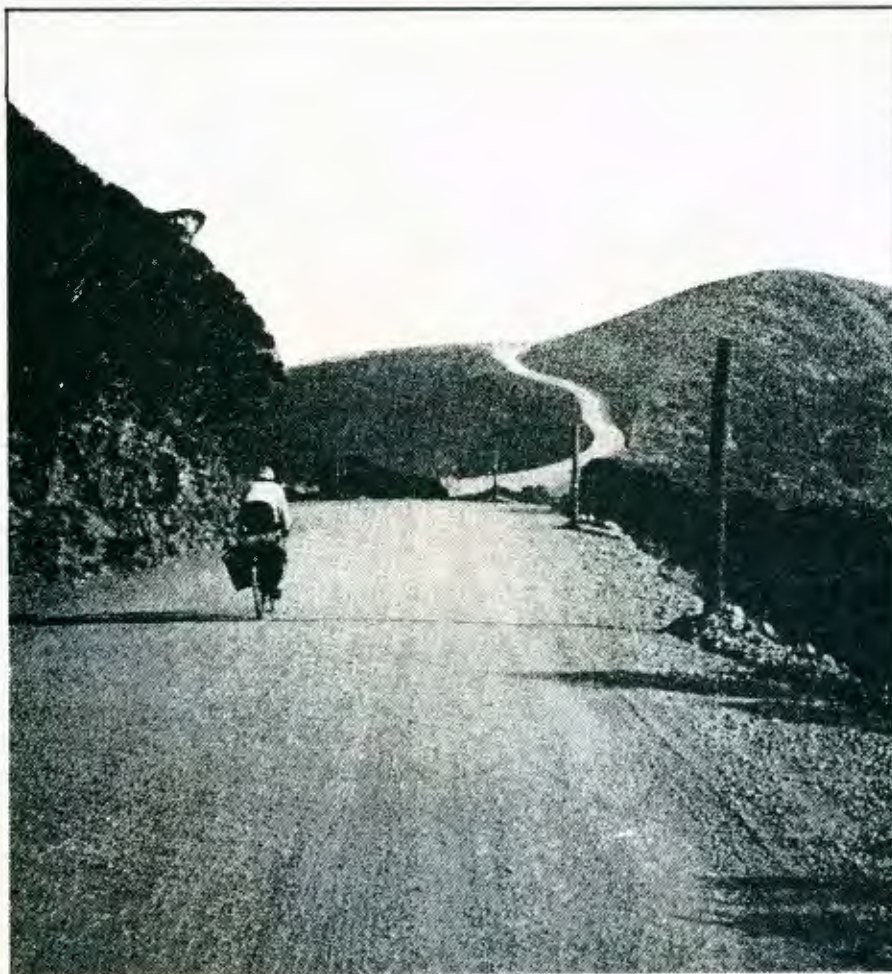
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THE BOGONG HIGH PLAINS

Bicycle touring

Cycling in Victoria's high country

by RAY PEACE

DURING the hot summer months of January and February Aussie cyclists are attracted, like the omni-present march flies, to the high country of Victoria and New South Wales. The raw natural beauty, the clean air and spectacular scenery are good enough reasons to put up with the grinding climbs, bumpy roads, swarms march flies, mosquitos and unpredictable weather. In any given summer it is usual to find cyclists riding solo, in couples or in larger groups, rattling across the high country.

In the summer of early 1987 it was the turn of Melbourne's Eastern Bike Touring Club, the "Eebies", to traverse the Victorian Bogong High Plains. Since

1984, Eastern had developed a tradition of taking off somewhere for a week in summer. The first had been to remote Mt. Skene and historic town of Woods Point, and the second in early 1986 to scenic South Gippsland. Towards the end of 1986 a certain Rob Kenyon, whose unused annual leave started these tours off, became enamoured with the idea of crossing from the NSW border at Wodonga to Bairnsdale in Gippsland via the Falls Creek ski resort, the high plains and historic Omeo.

The usual snowball effect within the club soon added Dave, Dick, Adrian and Glenn (Flash) Flood to the original duo. Word got around other cyclists in the city, and this lobbed in occasional

Eebie Gary Higgins and Knox BTC member Lorraine Banks to make eight in all. A short itinerary soon did the rounds, including some ominous altitude profiles.

We met at Spencer St station early on the first Sunday of the New Year and by lunch we were in a sultry Wodonga. Our first nights' destination was the historic

Blackman

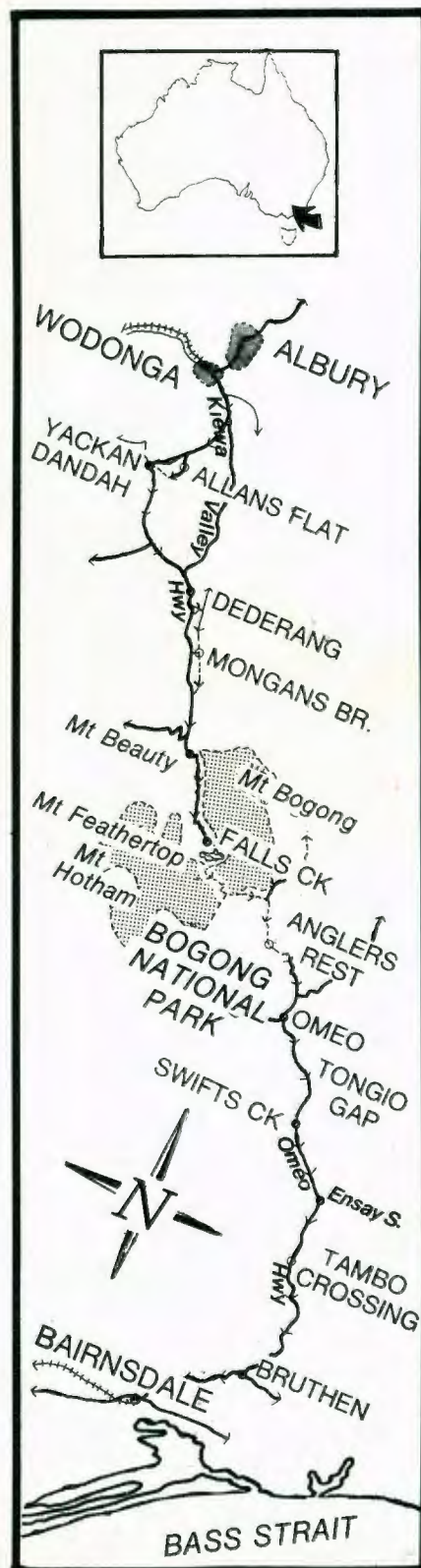
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This tourer pauses during his approach to the spectacular Bogong High Plains area.

town of Yackandandah, 39 km to the south. We expected a pleasant run out on the Kiewa Valley highway and then on back-roads to the town, but the weather unfortunately had other ideas. A monsoonal deluge hit us just before we turned off the main road at Baranduda. This had cleared by the time we dropped in at the strawberry winery at Allans Flat, but we kept a wary eye on the murky skies as we followed hilly back tracks into Yack. We spent a sticky evening drinking strawberry wine in the town's small camping reserve.

The weather had improved on Monday morning as we set out on the 67 km to Mt Beauty, the jumping off point for our assault on the High Plains. The road out to the south-east undulated up a valley between two tall mountain ranges. Gary observed that these were barely half the height of what we were due to tackle the following day.

We climbed up to a watershed where the road from Myrtleford came in, then roared down to the Kiewa Valley highway and the township of Dederang a few k's later. Here we found a pub and a milk bar and took a morning tea break.

We got off the highway again as soon as possible at Gundowring Junction, diverting onto the back road via Morgans Bridge. This included a solid 380 metre hill that proved hard work on a sultry, overcast day; some were forced to resort to "the two foot gear" (walking). The picnic and camping reserve at Morgans Bridge was quite pleasant, eminently suitable for lunch, but the dirt road either side of it slowed us down.

At 3 pm we rejoined the highway 14 km from Mt Beauty, with Mt Bogong looming solidly in front of us. After the township of Tawonga the road climbed up to the base of Tawonga Gap, where we paused to admire views from the Bogong lookout before heading down into Mt Beauty. We camped in the caravan park beside the Kiewa River, then went into town for supplies. Gary sent postcards, Lorraine sent several kg's of gear by post to her husband, who she said had packed the bike for her, Dave bought fresh bread and I bought a bottle of Brown Bros. port (which vanished rapidly).

We were now face to face with the big climb, 1100 metres in 30 km to Falls Creek, and a bit more to the high point of 1720 metres at Cope Saddle. The road began climbing immediately out of the town, but though it required low gears, it wasn't the sort of grinding climb found on the Alpine Road from Omeo. There

was an even an occasional downhill. We encountered one mid morning just below Clover Dam, and a second one an hour later, crossing the Kiewa river above Bogong.

Despite attacks from the bane of the High Plains, the march flies, the latter spot was declared morning tea.

Beyond this point the climb got tougher for the 5 km up to Sassafraas Gully, winding up the west side of a forested ridge, to Howmans Gap at 1250 metres. We hadn't seen Glenn and Lorraine for some time, and could only speculate on progress.

Unbelievably, the final section of 4 km was even nastier; a vertical rise of over 300 metres, a consistent 1 in 12. But we were identifiably entering the high country now with snow poles and snow gums, tussock grass and even more march flies. Gary was astonished to see snow clinging to the upper slopes of Mt. Nelse on the far side of Rocky Valley.

Most of our spread out group crawled into the lower end of the ski resort between 1 pm and 1.15 and sat on the porch of the day shelter for lunch. Lorraine eventually walked up and "Flash" Flood, so nicknamed for his legendary lethargy, was eventually fetched by a friendly motorist in a 4WD vehicle and deposited further up the road ahead of us.

Meanwhile, the rest of us had to make the 2 km climb, mostly on gravel road. After crossing the dam wall, the road wound around the lake shore-line for some 6 km, with low rounded hills around us. We were now at 1620 metres and on the High Plains. In due course we came upon Langfords Gap, where Dick took over navigation. We crossed the aqueduct from the reservoir and began following it along a rocky, sometimes boggy track which clung spectacularly to the rim of the Shannonvale valley. Dick found a patch of snow on a sheltered slope, and a brief mid summer snow fight ensued.

After some 3 km of curses from Lorraine and grumbles from Gary, we crossed the aqueduct again literally on stepping-stones, bikes carried high with panniers off. We walked up the slope a few hundred metres and set up camp around the edges of a clearing that had once been a set of tennis courts. We were about 300 metres downslope from Wallaces Hut, a ramshackle 80 year old stockman's shelter now classified and carefully preserved. The main road was over the crest of the hill 1 km away on an almost unridable track.

Lorraine and I had bought packet cheese-cakes down in Mt. Beauty and we decided to make one big one. Camp cheese-cakes are popular on Eebie

tours, but also notorious for usually turning out runny. The Lorraine special was the culinary piece de resistance of the tour, fully firm and topped with lemon and sliced banana.

We had allocated a day off on top of the High Plains to enjoy the scenery. In the morning we decided to climb Mt. Cope, some walking and some part cycling the 8 km round distance. In the afternoon everyone did their own thing. Despite the heat and the march-flies some decided to sleep.

Cycling on the High Plains is really enjoyable but it can also be hazardous. Weather changes can be rapid, and in January a bushfire or blizzard are both possible, though not very likely. Bearing in mind potential problems with Gary as a kidney transplant patient, I had filled out a "trip Intentions" form in Falls Creek. But it was actually Lorraine who ended up leaving the High Plains in an ambulance.

A mild lunch time belly ache became a violent stomach upset with dehydration setting in by 6.30. With some help from a girl staying at Wallaces Hut and a helpful couple at Falls, we managed to get Lorraine and her gear down to Mt Beauty, where a urinary infection was diagnosed. We had been lucky to have picked a place which was reasonably close to hand; the only other option

would have been a frantic dash to Falls to call in a chopper.

The remaining seven of us set out at 9 am the next day for Omeo. We chugged up to Cope Saddle one more time, and then began the long descent. The 6 kilometres to Buckety Plain were not unduly steep and included some uphill, with road quality fluctuating from claypan to "rough-as-guts". There was an icily enchanting moment when we dropped through a thin cloud layer near Trapyard Gap. As it turned out the real plummet came in the last 8 km down to the Omeo highway. There were some great views into the valley, but also many wheels skipping on rocks and rims warming up. We reached the bottom, still at 700 metres, at 11.15, but again had to wait for "Flash" Flood, this time with a puncture.

The Omeo Highway is only an *average* road with some sealed sections but a lot of sandy gravel in between; plus a lot of ups and downs. After 8 km we found a picnic area and ate lunch beside the Mitta Mitta river.

We began climbing once again on gravel, with 29 km to Omeo. After a while the road did a strange thing: following the contour around the hills, winding but dead flat, and very pleasant cycling. This kept up for the better part of 10 km before the hills reappeared.

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Fortunately, after a short distance we picked up first sealed road and then a big downhill into a creek valley to the Benambra road. The hills continued but we knew Omeo was only a short distance away. And so it was: by late afternoon we had rolled into the caravan park and were cleaning up prior to heading up to the Hilltop pub for a counter meal.

We met a group of South Australian cyclists in the bar who were heading for Bairnsdale like us. I phoned Mt Beauty hospital to check on Lorraine.

"I wish this IV drip bottle was full of booze," she grumbled.

The pub meal was a welcome change from our camp sloshes.

Friday dawned bright and clear after a very cold night, but Omeo had been having low 30 degree temperatures for several days. We had decided to ride from Omeo to Bruthen in one hit, close on 100 km, to assure us of making the train at Bairnsdale on Saturday. We started from the top of Omeo's winding main street at 9.15, climbing steadily for 10 km through brown open grasslands. Then came the drop: Tongio Gap, from 795 metres down to 400 in 4 km.

At the bottom, we began following the Tambo river towards the distant sea. Swifts Creek, 9 km down the blacktop,

was a pleasant little town with an excellent bakery on one of the side streets. The flat easy roads continued 7 km south to Doctors Flat, but we then met up with something solid in the shape of 410 metre Connors Hill. The growing heat added meat to the short but steep climb, though the gentler 10 km downhill all the way into Ensary South made up for this.

It was only 11.45 am and we thought it a bit early for lunch and so pushed on. We entered a rugged section of the river valley, a deep gorge in thick bush, and met another hill with knobs on it called the Devil's Backbone. Approaching nothing much at 12.45 with the name Tambo Crossing, we began looking for a place to have lunch. Eventually, a shady spot by the river showed up and we settled in for a lazy lunch while waiting for Glenn again. We also bumped into our South Oz friends again, having lunch nearby.

At 2 pm, suitably relaxed, we began attacking the final rugged section up to Walshes Cutting. The river entered another gorge in which the road undulated violently, climbing round spurs and sweeping through creek valleys.

The road eventually left the river and began the steady climb over the Ash Range. Though not overly steep and

only 360 metres high, in the humid heat the steady haul took it out of us. When we reached the top there was no fast downhill due to the southerly wind.

After one lesser hill at the bottom we came rolling down into Bruthen, and civilization at 4 pm.

On the recommendation of the South Oz group, we went a bit further across the river flats to Wiseleigh to camp there for the night. Despite a dodgy access road, this was a good choice: the campsite was excellent and the people running it very friendly. With only 20 km to go for the final morning into Bairnsdale we packed the tents late and pushed off at 10 am, in no great hurry. There were a few final hills though small after what we had been through. However, the road went straight over them making for good downhills and beefy climbs. From 11 am we lolled in the main street reading papers for a while, then retired to the railway station to board our train back to Melbourne.

The High Plains trip had not been an easy one; we had to ride a long way on either side to get there and back again. But the sweeping views, alpine wild flowers and crisp pure air of a mountain morning have to be experienced to understand why cyclists go there and feel uplifted. It's a trip worth making. □



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IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT HAYSTACK

Bicycle touring

*Solo bicycle touring from the Blue Mountains
to the Murray*

Lino-cut prints and words by HELEN PRINTER

IN JULY 1986 Helen Printer loaded up her new touring bicycle and caught a train across the Blue Mountains to Lithgow. From there she set out on an epic solo bicycling camping journey across the western slopes of the Great Dividing range to

the Murray River. During the ride she kept a journal and made many sketches which were later transformed into lino-cut prints. On the following pages we present a selection of these with accompanying edited text from her account of a very eventful journey.



Starting out in a blizzard!

LET ME tell you about my trip. I arrived in Lithgow on the train yesterday, finally. Leaving the station I heard one of the railway workers muttering about snow but it didn't seem cold enough to me. I left town early afternoon and headed out in my lowest gear into a freezing headwind (someone wished me: "May all your winds be tailwinds").

I finally decided to stop for the night at the top of a largish hill next to a plantation of young *pinus radiata* trees. Out of sight of the road I set up camp, made a hot drink and ate dinner. After warm-down exercises I hopped into my sleeping bag. I was glad that I spent so much time waterproofing everything the previous week.

Slept and woke, and slept and woke. Its not quite dawn yet but I am hearing noises like rain but unlike rain (it skitters after landing) on the roof of my tent. I'm glad I'm waterproof but it's stuffy inside the tent so I open up the door and look out. It's cold out there, and through the gloom I can see that it's snowing!

Morning at last. I make myself a big breakfast of porridge and look around. My bicycle is on its side and is completely buried in snow. After warm-up exercises my hands are still cold.

On the road it's an incredibly slow journey. To keep my toes from dropping off I ride in my Ug boots and that's not at all easy. There's a biting wind and blown snow everywhere but strangely there is an absence traffic which is a blessing as I have to ride all over the road slithering and swerving as I move along.

Someone stops and tells me there's a truck stop up ahead. I thank them and start pushing my bike up the icy hill and eventually arrive at a cafe full of truckies. The room has a distinct party atmosphere to it. They stare at me. I must look like a moon-walker. In the heat of the building my body thaws and I am able to dry my sodden gloves on a heater. From here I am told it's 30 km to Bathurst up over a higher (and colder) hill than this. There is a truck jackknifed in the valley in between and no one can get through.

Finally vehicles begin to arrive from that direction and around midday the cafe empties as queues of cars and trucks head off down the road. I wonder.

A truckie at the next table offers me a lift to Bathurst. I gladly accept but isn't

the weather and countryside the same again on the other side of the range? Still, its a start, and the party is all over here.

So off we go, my little bike strapped to the back of the huge semi-trailer. I joke, "The lightest load you've ever hauled?"

In search of the perfect haystack

ILEAVE the truckie at Bathurst and cycle 10 km or so down the road before the hills become too much, or it's too cold and my legs are too wobbly. I'm looking out for a friendly haystack but all there is bleakness snow and sheep. Soon there is a pine forest, this time of grown up trees, so I hop over the fence, lug my bike over and settle down for the night. If the weather stays like this I'm going to catch a bus from Wagga. Its too cold to take my balaclava and hat off before going to bed even. My average speed so far is 15 km per day so at this rate I might arrive in Adelaide by Christmas!

The day is overcast, but there is no wind. A slight breeze but nothing like the last three days. I cycle without my



DAWN NEAR BETHUNGERA

wet weather gear on (what bravery!). The road is mainly downhill, the countryside lovely and not too much traffic. There are roadworks at one stage and the workers wave, ask me where I'm going and say: "That's the stuff" and "keep at it".

It's 25 km since I set out and I stop for morning tea at the top of a hill. From my comfortable perch I wave at the passing traffic and look out across the ploughed, rolling countryside. It's very much like the Midlands in England. I can hear a skylark. This is nice.

Another 25 km and I'm getting hungry. The town I come to is Cowra. Signs every 5 km along the road have been saying "Cowra welcomes the tourist", so I wonder what welcome there is for me. Today feels like a good day. I deserve a wash and rest for a while.

I discover the Cowra Womens Rest Centre and for the first time since leaving Sydney I can take my clothes off and not die of exposure. I have a long shower then peruse the town on foot, my backside being a bit too tender for any casual riding.

I'm a vegetarian so I soon stumble across the Cowra Health Food Shop. I think that I should do a study of health food shops along the way, since usually cyclists tour the bakeries. This one sold almost everything I had painstakingly carried with me from Sydney!!!

I bought a few things anyway and went back to the gardens by the Rest Centre. Set myself up and cooked a lovely lunch. It's been a race so far to eat the food before it gets really cold again. I hung around for a while, pleased to be somewhere, then realised that it was time to move on.

Out of the town there were still no haystacks visible. So I ride on. Why is it that I always see splendidly situated haystacks a 11 am and not 4.30 or 5 pm? I promise myself one, soon, to sleep in but, caught out by the failing light I settle instead for a bridge on a deserted side road.

The next morning the sun is shining. The road unfolds like a huge carpet and drops down through hills and along a lovely river valley. This is getting better and better. My road is quiet with a good surface.

I come across the town of Young but it's all closed up because it is Saturday afternoon so I don't stop and keep pedalling on tired and looking for my haystack. But its cherry country; there are orchards and fruit storage sheds, but no haystacks.

That night I settle for a clump of gums away from the orad in a paddock.

It's another beautifully sunny day and I rode into Cootamundra for lunch and relax under a big pepper tree in the middle of town. I've discovered that my real

aim in life is the quest for the perfect haystack, not too near a farmhouse or near the road, half empty and with three sides sheltered from the wind. I think if I find one I might well take up residence.

I decide, on a whim, to detour and send a postcard to a friend from Mangoplah (its such a nice name). As I sat sheltered at the shop in Mangoplah it poured with rain, but the sun was shining as I rode on again and there was a rainbow.

Then at lunchtime I find it: my perfect haystack, on a dirt road on the way to Henty. I sit in it and eat my lunch while the rain falls, again. The farmer comes by with some machinery and I prepare to jump up and make sure that it is okay to use his wonderful haystack but he only hops over the fence for a chat. He asks me where I am riding to and tells me of a short cut. He doesn't seem to think it odd at all that I was on his land.

Country hospitality

IT was raining when I left Wagga and I knew I wouldn't get all the way to Mangoplah today so I looked for a



shed or a barn or, dare I hope, a haystack.

I spot a shed with one side open up ahead and well off the road. So I wheel my bike off the road through the front gate of someone's property, across the paddock, through a creek, down a slippery muddy bit and to the shed. If I had thought for half a minute I would have realised that it would be a pump shed and full of pump, oil and muck. Of course there would be no room for me and I'd be better off under the trees anyway.

Then the owner of the property turned up in a car. I just sat there. I obviously couldn't explore further for a sleeping spot. So I turned my bike around and wheeled it over to the car wondering who was inside and what they were thinking about me. It was a man and I explained, very simply, that I was going to sleep in the shed until I realised that it was a pump house.

We were both doing a bit of quick evaluating I suppose. He said he'd take a punt on me and I'd better come up to the house where he could decide what to do with me. I rode up the path in front of him.

So now I'm all snug in bed in the home of John and Bernice. They have children my age, they both think I'm

crazy. John is especially worried about what I'm doing, and how safe I'll be. I've explained that I'm as safe on my bike camping out as I am locked up in a house in the city, and we all agree its true, but he still thinks I'm too relaxed about it.

Bernice says I'm brave, can't really understand why I'd want to do it, but feels okay about me doing it. She is most worried about my diet. She wanted to give me a big steak meal, and has can't understand why I don't eat the kind of food she eats. John keeps saying, "You have to settle down some day". Bernice keeps shaking her head and looks a bit harassed by it all.

They like my story though, and they both said they trusted me because of my English accent! Why did I trust them? I chose that shed, on a property with a cattle grid but no gate, well kept, name of property out the front. Then the man in the car, I was honest with him and knew he could either be angry and chuck me out or be angry and say I could stay. Or be mild and chuck me out or be mild and say I could stay or ... He looked all set to be angry, but as I explained how I'd not thought the shed might be a pump shed there was the glimmer of a smile, and I knew. But why? Perhaps the other way of explaining could be that if you have absolute trust in the universe

then it will support you. Absolute honesty, it all sounds a bit naive and cosmic.

Sometimes I think I'm canny, other times just plain lucky, but I also believe that people reflect back to you what you give them, and that the fear attracts the accident.

I left there, with both of them worried about me – why am I doing it? I should settle down and accept that job in Sydney. Bernice asked me this morning not to become a hermit (even though I never mentioned it, or even thought of it!) John thought I'd been pushing my luck too far and they both had multiple stories of murders and rapes and disappearings to regale me with.

I have to keep on saying, "I am as safe on a bicycle as I am locked up in a house in the city". I don't hitchhike because I believe it isn't safe anymore but there are limits to how far one can go to 'feel' safe. (John had a two way radio in his car.) Anyway I set off.

So I cycled on through the afternoon to Henty. I am so much fitter and my bum has stopped hurting now. Also my knees, which I was concerned about, are not hurting now anywhere near as badly as before I stopped in Wagga. Pleasant farm countryside, with not quite enough trees but plenty of grass. The stock all ignore the traffic but run from the whirling bicycle, which amuses me. I got a



bit wet towards Henty. In town an older woman stopped me in the street and said, "is that your bicycle, you've certainly got it packed very neatly". We started talking, and I told her I was heading for Pleasant Hills that night. She asked me if I knew anyone there. "No," I said, "I'm camping out".

She lived along the Pleasant Hills Road, so she invited me home to stay the night.

The woman and her husband have a daughter who rode a moped 3,200 km across America, and a son who did something else like that, and incredibly they think that what I'm doing is completely normal, and not even the slightest bit silly. So what can I say, we are all different, but some people are really kind.

It's interesting that I could eat rice and veg and chips last night with another family and here with Pat and Lewis, who half expect me to be a vegetarian I had more difficulty and ate ham soup, wheat bread and butter and sweet biscuits.

Such totally different attitudes to their land too! Pat tells me that they don't spray their crops, and have solar hot water.

On to the Murray

NEXT day the rain stopped around lunchtime and during the afternoon I was cycling along a

sort of corridor between clouds with rain on both sides but not on me. I stopped to cook my afternoon meal with my back to the wind and watched the clouds, and rainbows. When the country is so flat the sky becomes extra important.

I rode until after dark, still wearing my rain gear because it was cold, finally came to the town of Urana. It seemed very spread out with no visible main street so I pedalled around in the dark until I came upon the Soldiers Memorial Hall. I looked around and found that the door was open, in fact most of them were. It was a big, old place, all creaky and echoing, I let myself into one of the back rooms. It turned out to be a netball/basketball hall. I spread out my camp and settled in for the night. Though I could hear people coming and going to the pub next door, I had an uninterrupted sleep.

The next morning I cooked my breakfast on the big open range in the kitchen. It was a dining hall once and sadly the whole place was peeling and cracked and falling apart, with the wood eaten out from the paint on the cupboards. Gas, water and electricity were all on, and half the doors were locked and the rest just swinging open. Strange.

I cycled into a brisk wind, but sunshine, with 50 km to go to Jerilderie.

That was Friday, and the hardest day so far. The sun didn't last long, and the wind got stronger, so I was riding along in my lowest gears, creeping along at a snails pace. I would have stopped but there was nothing to stop for. Flat, flat, flat, no trees. Nothing but me the wind and the sky, with an occasional car. I had no idea of the time and spent a lot of the day inside my head, just staring at the road and mechanically pedalling until I eventually reached Jerilderie.

I woke up before dawn the next day to find the wind had gone. I didn't even stop for breakfast, but was packed and pedalling by the time the sun rose. I thought I would get in a few k's before the wind woke up. The road was quiet once again and the sky was cloudy but still no wind. I stopped twice during the day to eat, and once to sit and rest. The road followed (within 10 km) a creek, so there were trees all along.

At some stage I entered an irrigation area (I could tell I was getting closer to the Murray) and then there were drainage channels and ditches and birds. I saw a wedge-tailed eagle, and cranes, herons, storks, pelicans, spoonbills, ibis and millions of galahs in huge flocks. The whole countryside softened up and looked more hospitable (though just as flat).

Just as the sun was going down a huge rainstorm passed me by, and the sun

shone on the grass turning it a bright and improbable green colour. Behind it the cloud was a bruised purple grey, and overhead hung a rainbow; a full arc from ground to sky to ground. It was incredibly vivid. I got off my bicycle and stood and watched. The rainbow was a double one, with an even fainter reversed rainbow outside of it. It was beautiful.

I cycled into Deniliquin happy. Found a wonderful second hand shop and had a look through the gear. They buy up things from old property sales and had some lovely stuff all of it much too heavy to lug on a pushbike.

At the journey's end

SWAN Hill is a city of public conveniences, not only are there toilets within 100 yards of wherever one may be caught short, but there are shelters and coin barbecues, and benches littered liberally around the place. I've ridden for two weeks, in a huge arc from Lithgow down to Wagga, across to Deniliquin and up to Swan Hill, and now I have stopped. The prospect of the continuing flatness of the land and the Murray Valley Highway, with its constant traffic, makes the idea of another 10 days, up to Mildura and then down through Berri to Adelaide, fairly dreary.

So I've stopped and am now being a tourist for a few days, visiting pioneer homes and generally enjoying the river. The cycling has been excellent. Only two punctures, a variety of weather (from snow, frost and fog to brilliant and blissful sunshine), and only one day when the headwind made me want to give up and weep.

I was due to catch the bus to Adelaide early Saturday morning at 1.40 am. I was told that I would have to take my bicycle apart and pack it up in a box so I went round the bike shops and obtained a carton. Back at the station (also the bus depot) the Station Master said that I could leave my bags and dismantled bike on the platform. I was worried about leaving them in the open and thought they should go into a shed but he pointed out that no one would be around at 1.40 in the morning to unlock the shed.

Finally everything was packed up and labelled. I left with a second reassurance from the Station Master that it would all still be there when I got to it at 1 am.

After dinner and a night out on the town I returned to the station to find

that my bags and bike were gone. When I finally located them I found that some kind soul had locked them inside the very shed they weren't to be locked inside. What to do?

I sprinted down to the police station. The officer on duty slowly looked up a number in his book and slowly dialled it. No answer. It was, after all, 1.30 in the morning. He slowly dialled someone else who woke up, answered the phone and said he'd be there in a minute. I was then told to go back to the station.

The bus arrived from one direction at the same instant that the Station Master arrived from the other direction. I scurried around lugging bags out of the shed and stuffing them into the bus, trying to

apologise and thank the Station Master at the same time.

He said, "It's okay. The important thing is that you had a good holiday, Okay?" and waved me goodbye on the bus. The bus driver asked me if he was a relative.

I sat on the bus, feeling washed all over with warmth from the residents of Swan Hill. The fact is that in all my journey from Sydney to Adelaide I didn't meet one single grumpy person, let alone anyone with harmful intent to me. Many people were worried about me and wanted to protect me from all the knife bearing molesters out there, but I cycled along without fear and all the people I met were kind and pleasant.

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TOUR DE FARCE

Bicycle travel

Riding the old red dragster

by GREG PRITCHARD

"Have I got a bike for you!" Ed had said and led me out to his back shed and pointed. I had fallen in love instantly with its curved lines, small fat tyres, drop handlebars, banana seat and three speed gears. It was a bike I was never 'cool' enough to own when I was young; The Harley Davidson of the pushbike world – a red dragster.

I'd been talking of doing the Great South-West Walk for a while, a 220 km circuit through national parks near Portland in Victoria. My house-mate Roger, who intended to accompany me, suggested we do it on pushbikes, but I was reluctant. I have a strong aversion to those two-wheeled death machines and hadn't ridden one for years. But, a dragster? Now that was just crazy enough to be fun.

A short time later, and with very little planning, we drove down to Portland to

start. The idea was to travel as light as possible so a lot of necessary items were jettisoned, food for example. Roger claimed he could catch fish to feed us and another friend had told us of some white berries you could eat. Fortunately we also took some muesli and dried food just in case. I also insisted that we carry sleeping bags despite Roger's protestations. Other than this we had some clothes, a small shifter, a pair of pliers and a puncture repair kit. All of which fitted neatly under the seats, with a little over the handle bars to keep the front wheels down.

We easily covered 20 kilometres the first afternoon, getting a feel for the bikes and how to load them correctly. My bike had been modified for a taller person and the seat was back over the wheel. Without weight on the front the slightest acceleration would tip me over backwards. Roger's bike, bought for

forty dollars from the *Trading Post*, didn't have the sleek lines of mine; it was more futuristic and dynamic, yet harder to peddle. As we raced along the gravel tracks through the forest in the late afternoon sun we were laughing, thinking how easy it would be to finish the walk, unaware of what lay in store for us.

When you're sleeping on the ground it always seems to rain at five o'clock in the morning. Early dawn found us racing around trying to set up the nylon fly and eating muesli in the rain. We spent the whole day riding in the rain along a swampy, grassy section of path through forest. It was only just possible to ride, often having to push through long mud sections, or going for it, legs pumping, fat, bald tyres spinning uselessly in the sludge.

Our lunchtime stop was a nightmare. At Fitzroy camp a million leeches waited. Big ones, waving like sticks of

licorice on logs, craving our blood. In the space of one hour, whilst struggling to light a fire and brew some tea in the rain, I lost the leech competition with a winning number of seven. My pants were stained from blood running from holes in my side and stomach where undetected ones had drunk their fill and dropped off. One particularly large one had to be burnt off Roger's back with a hot stick. If we had been on foot we would have had to slept there. I shuddered at the thought. It was only eighteen k's to the next campsite, so we pushed on.

The afternoon was better. We avoided the more boggy walking tracks and stayed on adjacent forest roads. Roger opted for wearing only speedo's and I for a leaky oilskin, both of us getting equally drenched. By five we reached the campsite of Moleside and miraculously the sun came out. We dried everything out and spent the evening swimming and sitting on the jetty in the sun.

Patterns were developing. Roger, braver, fitter and more at home on a pushbike, went first, down hills into sharp corners, never knowing what was coming; a tree across the path or a head-high branch. I, more prudently, waited. If there were no sounds of grinding metal or tearing flesh I would follow. Often I would pop around a corner to find Roger waiting, watching eagerly. This meant that there was something BAD on the track; a log, a rut, a bog and he wanted the pleasure of watching me negotiate the difficulty. Fortunately for my pride I usually managed to stay upright.

The next day we formulated a competition; the winner was to be the person who had the most prangs. With fifty kilometres of winding track along the edge of the Lower Glenelg river the 'prang possibilities' were high. At day's end I won the 'most original' crash category by being knocked off the bike by a wave and Roger took out the 'most stylish' with a graceful dive over the handlebars after his front wheel dug-in going through soft sand.

We hit the Nelson pub that evening for a quick beer and a game of pool and after stocking up on supplies at the roadhouse we rode out to camp on the beach. Here began what we had been worried about the whole trip: forty kilometres of beach along Discovery Bay.

We rode a kilometre along the beach that evening, relieved to find that the fat tyres handled the firm sand well. We sipped our coffee and rum contentedly that evening around a campfire on the beach, watching the sunset, assured of an easy day to follow of only 20 km.

As hoped the sand was firm the next morning and the day's riding was quickly out of the way. The afternoon was spent

lying around in the sun near the miraculously fresh Lake Mannyboeng before we attempted the feared soft sand the following day.

The next morning found us hard at work pushing our bikes, now unladen, along the soft sand. The park's handout had said: "time passes quickly if you concentrate on the next piece of interesting flotsam or strange shaped dune". Maybe so, but not even the discovery of a huge elephant seal asleep on the sand made the sixteen kilometres pass quickly enough. A long arduous task similar to pushing a wheelbarrow of bricks up hill. We were glad when we finally came to the exit through the huge dunes to Swan Lake.

Revitalised after a swim, we headed off, elated to have what we thought would be the worst behind us. The next section was wonderful. We pushed the bikes up to the summit of Mount Richmond and then enjoyed the long gradual ride down consisting of ten k's of non-stop rolling along grassy paths and asphalt to Bridgewater Lakes. Not even the late arrival of our support team, who found us shivering and hungry on dusk, could detract from our afternoon's pleasure.

What you gain on the swings you lose on the roundabouts. The ease of riding down Mount Richmond was more than compensated for by the tracks the next day. Soft sand to start, then miles of

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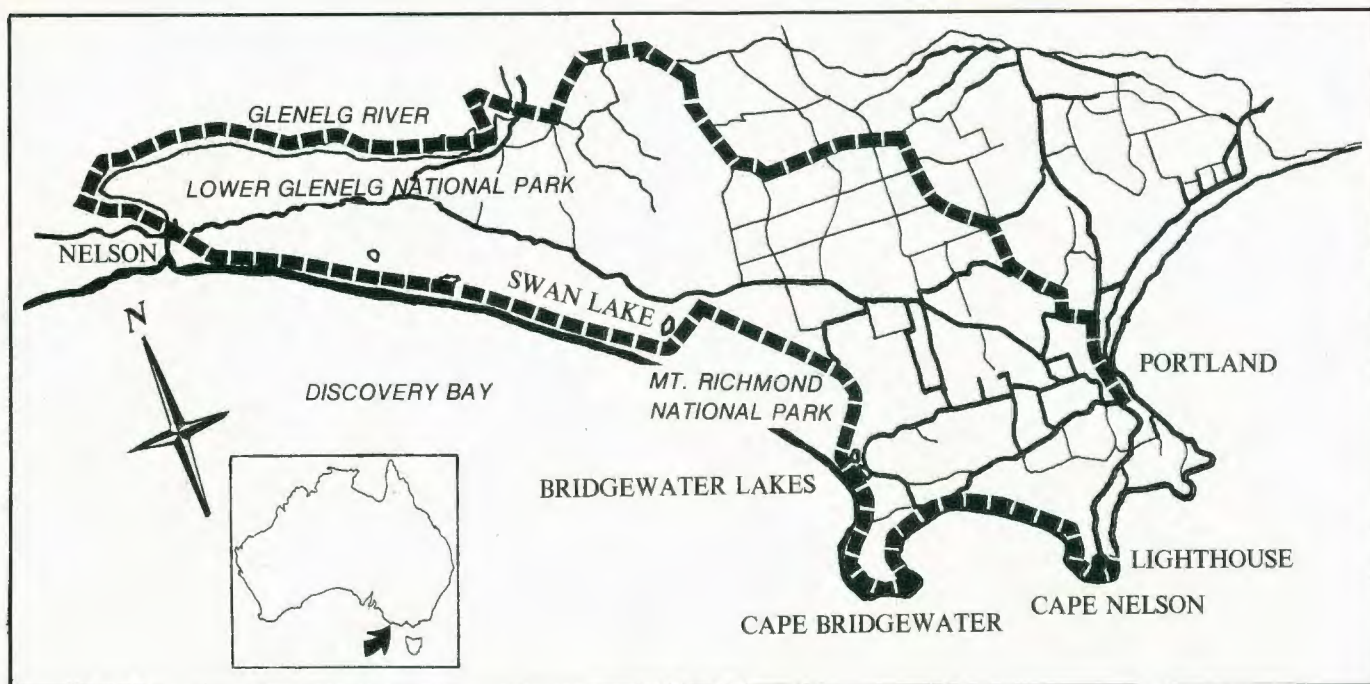
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torturous paths strewn with jagged limestone, up and down, with no possibility of riding. A brief respite was gained by an excellent run around Cape Bridgewater on a foot-wide, black, earthy sheep trail, barbed wire fences flashing past on one side and on the other a fifty metre drop to the ocean. After this the going really got tough.

Firstly, we had to push the bikes the whole length of Bridgewater Beach (ten k's), racing the incoming tide. My bike was beginning to seize up from its time in the seawater. Then, more up and down through dense scrub and over the jagged paths. With fifteen k's to go and only a couple of hours till dark we began to worry that for the first time we would be caught out. The huge thunderstorm we had watched build up all afternoon finally engulfed us, and there we were, pushing two mobile lightning conductors through the middle of it.

Our stomachs were sick with fear and we rode with lowered heads (as if this would protect us from the lightning). By the time we reached the lighthouse at Cape Nelson we were cold, wet and shaking from fear. To our elation our support team was there with towels, food and drinks. The final ride to the campsite was done quickly along bitumen, avoiding the 'markedly undulating' final two kilometres of Cape track.

Sitting in the car at the campsite we debated what to do. I didn't care. I was exhausted and didn't mind whether we finished the final 2 k's of the walk or not. After two hundred plus kilometres on dragster I felt a few more or less wouldn't matter. Roger was more principled. Suddenly, he was back on his bike and racing off into the rain. I sat there for a minute, then with a groan pulled



on my wet clothes and reluctantly followed him.

The bikes that had held together over the whole ordeal finally began to show signs of wear. It was remarkable. For two hundred kilometres we had not had a puncture. I had destroyed all but low gear on the first day and Roger had only two. Every night, in scenes worthy of competition races, we had taken parts of the bikes apart with our one small shifter and pliers: the brakes on both bikes, Roger's steering arrangement, my pedals. On one occasion, after my rear wheels had begun to make horrible grinding noises, I borrowed some car oil from fellow campers, carrying it over to my bike in an empty soup packet.

Now, a kilometre from the end, both bikes were giving up the ghost, gears seizing up, rear wheels locking, pedals alternately spinning uselessly then gripping. In pelting rain we rolled down to the official finish of the Walk, ditched

both bikes in the bushes where we could find them later, and headed for the pub.

It was early the next morning before we reached Melbourne. On the drive back we talked a lot about the trip, relieved it was over, forcing ourselves to stay awake in the dark, wet night. Drinking a cup of coffee in every town, closing down Victoria from left to right as we drove across it.

We planned more trips, so impressed were we with the performance of the bikes and the fun we'd had. In one campsite, talking to a teacher with a school canoeing group, she had looked at our bikes, awed, amused. "They're definitely not touring bikes, are they?" This is certainly true. I doubt a touring machine would have handled the rough tracks or soft sand. Admittedly it would have been easier on a mountain bike, but it would never have been as much fun. And after all, pleasure is its own reward. □



Photography by Warren Salomon

BICYCLE ADVOCACY: THE DECADE OF PROGRESS

Bicycle facilities

by JOHN G MATHIESON

President Bicycle Federation of Australia

WHEN the first issue of *Freewheeling* rolled off the press just a decade ago, it immediately set a new standard for an Australian bicycle magazine. But running very much in parallel was another emerging force in the cycling community. This, of course, was the national bicycle advocacy; the cyclists in every state who have worked in every possible way to promote a better deal for the bicycle.

Freewheeling was instantly the advocate's information source. The very first issue contained articles on the aims of

bicycle groups, the state of cycling in Australia and the politics of the bicycle. Issue No. 2 contained a superb review of the new and shining Geelong Bike Plan, the start to real improvements in conditions for cyclists in this country. And so on: every *Freewheeling* has dealt with issues of profound importance in moulding the future of bicycle transport.

The vital issues

There have always been two major thrusts for advocates: Better physical

conditions, eg. roads, bikepaths, end-of-trip facilities; and improvements to bicycle safety.

The three post-war decades saw Australia's love affair with the motor car flourish. But this meant that by the mid-1970s there was no remaining infrastructure for bicycle trips. Only those who had travelled overseas had ever seen a bikepath, and for many years designers assumed that only motorised vehicles would use roads. Bicycle parking had vanished and, as a sign of the times, tens of thousands of healthy Australian kids were being wastefully ferried to school by car.

Freewheeling has dealt with these issues, countering with articles on how roads (even freeways) can be improved for cyclists, how bicycle transport should be central to the design of our new suburbs. It sold readers on the importance of energy conservation and improved community health. Such articles have been strongly supported by Warren Salomon's editorial policy and personal writing talent and many were penned by Alan Parker who has constantly put bicycle issues before the public.

Bicycle safety issues have also been presented by *Freewheeling* from the beginning. Issue No. 1 contained an article by Chas Coin, *Bicycle Safety and You*, which was quite a milestone for its time. For example, it dealt with cyclist conspicuity (being seen, both by day and night), defensive riding techniques, bicycle brakes, and hard-shell bicycle safety helmets.

The latter topic was revolutionary, because at that time there were probably less than fifty such helmets in Australia. In fact the article made an important contribution to setting the bicycle safety agenda of the past decade.

Those ten years of progress

Substantial progress has been made. Who would have believed a decade ago:

- that around Australia we would now have State bodies charged with looking after bicycles?

- that school based bicycle education and special bicycle enforcement schemes would now be widespread?

- that bicycle safety would be recognised as the next major area for road safety improvement, and the most likely to achieve both short and long term success?

- that many cyclists would cast off their inferiority and believe that they are legitimate, in fact superior road users?

- that the widespread use of primary and secondary safety aids (particularly fluorescent clothing and helmets) would mean that law abiding cyclists could achieve safety levels similar to motor vehicles?

- that bicycling would now be portrayed in advertising everywhere as just about the nicest thing a human can do.

The ten years just passed have seen the breakthrough Geelong Bike Plan fully implemented. They have seen the Newcastle Area Bikeplan, despite many difficulties, slowly emerge as a worthy plot scheme for NSW. Metropolitan plans have been developed and are being implemented in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. However, while Sydney has several local plans, it still lacks the thrust of an overall strategy.

The election in March, 1983 of the Hawke Labor Government has seen the most incredible injection of funds into bicycle facilities through unemployment funding. By the end of the CEP scheme in 1987, some \$40-50 million will have been spent. Importantly, the extensive use of the paths built will ensure that there will be even stronger community support for the continuation of such works.

The Federal Government has been active in safety too, through the funding of the "Molly Meldrum" helmet campaigns, television safety spots, and importantly our first National Bicycle Safety Conference, BIKESAFE '86, which was held in Newcastle.

Tremendously important for the future is the work of the Standards Association Committees on bicycle helmets, bicycle lights and the bicycle itself. Advocates on these committees have encouraged and ensured that the standards drafted are arguably the best in the world.

What lies ahead

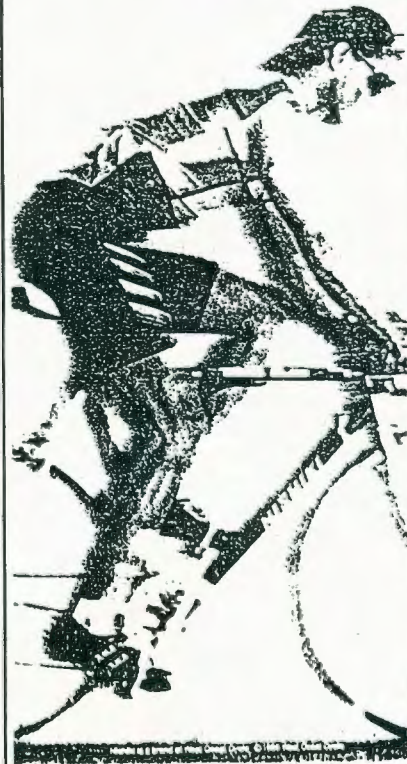
The first thing to get right in the next decade is cyclist behaviour. How can cyclists expect a better deal while so many blatantly flaunt the road law? When a lot more of us look like we know what we are doing, we will get vastly more support.

The next thing to get right are the official records of bicycle use and injuries. Currently, our police and road safety authorities quote injury levels which are known to represent only about 20% of bicyclists hospitalised and only about 3% of bicyclists seeking medical attention. We will never get our fair share of resources while governments are working on invalid information.

Once these things are right, progressively over the next decade we will see every road and bikepath built or improved to "bicycle-safe" standards. Only then will the bicycle be able to take its rightful place among Australia's major transport systems.

Congratulations *Freewheeling*, bicycle advocates and cyclists generally thank you for your support over the past decade. May the next ten years be even better!

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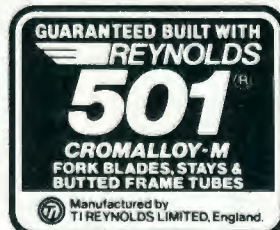
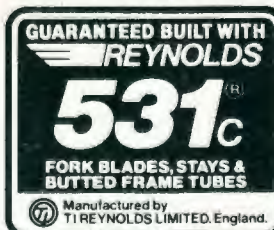
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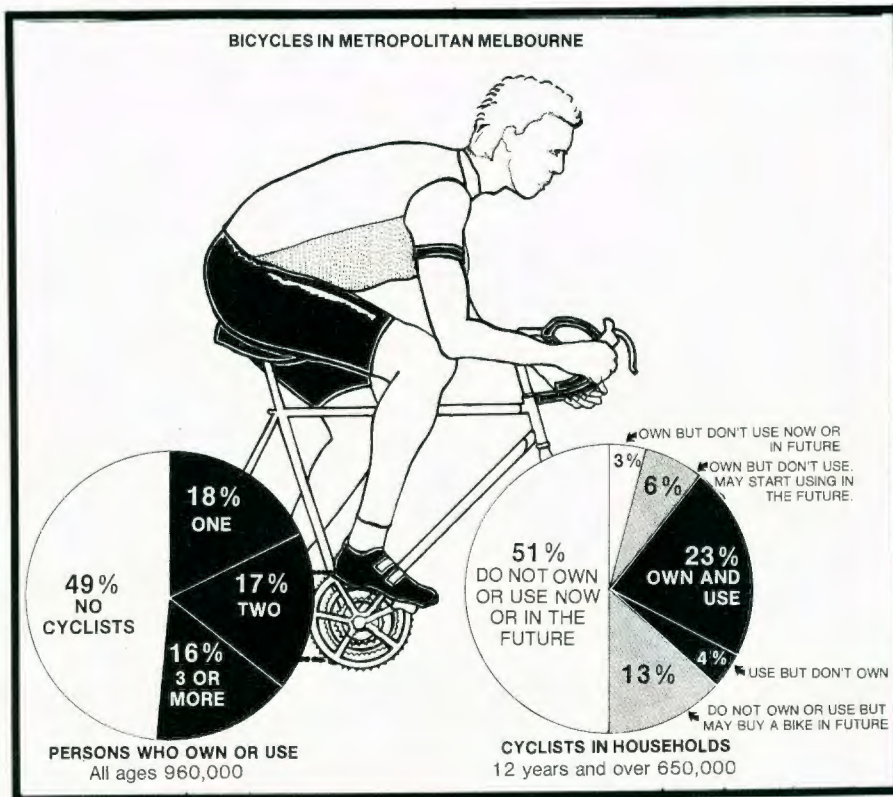


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ENCOURAGING BICYCLE USE IN AUSTRALIA

Bicycle facilities

by ALAN A PARKER

In this diagram the toned area shows that 6% of Melbournians say they may start using bicycles in the future while 13% say they may buy a bike in the future. These figures indicate a healthy growth rate for bike sales in the coming years.

THE last ten years have been the most eventful in Australian cycling history since the 1890's. The thirty year decline in adult bicycle use

bottomed out in the early seventies and the bicycle is now back as a means of recreation and transport. 850,000 bicycles were sold last year but only 480,000 cars and station wagons, so the bicycle is also returning as a hip pocket response to economic insecurity and not merely as a form of recreation.

In the mid-seventies the high riser style kid's bike became extinct when the

BMX craze crossed the Pacific from California and boomed. In last four years BMX has settled down into a mature sport, route mapping is proceeding in all states, large bicycle events like the Repco Sydney to 'Gong and Caltex bike rides are growing in popularity and triathlon racing has become a major sport. Government agencies are now encouraging cyclists and their organisations. Private sponsorship of major sporting recreational events is now well established and cycling for leisure and fitness is booming.

Over the decade, adults have mostly bought ten-speed bikes with dropped handlebars, but in 1987 we see the shape

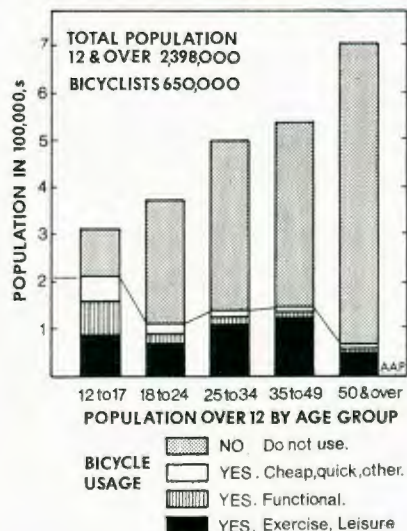
of things to come with mountain bikes now available. Mountain bikes are not only being used for sport and recreation, but also as city commuter transport. This latest trend is world wide and Australia is only a year or so behind the USA. Indeed the sales of bicycles on a per capita basis is now at the same rate in Australia as it is in the USA.

As a result of increasing bicycle sales over the last ten years there is a massive stockpile of bicycles in Australian cities and a survey recently undertaken in Melbourne shows that the multiple ownership of bicycles is very high indeed. This level of ownership is probably typical for most large cities, with slightly

lower levels in Sydney and higher levels in Adelaide and Perth.

The same study commissioned by the State Bicycle Committee of Victoria and conducted by the Spectrum market research organisation reveals the number of cyclists and non-cyclists and their stated motivation for cycling. It is pretty obvious from this study that many people must be cycling instead of going for a Sunday drive, or going to work by car. A third of all bike trips are for shopping or to see friends so that a family car is used a lot less or is available for use by another member of the family.

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CYCLES

Changing attitudes towards transport

Neither the increase in bicycle sales nor the levelling off in car sales means that less motoring is being done or that bikes are being used instead of cars today, but subtle changes are taking place.

Over the last ten years basic attitudes towards both cycling and motoring have taken place and many people have a more practical and less emotional attitude to the vehicles they use. To be sure there are many young males for whom the car is a packaging device for their immature egos but there is a trend away from these kinds of attitudes. This should have a profound long term effect on the sale of cars and future designs.

Likewise there will be changes in people's motivation for buying a bicycle. In the lead article in the first issue of *Freewheeling* in 1977 I pointed out that cycling was now fashionable and this was a motivating factor behind increasing sales.

However, the most significant factor is not how many bicycles are sold, but who is buying them... It is the middle class

trendies and their offspring who are the pace setters in the revival of cycling. This was just the same situation during the early stages of the American bicycle boom... The persistent 10 year long increase in US bicycle usage is one of the most interesting social phenomena in the western world because it crystallises, in a visible human activity, deep underlying changes in attitude and values in American society.

At the time not many people believed that these changes, attitudes and values would cross the Pacific. They did and now different attitudes are beginning to emerge. What is different today is that a lot of young people are unemployed and those over 40 who don't have a secure job are very unhappy about the economic future. There is not the same kind of optimism around as there used to be.

Fortunately, these new cycling attitudes during the last few years have obliterated the old working class image of the bicyclist. This has paved the way for a more practical attitude to cycling and today many more people have no difficulty in hoisting their ego onto a saddle.

A similar situation existed years ago with small cars that fitted people physically, but were too small for their driver's ego. Even this attitude has changed.

When the annual registration figures for cars and station wagons are charted against the estimated annual number of bicycle sales and numbers of unemployed people we see an interesting pattern emerge.

What precise connection there is would require a very detailed study to resolve.

In general terms it leads to the conclusion that if we take the unemployment figures to indicate growing feelings of economic insecurity and the levelling off in vehicle sales as a belt tightening reaction, then the increase in bicycle sales

seems a logical response because the bicycle is obviously a sensible way of doing more with less, whether it be for recreation or transport.

The idea is slowly and surely getting around that using a bike and car together is the best way for a family to minimise their transport costs and reduce the need to buy a second or third family car.

Car sales are dropping because people are making better use of what they already have and keep their vehicles going longer. They are also using bicycles in a way that helps the family to avoid buying another car. A bicycle or two in any household can provide greater mobility for the same cost and this is an important long term reason why bicycle sales will continue to increase. Sales will also increase if better conditions for cyclists are provided on main roads, but if that does not happen then the growth rate is surely going to be stunted.

A private response to public neglect

Ten years ago it was mostly children who rode bikes and in Melbourne it was rare indeed to pass another cyclist on the way to work, now there are many more. For the first time in cycling history many are wearing helmets. The helmet symbolises a personal concern for a safe passage and tells us again that cyclists are unhappy with the conditions on roads. This is the private response to public neglect, yet it is easy to forget that it was only in 1979 the first Australian made helmet was available, and not until 1986 that a range of well ventilated quality helmets was on sale.

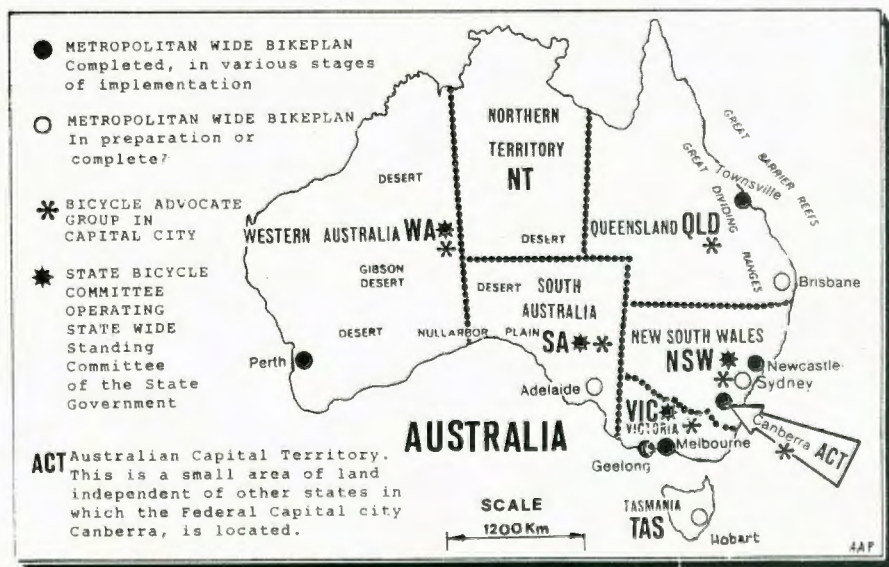
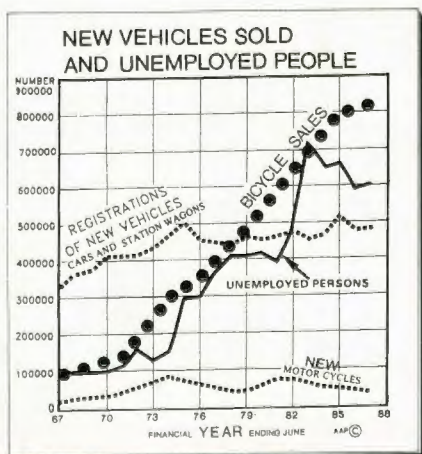
There are several Australian made helmets today, but no precision engineered parts such as gears, chains or

hubs or even simple products such as saddles. Only 7% of bicycle frames are made here compared to 33% in 1977. There is not much local content in Australian bicycles due to the series of tariff reductions over the last ten years. Only 65,000 of the 850,000 bicycles sold here have Australian made frames today, as Federal government policy has turned a potential manufacturing industry into an assembly and import operation.

The reason so little has been done for either cyclists or manufacturing is that 10 years ago most politicians and transport bureaucrats regarded the increase in bicycle sales as a temporary fad that would go away, and made life difficult for anybody wanting to get anything done. Now there is the attitude that cyclists are a safety problem, which is an improvement but there is no vision of cycling as part of the solution. There is no recognition, as in Sweden, that for national security reasons there is a need for the full range of bicycle parts and frames to be made in Australia.

The Federal government doesn't see the bicycle as an elegant resource conserving form of transport that, if properly provided for, will not maim or cripple on a mass scale unlike the over use of the motor car does. It doesn't understand that the noiseless non-polluting bicycle can help make our cities more livable and to create a non-violent transportation system. This is why the bicyclist needs protection like an endangered

This map of Australia shows where the major bicycle groups and state bicycle committees are most active. Tasmania, Queensland and the Northern Territory lag the other states in providing facilities for the growing numbers of cyclists.



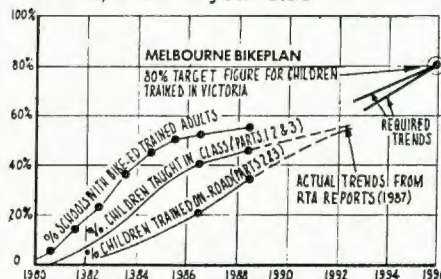
species making a comeback. They still have to be persuaded that the bicycle is the most ecologically superior form of transport on Earth, even though Ivan Illich eloquently established this fact in his book, *Energy and Equity* way back in 1974.

Major opportunities to encourage cycling have been missed because of the failure to see the into the future on long term issues and pursue the large economic benefits.

Ten years ago the Federal government was doing nothing for cycling. More recently it had funded accident studies and provided \$40 million for employing people to build bicycle paths and shared

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VICTORIA BIKE-ED PROGRAM.
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Road Traffic Authority:

Education: The Bike Ed Kit for primary schools developed by the Geelong Bikeplan with the Education Department and the then Road Safety and Traffic Authority, was piloted in Geelong and is now available to all Victorian schools.

Specific tasks will include,

- Research, develop and implement cycling safety education programs complementary to Bike Ed for younger and older school age groups in close co-operation with the Education Department and SBC

Performance Indicators

- Maintain and reinforce the Bike Ed program with the aim of 80% penetration of the target age group by 1996.

©AAP

This graph shows the progress made so far with the Bike-Ed program in Victoria.

footways. Now that the Community Employment Program and the Jobs On Local Roads program are now at an end there is a complete lack of ongoing sources of funding available from Federal sources.

Today, all that the Federal politicians and bureaucrats want to do is make helmet wearing compulsory and ignore the need to encourage bicycle use by providing funds for improving the main roads or providing alternative off-road routes.

Today we can see that Australia is being turned into a motorised banana republic by politicians who are out of touch with a public who have taken to cycling in a big way.

1977-1987 - The need for long-term objectives

The little that has achieved for cyclists in the last ten years has come from the political lobbying of the community cycling organisations. This has resulted in about \$7 million being spent each year by all state and local governments combined, which is about one fifth of what is really required.

In recent years cyclists have been denied access to major roads and bridges that are short cuts for other road users. Average speeds have been allowed to increase on roads and Police no longer patrol the streets where people live, so that there is no one to caution the unsafe behaviour of child cyclists. Proper training courses for professional engineers and planners to learn how to provide for cyclists do not exist in spite of the explosion of information and research on the subject.

In spite of this neglect the last ten years has actually seen improved safety levels due to Police action against drunken drivers and better driving instruction which has resulted in less dangerous new drivers.

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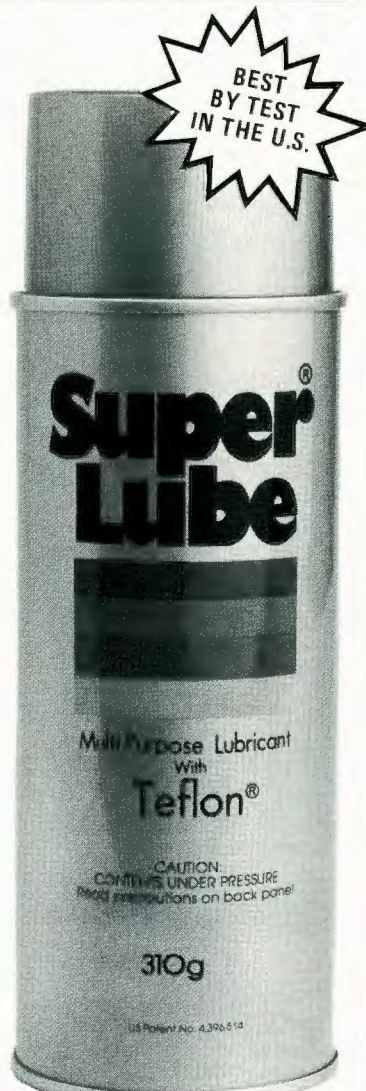
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PROVISIONS FOR CYCLISTS			% NATIONAL RATING A. A. Parker			
ENGINEERING	MAIN ROADS	INTERSECTIONS-Low speeds/stand up lanes	1	Some progress in Townsville and Newcastle.		
		KERBSIDE LANES-Widening and cleaning up.	5	Progress in Geelong and Adelaide		
		RURAL TYPE-Sealed shoulders	5	New road design standards required		
		FREEWAY ACCESS-Roads and bridges	10	Rights of access not recognised		
		BIKE LANES-Exclusive and with parking	10	Bike/car parking lanes successful		
		PRIORITY ACCESS-Bus lanes/bike only turns.	5	Common practise in UK not used here?		
	LOCAL ROADS	REDUCTION IN THROUGH TRAFFIC	50	Good progress in Victoria		
		CROSSINGS- Refuges and or signals	5	Detail design guidelines required		
		EXCLUSIVE ACCESS- shortcut links	1	Planning opportunities rarely identified		
		SPEED CONTROL DEVICES-Humps, islands etc	50	Excellent progress in Victoria		
	OFF ROAD	LEGAL ACCESS- Through closures.	1	Lack of proper guidelines		
		SHORT CUTS-Road/rail/river crossings	40	Need for adequate funding and guidelines		
PATHS-Shared footways/bikepaths etc		60	Design standards are appalling			
SECURE STORAGE- At offices and workplaces.		5	Need to change planning regulations			
EDUCATION	RIDER	RAILWAYS-Storage and transport	20	Theft out of control		
		ACCESS-Waterways/other easements	40	Lack of interdepartmental cooperation		
		PRE SCHOOL- Parental education.	1	New area needs developing		
		JUNIOR-Safer riding, 6 to 9 year olds.	10	Programs urgently required for this group		
		MIDDLE LEVEL-Safe riding 9 to 12 years	30	Good progress in NSW and Victoria		
		SENIORS-Advanced riding 13 to 16 years.	1	New program being developed in Victoria		
	DRIVER	ADULTS- Informal programs using media	5	Scope for innovative programs		
		DRIVER TESTING - Revised training manuals.	20	All state driver manuals could be improved		
		DRIVING INSTRUCTORS-Revised training methods.	0	Nothing done so far		
		ALL DRIVERS - media campaigns.	20	Good federal program more required		
		ENFORCEMENT	RIDER	POLICE- Bike law enforcement officers	10	NSW scheme OK but need to enforce laws
				UNDER TWELVES - Cautioning and advice	20	Police patrols hopelessly inadequate
OVER TWELVES-Cautioning and on-the-spot fines.	5			On-the-spot fines needed for 12 to 17 years		
DRIVER	BREATH TESTING -Maintain programs.		80	Excellent progress far less drunks on road		
	SPEED LIMITS-Reduce speeds to within limit.		20	New technology has great potential		
	LOCAL STREETS- Introduce 40kph (25 mph) limit.		5	New technology has great potential		
SAFETY	RIDERS AND PARENT	BROKEN GLASS -bottle deposit legislation.	10	95% off the bottle glass removed in SA		
		GLASS/LITTER Litter laws and street cleaning.	10	New litter laws coming in Victoria		
		DANGEROUS DOGS- Introduce leash laws.	5	\$100 fines under new Victorian law		
		HELMET WEARING -Promotion schemes.	70	Excellent progress in Victoria		
		USING LIGHTS- Promotion schemes.	5	A national media campaign is needed		
		SAFE ROUTE SELECTION- bike route maps.	50	Excellent progress in Victoria SA and WA		
SAFETY	RIDERS AND PARENT	HELMET STANDARD-Revision urgently needed.	60	Ventilation study urgently needed		
		LIGHTING STANDARD- Adopt HSI as interim stds	60	Political pressure needs to be applied		
		PARKING STANDARD -Needs to be issued soon	60	Guide for confined parking spaces needed		

term goals for all of these programs, with defined performance criteria. There are no state traffic safety education plans, and without such plans momentum will be lost.

On back road routes, in residential areas, the provision of local area traffic management measures has indirectly helped a lot of cyclists by reducing the speed and volume of traffic. Overall provisions made for cyclists are few and far between, but there is some progress and a good start has been made on getting the planning process moving and putting administrative mechanisms in place which could be stimulated into taking more effective action.

The enforcement programs of the Victorian, NSW and WA police, namely the

This chart shows that most of the motorists 'killers' are male and under 30 years of age, so it is obvious what the solution is, even if the police don't currently have the resources, to completely remove the offenders from the roads.

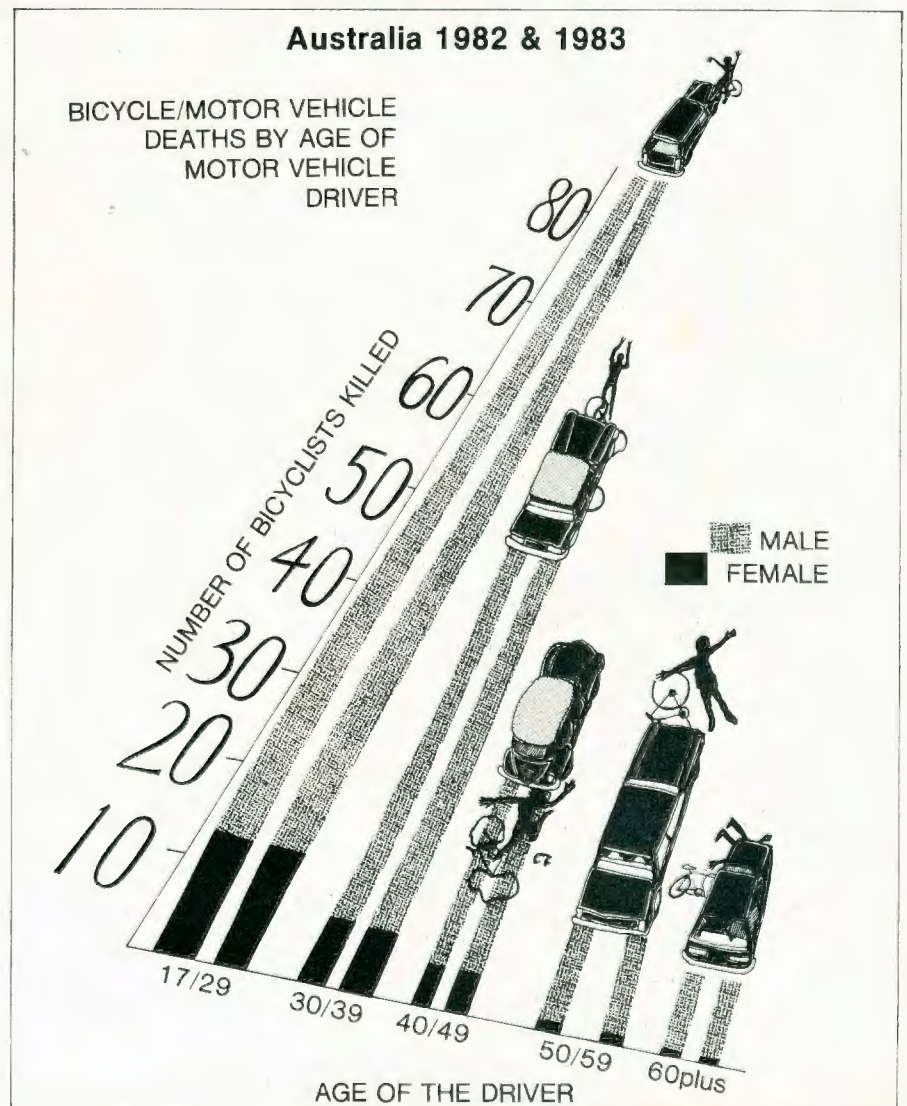
The overall needs of cyclists, expressed in terms of practical things that could be done for them, are shown on this chart. Readers can form their own opinions of the relative worth of individual programs in both the short and long term. The achievement ratings put in as percentages are purely subjective estimates, because no government agency ever evaluates its work.

The progress made in providing off-road facilities has only been fair because of the appalling quality of most of the paths built. The total distance of widened kerb lanes on main roads is negligible and most of the main road intersections were serious accidents occur have not been altered.

The progress made so far with the Bike Ed program in Victoria is very good, but there are no effective programs for child cyclists in the 6 to 9 age group and none for those over 13 years.

Bike Ed is unlikely to reach the intended figure of 80% penetration of the target age group by 1992 unless more resources are put into the program within the next two years. New South Wales and West Australia are rapidly setting up similar Bike Ed programs, but have a long way to go to catch up to Victoria. In other states the quality and effectiveness of other education programs is suspect and I doubt if what is being done in Queensland is effective at all.

Other education programs, namely Roadworks, Post primary curriculum units and the Bicycle Offences Report system only reach a small proportion of the children they are targeted at, and no overall plan exists to establish the long



Bicycle Offences report system, only reach a small proportion of the children (about 20%) and no police force has long term goals for any of these programs with defined performance criteria. Furthermore, the enforcement of bicycle law for serious bicycle traffic offences by older children does not occur. A system of on-the-spot fines needs to be introduced for repeated offenders over 13 years of age. The re-introduction of police bicycle patrols in residential areas that are level enough for easy cycling also needs to be considered.

Riding at night without lights, not obeying traffic lights and other intersec-

tion controls and wrong-way riding are the most blatant of the common offenses. There are approximately 1 million BMX bikes – owned by high risk males – and 95% of them have no lights and only and only 40% of them are fitted with a rear reflector. The annual accident cost due to non-compliance with existing traffic laws is in the region of \$20 million per year and provides a compelling economic reason to develop a bicycle law enforcement capability.

The safety initiatives of most benefit to cyclists are technical improvements in efficient speeding detection devices and their application on all roads which would then make it feasible to introduce

a 40 km/h speed limit on all neighbourhood and access roads. This should also reduce average speeds by ensuring compliance with existing speed limits.

The system of police speed cameras and fines has the potential to greatly reduce the number and severity of injuries, especially for children, adult pedestrians, bicyclists and motorcyclists.

Unprotected road users can be killed, brain damaged or crippled at impact velocities which most motorists usually survive free of personal injuries. Child road casualties alone cost Victoria \$80 million per year, and if you add the other unprotected road user casualties this goes up to around \$100 million.

Reducing the average speed on main roads should be the long term goal for the police because, at lower speeds motorists have more time to take action to avoid collisions, especially when fatigued or under stress.

There is now the potential to make much more happen, but the political will to do so is lacking. There are now many local and metropolitan bikeplans, but the rate at which they are being implemented is slow indeed, I doubt if most of them ever will be implemented.

The emergence of bicycle lobby groups

Of crucial importance is the emergence of cycling organisations who lobby governments to make cycling safer, more enjoyable and more convenient.

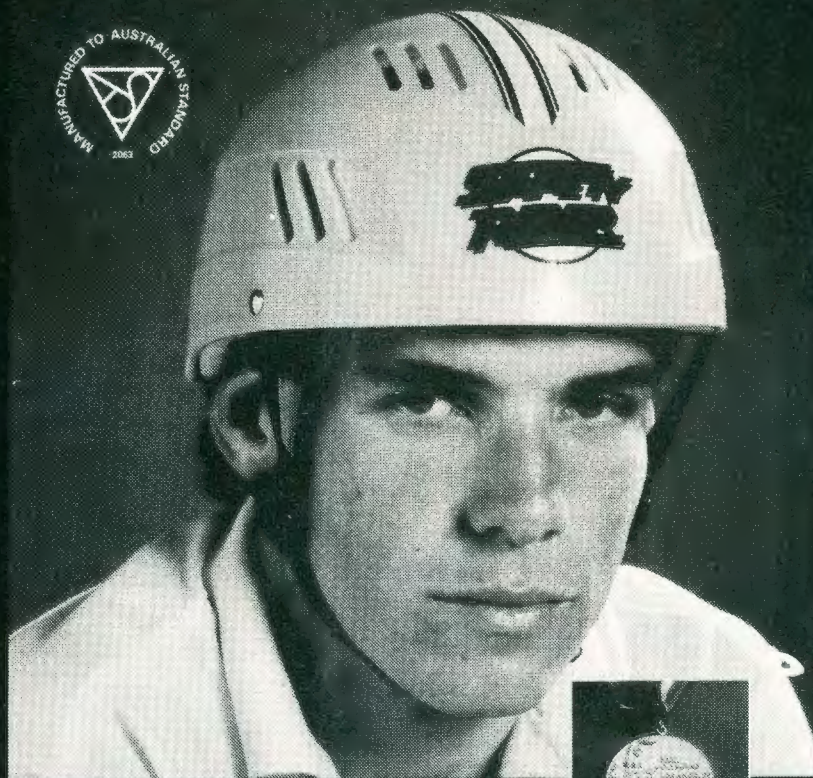
The papers written by bicycle advocates and published by the Bikesafe conference (held during 1986) clearly show that cyclists are recognised to a limited degree by government. The only problem with the bicycle advocacy movement is that it is bending over backwards to keep sweet its relations with the bureaucracy. It forgets that it is motorists who kill cyclists; cyclists do not kill motorists. The Bicycle Federation of Australia (BFA) has no policy on what must be done about the 10% to 15% of motorists who drive too fast to too recklessly and kill about two thirds of the cyclists on the roads every year.

One of the European Cycling Federation's main policies recognises that most cycling is done on the roads and that the main purpose of traffic engineering measures should be to, "enhance safety by reducing the overall speed of motor traffic."

The Europeans also call for the enforcement of traffic laws relating to road users but particularly motorists.

Indeed the latest research from the Nordic Association of Road and Traffic Engineers shows that a 10% reduction in average speed means that the risk of a fatal accident is reduced by 40%.

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THE LIFE AND TIMES OF
RUSSELL
MOCKRIDGE

Bicycle sport

A TRIBUTE TO AN AUSSIE CYCLING GIANT

by John Drummond



Mockridge teamed with Australia's greatest six-day cyclist, Roger Arnold and four times world track champion, Sid Patterson, won the Paris Six. Mockridge is seen here during the final hours of the race.

Edward Russell Mockridge was killed in a road racing accident in Melbourne in September 1958, and while I have contributed to the extraordinary flow of words, written by the world's best sporting journalists in many languages about the feats and death of Russell Mockridge somehow I have felt inadequate to write comprehensively on the manifold qualities that made up his outstanding life.

Now, before I too cross the final line, despite my inadequacies I shall try to reflect his life without prejudice, for in spite of the malice, accusation and jealousy, often directed at him and his family whilst alive, designed to deflect him from the path of principle, recrimination had no place in his life nor shall it have any place in my story.

Russell's untimely death at the age of thirty years so shocked the nation that an estimated 12,000 people lined the 20 km route from St Kilda road to Melbourne's Springvale Crematorium.

3000 crowded the funeral parlours but only 300 heard the service in the overfull Chapel. 440 cars followed the cortege.

Wreaths filling three cars were from all parts of Australia. Seven police motor cyclists headed the funeral procession. Fellow cyclists and cycling officials from every Australian State were present.

Hundreds of vehicles pulled onto the roadside to allow the cortege to pass, while drivers and passengers stood with bowed head as the mighty cyclist went on his last ride.

On that day Monday, 15 September, 1958, Russell Mockridge was cremated, and all Australia cried.

The Dual Olympic Champion and world rated cyclist was killed in a freak accident with a passenger bus at 10:30 in the morning in Clayton North, a suburb of Melbourne while competing in the 30th Annual Tour of Gippsland. It was world news within 30 minutes. Astonishingly all this happened in a city where Australian Rules Football is a religion. Such was the impact Russell Mockridge made on life.

What was the intangible that so stirred the passions of ordinary people? He was modest, unassuming, a gentle giant to a marked degree. Yet his presence and popularity was overwhelming. I think it was his lofty sense of sportsmanship combined with a touch of genius. These two qualities show through his cycling career time and time again – such as the time when he was given a narrow decision over reigning world sprint champion, Enzo Sacchi. With the huge crowd acclaiming his victory over

the Italian star, Mockridge dismounted and advanced on the judges imploring them to reverse the decision, for he knew in his heart that Sacchi had beaten him. When Sacchi left Australia in March 1958 he asserted that Mockridge was the finest sportsman he had ever encountered.

Everything the Geelong cyclist did had a touch of genius about it – such as when he created cycling history in France in 1952 by doing what the French would consider the impossible. He won both the amateur and professional Paris Grand Prix in the one year.

WHERE does the Mockridge saga start? In the instance of an enigma, as Russell was, no one can really say where or when. Edward Russell Mockridge (Edward was never used) was born 59 years ago on 18 July, 1928, at Newtown, Geelong, Victoria. He was educated at Geelong College. His father, Robert G Mockridge, was manager of the Cheetham Salt Works.

Russell had an elder brother, Graham, who like his father was a self made man, and became a prosperous business man in Red Cliffs, some 16 kilometres east of the Victorian border town of Mildura.

Graham and Russell, had a close affinity and spent most of their adolescent years playing in the bush, especially in the school holiday period.

The Geelong College motto, "Sic itur ad astra" in effect means, "here lies the road to immortality". And the name Mockridge is immortalised in the annals of cycling.

Perhaps the starting point of the Mockridge story began in his formative years with his brother in the bush. For he consistently returned to his adolescent haunts as his disappointments arose. Like his decision to try football as a sport in 1944 when the Geelong Football Club, in recess, was conducting an off-season coaching clinic in Geelong City. Russell became involved and looked a likely prospect. For he had exceptional speed, kicked farther and straighter than any other player and the coaches agreed he would make a brilliant centre-half back or a good forward.

But he missed easy marks and appeared to have problems judging the flight of the ball until it was very close. It was then discovered that Russell had defective eyesight and he would have to wear spectacles permanently.

Football was out. So Russell and his brother resumed their bush activity.

He was 18 years old when he decided to have a shot at cycling. He fashioned cycling shoes from street uppers, gathered the family shared bicycle with its *Major Taylor* handlebars, dressed himself in shorts and rolled up to the

Geelong Amateur Cycling Club's usual winter Saturday afternoon road race start.

Alex McPherson who was everything in the Geelong Club, took one look at the new hopeful and his bicycle and placed him on limit for the handicapped event. But McPherson had not reckoned with Russell's determination or natural ability, he was deceived by looks because Mockridge won by five minutes, and would have also gained fastest time had anyone been there to clock him in. The timekeeper was following the scratchmen prior to making his usual journey to the front at the finish line.

Despite a huge hike back in the marks three fastest times were recorded, and Russell was on scratch in four rides. His clubmates could not understand his apparent lack of elation at being on scratch. He had achieved in just four starts what most of his compatriots strived for during the whole of their careers. But to the gifted Geelong cyclist it was not unique.

Before the end of his first season he had won the Western Districts of Victoria, and the Geelong Amateur Cycling Club road championships. At the conclusion of the road season (October 1946) Jack Baker, a rider with International experience, and Stuart Cunningham, a Geelong Clubman of some repute, joined forces to educate the obviously talented rookie in the finer rudiments of cycling. Thus Russell was ready to enter open competition when the 1947 road season arrived.

At his sixth open start he finished third, following with fastest time in the "Castlemaine", a performance that saw his selection in the Victorian team to the 1947 National Championships. The titles were decided at Centennial Park, Sydney. Mockridge was the only remaining Victorian as the field bunched up for the final sprint. He won going away and was subsequently selected for the 1948 Olympic Games in London, where bugged with punctures he finished 29th.

It was following his selection race championship victory that his strong sense of sportsmanship first surfaced. He refused an invitation to speak over National radio network saying, "Why should I claim the limelight. I couldn't have won without the teamwork."

If told, following on Russell's national victory on the gruelling Centennial Park circuit only fourteen months after taking up the sport of cycling, that Mockridge would later become a world class sprinter, the purveyor of such a prediction would have been laughed to scorn. But such was the genius of Russell Mockridge that this was to be the case.

Russell was a quiet, studious and determined character whose attitude often alienated him from his contemporaries.



Indeed some considered him a snob. He was courteous to the extreme.

He was fond of good books so he chose journalism as a vocation and commenced a working life as a cadet journalist with the Geelong Advertiser. But shyness led to his resignation.

According, to his brother Graham, Russell was often short of money and the only thing he really cared about was sport. He was a good athlete, capable of running a quick mile, was a fast swimmer and a speedy footballer. But his poor eye-sight restricted his choice. Of all the sports he would have chosen that would have given him a wealthy existence he chose cycling, which gave little other than fame.

Perhaps it is an indictment of the Australian cycle racing system that it returns so little to its champions.

In order to overcome boredom between road sessions while waiting for the London Olympics Mockridge's Geelong advisors suggested he should compete in selected track events. Considering his Olympic road race involvement Russell chose the 1000 metre time

The remarkable Russell Mockridge behind Lionel Cox ride a lap of honour at Helsinki following their gold medal win.

trail. The Geelong West Velodrome was measured for the distance and the Olympic road race representative trained for this track cycling debut.

Russell won the Victorian 1000 m time trial championship at his first appearance in track cycling. Ten days later he was the National champion.

Following the London Olympics Russell returned to Melbourne in the midst of the 1949 Australian road season hampered by a knee injury. He was obliged to seek medical aid advising a long rest, so he announced a temporary retirement from road cycling advising that he would return for the summer track season.

Following this ultimate triumph he was the number one selection, ahead of reigning world sprint champion Sid Patterson, for the forthcoming New Zealand Empire Games.

What a season it was! At the National championships in Bundaberg, Queensland, he won all the titles and an Empire Games test selection 4000 metres pursuit.

In Auckland, New Zealand, while on the crest of a wave, he shocked the cycling world by announcing his retirement to study theology to become a minister of religion. A year later the Commonwealth Jubilee Committee, through Hubert Opperman (now Sir Hubert), and a prominent Victorian administrator, C J Gray lured Mockridge out of retirement with the intention of contesting the 1951 world sprint championship. Coached by former professional sprint champion Jack Fitzgerald, Russell quickly regained his speed. For relaxation from his studies, Mockridge had been rowing, a discipline at which he had become quite proficient, the increased power across his shoulders had become evident.

In his first training match he cleared out to record a 12.2 last 200 metres.

Thinking the time was incorrect "Fitzie" lined the riders up again and "Mocka" as he was now known, repeated the effort. Fitzgerald was puzzled, and no wonder, for Russell was no more than halfway through his preparation and still on a restricted 88 inch gear.

Mockridge was to later surprise the whole cycling world, by coming second to reigning sprint champion Italian Enzo Sacchi in the Milan world championships.

In 1952 Russell was at the peak of performance and skill. He won every Australian title he contested, and was an automatic selection for the Helsinki Olympic Games of that year, but he became the centre of the greatest selection storm ever to rock the Australian Olympic Federation. His name was taken off the Federation's Olympic list when he refused to sign a bond requiring him to remain an amateur for three years after the Helsinki Games. Just because he thought he may decide to race professionally.

The whole nation was outraged. The press wrote editorials condemning the hypocrisy of the Australian Olympic Federation. Athletes could sign the bond, then retire after the Games to emerge later as a professional, or just tear the contract up as it only bound them morally. The issue was even discussed in Federal Parliament.

Throughout the furor that raged around him Mockridge remained inflexible, his honesty was total.

He felt no injustice when he boarded a ship for Europe, believing that he would take no part in the Helsinki Olympics. He planned to settle with his wife Irene, and his beloved books, perhaps to spend half the year racing in Europe and the other half working among the sick and those in need in the slum districts of Britain.

Fate was to determine otherwise. The enigma of the era was giving Europe's best amateur cyclist's thrashing after thrashing, and that included the Italian world champion Enzo Sacchi. Of course, the dour AOF remained resolute.

The day of reckoning came on July 6, 1952. At Vincennes track in Paris, the Olympic reject handed out another defeat to Sacchi. The packed stands around the 333 metre track were shocked into silence by this Australian win, for the previous day he had changed the rules of French cycling.

For as long as anyone could remember the amateur and professional Grand Prix of Paris were the greatest prize of French track cycling, the Tour de France of the track as it were. As winner of the amateur Grand Prix Mockridge was accorded the honour of taking part in the professional counterpart, and won. Never before had an amateur defeated the professionals, and never will they again, the French made certain of that by abolishing the tradition.

On the way to the final Russell defeated Dutch Olympic champion Ari Van Vliet, former amateur world sprint champion, Australian Sid Patterson and French sprint champion J Bellenger. The final saw underdog Russell Mockridge opposed to triple Grand Prix winner Englishman, Reg Harris, and the then current world sprint champion Jan Derksen of Holland.

Immediately the starter signalled the race had begun all three stood on the mark for six minutes in an endeavour to force each other into the lead, then they moved fifty metres, and stood another five minutes.

The tension was overwhelming. Who was this bespectacled amateur rider who was matching the tactics of Europe's best professional sprinters? At the 200 metre mark Derksen had the lead from

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Harris. Coming into the final straight Harris moved to Derksen, then Mockridge with a withering burst of speed shot past a surrendering Harris, gathered in Derksen at 40 metres, to score going away with both hands punching the air.

The French morning newspapers headed their Grand Prix stories simply Mockridge – right across the top of the sporting page in 30 mm type.

When the news was flashed over the BBC the announcer expressed his astonishment that Mockridge had been deleted from the Australian Olympic Team.

Later that morning moves were made through the Mayor of the city of Geelong. Councillor Bervin Purnell to have the Geelong cyclist reinstated in the Helsinki Olympic Team. Councillor Purnell firstly spoke to Hubert Opperman and between them they set up negotiations, which after three days of compromise ended with Mockridge signing a one year bond to which Councillor Purnell had no hesitation in guaranteeing Russell's part of the agreement.

If the Chairman and Secretary of the AOF, G G Alderson and Edgar Tanner respectively, ever had any doubt about the honesty of men they must have been cast aside when Mockridge stood by his agreement for the full twelve months, despite very lucrative offers to race professionally both home and abroad.

When Mockridge was told agreement had been reached and he was required to be in Helsinki, his response was typical, he remarked "That will be very nice. Then all I've got to do is win an Olympic title for Australia, and that is quite a responsibility."

So on the morning prior to the greatest individual Australian Olympic cycling effort (even to this day) Russell tapped on Edgar Tanner's door in Helsinki and quietly said, "I'm here."

There was no cycling manager sent to Helsinki because funds were not available. Lindsay McLeod, the Victorian nominee, had to stay home. Mockridge was entered for the 1000 m time trial and the tandem pairs which was then an Olympic championship, but not the sprint. In the sprint he was clearly the world's best. But, Lionel Cox, the eventual silver medalist, did not let us down, and he had no pretensions as a time trialist.

Russell had brought a tandem and the essential equipment, because the Olympic team had nothing, not even a mechanic. Next day he and Lionel Cox had their first ride together on a tandem. Three days later they were the Olympic gold medalists. They remained undefeated in several revenge matches throughout Europe.

I well recollect listening to the raucous voice of the BBC commentator as he excitedly described "Mocca's" gold winning time trial in the world record time of 1 min 11.1 secs.

Mockridge returned to Australia on the ocean liner "Otranto" in November, 1952 to a VIP welcome. His Olympic blazer was presented by Hubert Opperman, MP.

The modest sporting giant was given a hero's welcome home. He was the recipient of a civic reception given by the Lord Mayor of Melbourne and then brought under police escort to the Geelong City Hall, where the Mayor gave him another civic reception.

Russell made his reappearance on the track in Australia before the biggest crowd ever seen at the Geelong West Velodrome, on 6 December, 1952.

Mockridge continued his good form taking a string of titles in a seemingly never ending run of success.

Following developing problems with Australian cycling officialdom Mockridge accompanied by Lionel Cox left for Europe on March 17th, 1953. Back in England, and on the continent the Geelong Olympic champion was challenged by the current cycling stars, Cyril Peacock of Great Britain and Andre Gruchet of France. They both fell before the might of Mockridge, and his

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Ill and suffering from a leg injury Russell Mockridge finished 64th in the 1955 Tour de France an example of courage and determination that has few equals. The photo shows Mockridge at the end of a tough stage in the Tour.

name was on everyone's lips as the approach of the season ending with Grand Prix Paris. As expected the Australian remained as "King of Sprint", with a resounding victory over Gruchet and his travelling mate Cox.

Mockridge had changed the rules by his victory the previous year and if he was to defend his title it had to be as a professional. There was no impediment to him doing so as his agreement with the AOF had now lapsed.

After some agonizing Russell decided to turn professional. His father duly called on Roy Ward, a journalist friend of the Mockridge family and an official of the Geelong Amateur Cycling Club. After the usual formalities Russell was issued with a professional licence.

On Sunday 21 June he defended his Paris Grand Prix in his first ride as a

professional. Racing with a severe wrist injury Russell won the admiration of the French crowd by entering the final and finishing third to the great Oscar Plattner of Switzerland, and Louis of France.

In 1954 Mockridge received a most serious setback. He was stricken with the cyclists most dreaded scourge, glandular fever which sapped his strength for two years, baffling all the medical skill and knowledge of his doctors. Mockridge returned to good health and his first love of road cycling in the European season of 1955. The French and Italians who had witnessed his track skills watched incredulously as he punished himself to become a roadman.

On the Riviera he was turned along the incorrect road when he broke away from the peloton and virtually had the race won. In the motor paced Rome-Naples-Rome he finished well up the classifications, being the second non-Italian to finish. The French just could not believe that a champion track sprinter could be such an accomplished road rider.

Following a win in the Tour of Vaucluse, Russell was invited to ride with the Luxembourg team in the Tour de France. He became the first Australian cyclist since Hubert Opperman to complete the Tour.

One thing "Mocca" did find out from the Tour was: that to win the worlds toughest Tour one needed a special preparation of years spent on the road to build up a resistance to the rigours of the massive mountain climbs.

The 11th stage over Mont Ventoux, unhappily coinciding with his birthday, was probably the most depressing day of his life. It was the day the Mountain came to Mohammed. A false hill just before the mountain, Russell just couldn't ride up it. He got off his bicycle and had a hose down and then crawled along the road a bit more. But the searing heat got to him again so he went into a house and had another hose down. All the time he was cramming load sugar into his mouth.

He kept pushing but the mountain just went on and up. He thought, how terrible, I will never reach the top. However by the time he was nearing the summit his nemesis had passed and he was going a lot better. He thought of the words of his team leader, Charly Gaul, who would ride up to him on the mountain passes and say "Save yourself boy; take your time, there's a long way to go and I may need your help."

Charly Gaul was third overall, and Russell's job was each time he punctured to drop back and help him regain the peloton. For this he was to receive 300 pounds.

When the Tour was over Russell collected his 300 pounds for the three har-

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dest weeks of labour in his career. But, get to Paris he did, only not ahead of Louison Bobet who won the Tour for the third successive year.

Unlike most of the other riders, however, the 1955 Tour de France did not end for Russell Mockridge with the final stage to Paris. He was contracted to the promoter of the Essendon Board Track to match race several local and European champions during the forthcoming 1955/56 track season. So with his wife and daughter, Melinda, he returned to Melbourne.

Although the effects of the muscle wrenching Tour were to stay with him for the whole of the track season, by a judicious choice of events and avoiding any track championships Russell emerged from the season undefeated in match racing.

On the road he was a sensation as he eclipsed great champions like Eddie Smith, Alan Geddes, Hee Sutherland, and others with consummate skill.

It was in August, 1956, in Hobart that Mockridge won the first of his three Australian professional road titles after surviving a fruitless protest by defender, Eddie Smith.

Where money is concerned there is usually some organisation, and within professional sport it is more than incidental and something officials find difficult to control. Backmarkers in the

uniquely Australian cycling handicap system of the time found they had a better chance of overtaking the outmarkers if they combined and this sometime led to collusion.

It should be stressed that there is a marked difference between teaming and collusion. In simple terms, collusion means teaming with evil intent. The worst form of collusion is for an outmarker to deliberately slow the field for a given backmarker – and this practice far too often escaped the attention of race officials.

Everybody knew that Mockridge would have no part of arrangements that could be construed as collusion. Consequently, he became the target for innuendo and accusation by certain riders, they even boasted, "we got rid of Hoobin (Hoobin being the amateur world champion who turned professional on returning to Australia) and we'll do the same to Mockridge". But they reckoned without his brilliance.

Russell did not quit he went on, often as a loner, to sweep all before him in a never ending saga of success. His best year as a professional was 1957. Russell had become a resident of Melbourne and a team relationship was formed with Les Dunne, a trade representative with Russell's sponsor Healings and team mechanic. He also took into his confidence Alec Weston a school teacher and

masseur. Probably because of the team effort Russell won most of the professional road races from scratch or took fastest time.

He won all the major events including the National Championship, Mercury Tour, Tour of Gippsland and the Sun Tour. During the Sun Tour Mockridge trailed by more than two minutes on the final stage so he unleashed one of the most powerful attacks of his career when he charged through the hills with George Goodwin, the previous year winner glued to his wheel, to finish more than five minutes ahead of the chasing peloton.

The gut-wrenching ride through the Dandenong Ranges was among Russell's best. The following motor cycle police were scraping the footrests of their cycles on the road around the hairpin bends in order to maintain contact through the rainforests.

Mockridge was reliving his Tour de France experience with his fitness and daring at its peak.

At 30 years of age he was Australia's dominant rider and considered he had five more seasons at the top. Secretly he was preparing himself for another challenge with the mountains of the Tour de France. This time with three years of training in his legs.

Mont Ventoux would not stop him – but death did. ■

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A FAT-TYRE FUTURE

The fat-tyre fanatic

THE fat-tyred mountain bike is a recent invention with a promising future. The first bike of its type, an Araya from Japan, was imported as a sample by General Accessories Pty Ltd (then the makers of Malvern Star bicycles) in 1982. We subsequently reviewed it in issue 18 and since then even better machines have become available. This summer mountain bike sales are set to dominate the market in the eastern states but competitive events and tours have been slow to develop.

From the outset the mountain bike has been accepted as an ideal general purpose bike for Australian conditions. This is partly because a true all-purpose has never been available in this country. In the past the major influences on the buying public have come from our long tradition in track racing and even the old postman's delivery bike was closer to the racing machine than the forerunner of the modern mountain bike: the balloon-tyred American delivery bike.

Perhaps the most interesting side effect of the rise of the mountain bike is its effect on the touring scene. Many people now choose fat-tyres for touring

instead of the more conventional road machines. The touring bike has never been a big seller in Oz but since mountain bikes went on sale even fewer touring machines are being bought and sold.

What will eventually become apparent as the modern bicycle scene matures is that many people will realise that the mountain bike is a bicycle for all uses there are some things it does better than others. And there are some things it doesn't do well at all (try racing one on sealed roads for instance).

Still this type of bike has a great future. But will its real potential be fully realised in the near future?

Though sales are booming the off-road racing scene is yet to fully get its act together. There have been at least three national championships in the last four years but the race fields have, in most cases, been small and inexperienced. The sport has, however, managed to produce some real talent. The current champs, Werner Wholrab in the road event and Glen Roche in the Trials have proven that they have the ability and skill to achieve their status but until there is sufficient support and money in the system to send these people to com-

pete in major international competitions the local sport will lose good riders before their careers even begin.

What is most needed is an event promoter who is able to develop the sport into a national series (there are many examples elsewhere in the world) and capture the imagination of not only the cycling enthusiasts but the general public as a whole. It happened in BMX but most of the people presently involved in the sport are hoping that the off-road scene will not follow the boom-or-bust path taken by the early BMX promoters.

The sport is still to be recognised officially but once a series is established the organisational side should fall into place.

There are only a few organised clubs and only a minority offer a full range of activities including regular competition and touring events. Perhaps the most successful club to date is the Hunter Valley Mountain Bike Club which has been staging well organised competitive in the Newcastle region of NSW for a number of years. It is no coincidence that national off-road champion Werner Wholrab is a member of this club.



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A BICYCLE IS ONLY AS GOOD AS IT IS ASSEMBLED

The following report provides description of one of the Hunter Club's longest running events: the Paterson Winter Classic. The event is held annually in the Hunter region and attracts riders from all over the country.

MOUNTAIN BIKING'S MECCA

Fat-tyre competition

The 1987 Paterson Winter Classic

by BOB JONES

PERSISTENT heavy rain in the fortnight prior to the event promised a wet and muddy site for running of the Classic but miraculously the sun came out on Friday and by Sunday the course had dried to a smooth tacky surface that gave a fast, if tricky ride.

This was the fourth edition of this popular, annual off-road race and it was decided to try a novel approach, giving the increasing number of road racers turning to the sport a fair chance. We felt The organisers felt that a time trial on an uphill gravel road coupled with an off-road circuit would emphasise fitness as well as bike-handling skill.

The entries included such notables as Werner Wohlrab, current national and state off-road champion, Peter Hansen, winner of the Simpson Desert challenge, John Houston, National A level road racer, as well as a strong Sydney contingent with such people as Dave Howells and Steve Lowe. The thirty-seven strong field was filled out with visitors from Canberra, Sydney and the Central Coast, along with hopefuls from the local area.

We also saw the debut of the official Repco Mountain Bike team who have signed on Wal Wohlrab, local rider Bruce Richards and Peter Bundy who was unable to compete on this occasion.

The morning time-trial which climbed for a steady five kilometres had riders pushing into a fairly stiff breeze on open sections and the warm conditions made for hot and thirsty work. The strong contenders emerged after this stage with five riders led by Wohlrab bettering 14 minutes. At this point the afternoon stage was divided into two grades, with the remainder of the experts having recorded up to 17 minutes for the trial and the novices between 18 and 25 minutes.

So it was sixteen riders who made up the expert category sprinting into the uphill start after lunch. At the end of the first lap, Wohlrab led through the pits



Glen Roche shows how it's done as he clears a log during the Queensland Observed Trials championships.

with riders stringing out, though still in close attendance with gaps in terms of seconds. The story was different on lap three as the pressure applied by the leaders began to tell and the following rider's faces showed gritted teeth and furrowed brows as the gaps stretched.

It was clear that local road ace, Grant Croese, was putting in the ride of his life and had a firm grip on second place, even starting to gain on the leader. However, it was the bright blue, black and yellow jersey of Wohlrab that emerged up the finish climb on the fourth and final lap, and a broad grin on his face at last, as he racked up his eighth straight win. Grant Croese's feat was no less as two minutes later he beat his nearest rival, Peter Hansen, by a minute through to finish. Grant's placing was all the more remarkable as he rode a stock two year old Apollo Himalaya while most of this class were on the latest light-weights.

Then it was the turn of the novices, competing over two laps and led out by popular North Shore bike shop owner, Steve Nesbitt of Cranks who held onto this slot to record his first off-road win. The remaining twenty riders raced and struggled their way over the line for the next ten minutes until it was all over bar the prize giving.

Thanks to the generosity of local and Sydney shops, namely St Ives Bicycle Centre, Hadley Cycles, Europa Cycles, Champion Cycles and especially local dealer Kel Pritchard of Gateshead Cycles, who alone donated over \$500 worth of gear to the (roughly) \$800 tally on offer, we were able to reward over one third of the entrants while the

others seemed happy enough with the competition alone.

Special thanks are due also to *Freewheeling* for the donation of two, two year subscriptions for the first woman rider and first veteran. The day was rated a resounding success and so it's on to the next challenge for all concerned. That's mountain biking.

Results

Experts

1. W Wohlrab 55.23
2. G Croese 57.40
3. P Hansen 58.46
4. D Howells 58.57
5. J Houston 59.45
6. D McAlpine 59.51

Novices

1. S Nesbitt 42.19
2. D Phillips 43.56
3. L Chalker 44.06
4. R Jones 45.16

First woman

Karen Wells 48.46

First junior

S Kelly 45.55

First Veteran

R Jones 45.16

THE following month Brisbane was the scene for it's first ever mountain bike championships. Mountain bike sales in Queensland are trailing most of the other states. This is surprising because the Sunshine State lead the nation in the growth of the BMX craze years ago.

WOHLRAB RETAINS THE NATIONAL TITLE

Fat-tired competition

The SunTour-Bell National mountain bike titles

WERNER Wohlrab of Newcastle in New South Wales retained the National Mountain Bike Title with a convincing win in the 1987 SunTour-Bell National Mountain Bike Championships held in Brisbane on September 13, 1987.

Wohlrab was in control from the start and never really looked to be in danger. "He has been always well prepared for these races and it shows in the end," said National Trials Champion Glen Roche of Victoria.

Just one day prior Glen won the Queensland Trials Championships by the same sort of margin. However, trials is a specialist event that relies more on balance and technique than physical strength and endurance so Glen found himself somewhat outclassed by the former canoeist who has now run up a

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Werner Wohlrab (left) chats with his runners up Grant Croese and Dave Howells at the end of the Paterson Winter Classic.

tally of nine major Mountain Bike victories in a row.

"I have been looking for a sponsor who is prepared to send me over to America not only to wave the flag for Australian mountain biking, but to obtain whatever knowledge I can to assist this sport to develop here into the entity it has become in the USA," said Werner after the presentation. In winning the National Title Werner took home a Sun-tour XC Accushift Ensemble, Bell V1 Pro Helmet, plus various other prizes to the value \$1,400. The total prize pool for the event was over \$3,000.

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A total of 35 competitors took part in either the Novice or Pro Class with the first woman to finish being Cyndi Holmes formerly of Michigan, USA.

The course was very fast and covered in sharp shale rock that saw many retire with punctures.

The race was organised by Panorama Pedal Promotions who have organised the National Mountain Bike titles since 1984. The choice to conduct this year's title in Brisbane was primarily due to the fact that Brisbane Forest Parks welcomed the event and provided unparalleled assistance. There are a number of problems in other States in respect to finding appropriate courses. Brisbane offered a refreshing alternative.

Panorama Pedal Promotions, based in Sydney, also had the enlisted invaluable assistance from Michael Roberts of Pedal Power Couriers who is leading the way for mountain bike competitions in Queensland. Already Michael has plans for an event to take place in February next year as part of the Australian Cycling Federation's Centenary of Cycling celebrations which will also take place in Brisbane. It is possible, that if a venue cannot be found in Canberra for the 1988 National Mountain Bike Championships, the event will land itself in Brisbane once again.

Results

Pro class - National championship - 34 km

1. Werner Wohlrab, Newcastle 1:14:23.18
2. Grant Croese, Newcastle 1:20:32.67
3. Ian Downing, Maroochydhore 1:25:32.02
4. Michael Croese, Newcastle 1:31:27.16
5. David Russell, Brisbane 1:35:09.37
6. Anthony Whiteley, Brisbane 1:37:11.38
7. Darren Assink, Mt Nebo 1:37:26.22
8. Glen Roche Melbourne 1:39:53.01
9. Rod Hay, Gold Coast 1:56:05.60

Novice class 11 km

1. Rodney Crerar Buderim 25:57.62
2. Michael Lane, Mt Nebo 26:24.49
3. Ian McChesney-Clark, Brisbane 26:46.46
4. Mark Dixon, Brisbane 27:31.16
5. Ray Newing, Brisbane 28:25.58

Womens 11 km

1. Cyndi Holmes, Michigan USA 31:31.50
2. Joanne Case, Maroochydhore 32:16.08
3. Joy Elliot, Vancouver, Canada 34:18.99

LAST Easter an event of a different type was run for the first time in the searing heat and sand ridges of the Simpson Desert. Next year the event will be staged again and is sure to attract more competitors and public interest.

The organisers have recently released details and rules for the 1988 event and the following information is an edited version of their press releases.

BEATING THE CRUEL SIMPSON

Fat-tyre competition

The Simpson Desert Challenge 1988

THE desert was the winner last year in one of the world's most unique cycling endurance events, the Simpson Desert Cycle Challenge. It may be the same result again, but for the second race in April, 1988, competitors will have a choice between two routes through the harsh terrain.

The first is for the Cycle Challenge proper, with riders traversing 360 km of sand-dunes and some of the toughest and most isolated desert terrain in the world. The second, but no less daunting is the Simpson Desert Cycle Race over 600 km, following the maintained Rig Road, which skirts part of the dune country and ends in Birdsville.

Both events will start from the western edge of the desert and back-up vehicles driven by experienced four-wheel drivers will be recommended again for all participating riders.

As many riders found last year, the sand dunes were just too soft to ride up and had to be tackled on foot, a punishing task in 35 degree heat. But despite the hardships, last year 32 riders ranging in age from 12 to 73 took part and most vowed to return, eager to improve on their performances.

The Bicentenary year Challenge shapes up as a formidable test of fitness and preparation. It will start on Monday, April 4 and finish in Birdsville five days later with a special presentation barbecue.

For further information contact Energy Promotions (02) 997-8011



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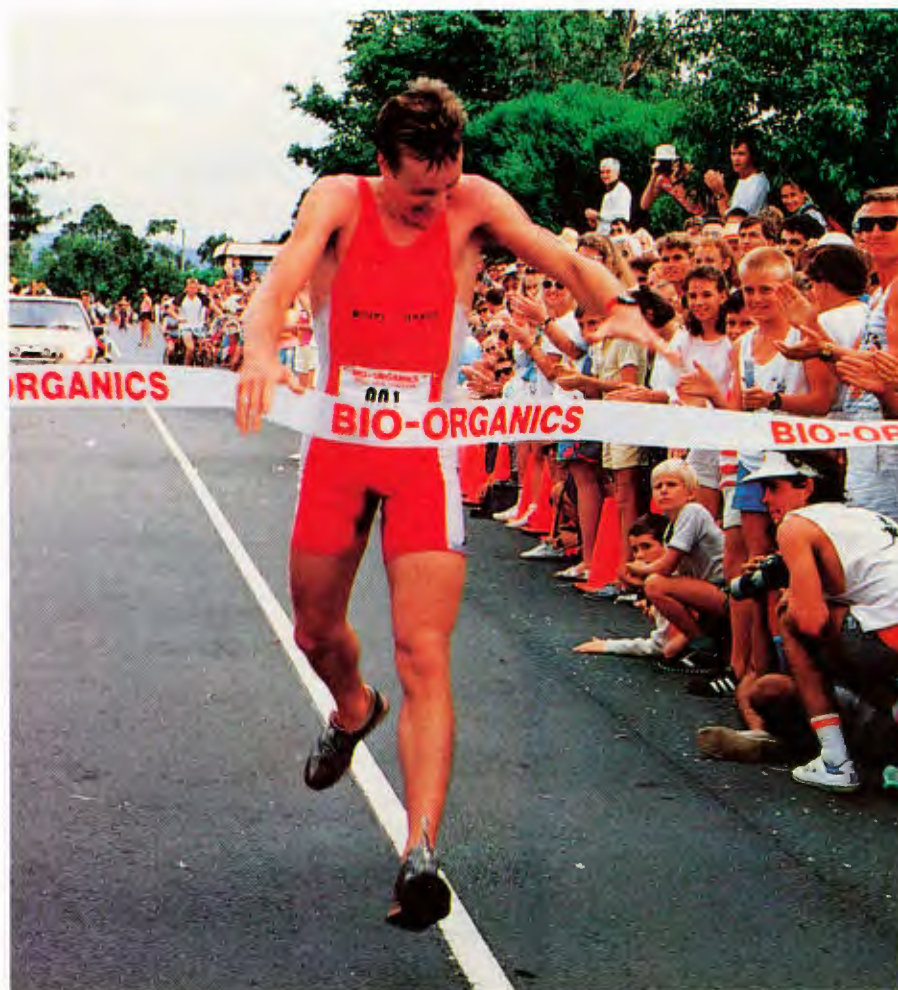


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WINTER SOLDIERS – SUMMER ACHIEVERS

Triathlon

by JOHN DRUMMOND
Photography by Frank Walsh



The Gold Coast's Great Race Triathlon shows the current strength of the Australian triathlon scene. Clockwise from the top left: A section of the 600 strong field at the start of the Great Race Triathlon on Queensland's Gold Coast. There off on the swim leg of the great Race. No, not a criterium, just triathletes cornering in a bunch during the cycle section. Greg Stewart of Victoria finished second overall. Sue Turner of West Australia shows her elation as she wins the womens section of the Great Race. Troy Fidler wins the bike leg and is first into the run. Photography by Frank Walsh.



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• removable, five position ratcheted visor for extra eye protection (light gray sun tint standard, clear and graded optional) • sweat absorbing front chamois (two sets) • quick release chin strap with chamois cover • distinct look in metallic colors (silver, anthracite or red). When you study all the features, you'll be as impressed as Eddy Merckx.

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You'll also be glad to know that both Lazer helmets meet or exceed the tough ANSI Z90.4 safety standard. That's not only good news for USCF racers and triathletes, but it's also good news for anyone concerned with safety and superior protection.

Now that you've had a brief introduction to the world's newest, most technologically advanced bicycle helmets, try one on at your favorite bike shop. For a full color Lazer Helmets brochure, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: **Gerry J O'Brien Imports** 7/9 Pilgrim Court Ringwood Victoria 3134



LAZER

THE sense of appeal in a triathlon event rests in the challenge to every individual's capacity. From when competitors wade into the water at the start until they run past the finishing line everything hinges on the reserves of each individual.

Australians being notoriously individualistic are prone to the burgeoning sport of Triathlon, and are therefore destined for great things. This was amply demonstrated when Australian Triathletes intruded on the World triathlon scene as summer achievers as a result of some keen winter soldiering, like pyramid training in the swimming pool, learning how to keep safe and warm on badly lit winter night runs, or improving cycling skills racing and training with cycling club members.

The progress becomes noticeable in the assault on the Hawaii Ironman World Triathlon championship in October of last year, when leading East Coast Triathletes Greg Stewart, and Tony Sattler finished in the first ten among the professionals and Louise MacKinlay won the 18/24 womens age group.

The performances were Australia's best in the eight year history of the masochistic sport, which commenced in Hawaii when 14 competitors joined Captain John Collins, a US serviceman, stationed in the Philippines to decide what was the ultimate test of stamina, as a result of a bar-room debate. The standards set by the Australians were even more impressive when you consider the field in the Ironman was the best in its history.

Some five weeks later "Aussie" triathletes Stephen Foster, Matthew Braban, Nick Croft and Sean Hill cemented the Hawaii show by defeating some highly credentialed triathletes from the United States of America, France, West Germany and Denmark by winning the teams trophy in the Triathlon Des Cimes, held on the exotic tropical island of Reunion in the Indian Ocean. The win against Internationals was a superbly executed exercise in difficult climatic conditions.

Australia also entered the International triathlon promotional field with a brilliant presentation of the \$150,000 World Sprint Championship during the Americas Cup finals held in Fremantle in January of this year. Not only was it a huge success for the organiser but also for Australian competitors, who mostly finished high up in the placings.

Winners of the 1.5km swim, 40km cycle and 10km run World Championship came from across the Tasman. Richard Wells and Erin Baker, both New Zealanders were the first man and woman to arrive at the finish. But of greater satisfaction to Australia were the number of competitors who performed

as well as internationals from the United States of America, Singapore, Zimbabwe, Japan and Europe.

Best performance by an Australian was given by the 1986 National Triathlon Sprint Champion, Victorian, Stephen Foster, when he sprinted to the finish line to decide second place with Europe's top rated triathlete Bob Barel and America's world class triathlete Scott Tinley. Just three seconds separated the three across the line.

If further proof was needed that the appeal in a triathlon lies in its challenge to individualism, it was provided in the Bio-Organics sponsored Great Race Triathlon, at Pacific Fair on Queensland's Gold Coast. Encompassing the Australian Long Course Championship a 2km swim, 75km cycle leg, and a 20km run attracted 600 odd contestants and 514 completed the course.

Dutchman Robert (Bob) Barel rolled an international field, ahead by 1 min 38 secs in a new Australian record time of 3 hours 25 minutes 43 secs.

In a field containing Triathletes from Holland, West Germany, United States of America and Japan, Australian triathletes won nine placings in the first ten to finish. Greg Stewart of Victoria, was second placed, Matthew Braban of Queensland's Sunshine Coast was third, with Victoria's Stephen Foster being fourth.

First woman home was West Australian Sue Turner in 3-54-30 from Victoria's Virginia Bell. New South Wales Kim Hicks was third. Bob Barel, who has won 35 of his 47 triathlons praised the organisation of Barry and Julie Voevodin, and rated the field as "the most competitive in the world".

So now it's again to Hawaii for some of the 90 odd Australian qualifiers to compete in the 1987 BudLight Ironman Triathlon World Championship to be held on the island of Kona in the on 10 October 1987. *Freewheeling* wishes them well.

PREPARING FOR THE MAIN EVENT

Triathlon

An ultra triathlon for the bicentennial year

WITH only seven months to go, preparations for one of the biggest sporting events of the Bicentenary, the 1988 Beneficial Finance Six Day Ultra Triathlon, have already swung into top gear.

The organisers of the event, the Stirling Apex Club and Beneficial Finance have already accepted many entries and are now receiving enquiries from all

over Australia and throughout the world.

This special Bicentennial event, scheduled for April 18-23 next year, is believed to be the only one of its kind in the world and is noted for its extreme test of endurance.

The event covers 551 kilometres – 371 km cycling, 75 km canoeing and finally 105 km running.

One early entrant, Gary Gillies, 27, a Nautilus instructor, has begun a serious training programme. Gary finished in sixth position in his age group and ninth overall in the 1986 Beneficial Finance Six Day Ultra Triathlon.

Since then he has kept up the training momentum by competing in such events as the Festival City Marathon, the West Lakes Classic, in which he finished first, and many other cycling events.

He says he works out three times a week in the gym, but uses the bike every day, swims five times a week at the North Adelaide Swimming Centre (olympic size) and takes his own canoe a few kilometres two or three times a week at nearby West Lakes.

Gary says he runs as much as possible, always building his base mileage, but he is currently suffering a torn calf muscle from a recent "Corporate Cup" running event.

"My training schedule will pick up quite substantially from the start of the triathlon season in November, but really I'm looking forward to it because I enjoy every minute," he said.

"The curtain raiser to the Ultra Tri for me will be the Iron Man competition in New Zealand in March next year.

"However, the Ultra Tri will be the big event because it is a whole experience. You don't only test yourself to the limit; you enjoy yourself in the great atmosphere that will be evident throughout each day – and night – of the whole six days," he said.

The eight members of the organising committee have built on the experience of last year's Ultra Triathlon to make next year's event even bigger and better. They have been promoting the event not only throughout Australia, but in various countries around the world.

Mr Brian Scarborough, from the Stirling Apex Club, says that the committee will be holding a special 'Competitor's Seminar' in association with Beneficial Finance, to help competitors prepare for the event. "The seminar will be a chance for entrants and their support team to get advice on how to cope with the six days of endurance, what they need and what they should be doing to prepare," he said.

"These seminars will be held in Adelaide initially, but if the demand is strong enough, we will look at arranging something in the other states."

A limit of 200 entrants has been placed on the next year's event, with a slight increase in entrance fees, to cover the many services offered by the organisers, for example, pre-event carbo loading for entrants, tee-shirts, medical facilities, provision for overnight campsites and support crafts on the river. All of the services have been expanded – from medical support teams to toilet cleaners.

"Competitors are encouraged to enter early (this year) as a discount is available. Late entrants will see another slight increase in the entry fee in the three months lead up to the event in 1988," said Mr Scarborough.

The Stirling Apex Club and Beneficial Finance have been organising this event since the completion of the 1986 event. The major organisation is over, it is now just a matter of fine tuning in the lead up to the event. Anyone wanting more information on the Beneficial Finance Six Day Ultra Triathlon can contact Mr Brian Scarborough on (08) 388 5425.

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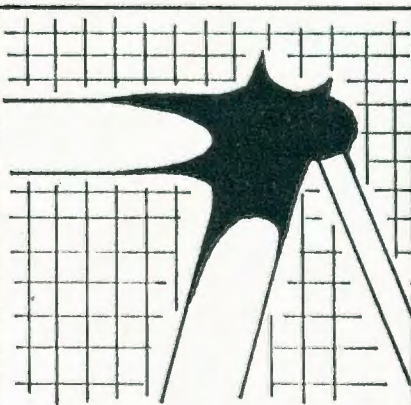
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THE 'GONG RIDE TURNS SIX

Bicycle events

by WARREN SALOMON

THE first ever Repco Sydney to the 'Gong Ride was not held in summer of 1982 but much earlier in March. Nigel Jenkins, the ride's co-founder, had recently returned from Europe. There he had come in contact with the famous London to Brighton Ride and was impressed with the concept. He had liked the English way of doing things: a bike ride; morning tea; crazy teams out-fits; and a relaxed social atmosphere.

Around that time I had been thinking of organising a ride for my readers and their friends so, over dinner one night, we decided to look for a suitable route in the Sydney region which would meet our criteria.

What we were looking for was route of roughly 85 km (to provide sufficient challenge) with good scenic attractions, somewhere along the way to serve morning teas, a nice spot for lunch and some way of getting back to the start again. The English had British Rail to move

their thousands and bikes back to London. Could the State Rail Authority do the same here?

Neither Nigel or I were sure if we chose the final route or it chose us. We had ridden all or parts of the 'coast road south to Wollongong before so, once we had decided that it was close to our ideal, it was only a matter of testing it out. Rain fell during the morning of the pilot ride and I didn't make it along but the outting confirmed the feeling that here at last was one of the best routes in the country for a real bicycle event.

So the Sydney to the 'Gong Ride was born. On Sunday November 21, 1982, the first of the 250 registered participants turned up in Belmore Park to collect their riders kit. That year all of the packaging and processing of forms and rider's materials was done with the help of a small group of friends. On the day it was much the same and the goodwill established on that first momentous ride has continued ever since.

The ride has always been greatly appreciated by its participants who in the early years were almost always *Freewheeling* readers. On the second ride in 1983 the numbers climbed to 750 followed by a jump to 1500 in 1984, 2100 in 1985 and around 3000 last year. This year we expect between three and four thousand to saddle up and ride south to the city of steel.

The 1984 ride saw the beginning of the Repco Cycle Company's involvement as the key sponsor and the name was changed to the Repco Sydney to the 'Gong Bicycle Ride.

In six years the task of organising such an event has become a major logistical exercise. This year portable toilets have to be provided at Belmore Park and at Red Cedar Flat and at Flagstaff Point. The stop over points at Audley, Red Cedar Flat Cloedale PS and Flagstaff Point will need to be staffed throughout the day and what was once a job for a few volunteers has become the labour of a small organised workforce.

Apart from the small ride staff of about twenty there are many other people who give their time and effort voluntarily so that you can have an enjoyable days cycling. Three shops provided a repair service on the first ride and this year there are eight - two from the 'Gong, five from Sydney and one from Mittagong. The Southern Cross Motorcycle Club, St Johns Ambulance and our volunteer Ride Guides all give their time and energy to ensure a safe and troublefree day.

So remember, if you cycle the road south this year, that you are not sitting idly by watching others create the events that make our history. By participating in the Repco Sydney to the 'Gong Ride you are part of history in the making.

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Classifieds

TOUR MATES

Tour Mates is a FREE service to readers wishing to find companions for bicycle trips and holidays. Entries are limited to thirty words and there is a charge of thirty cents per word for any long entries exceeding the limit. Payment (if applicable) must accompany your listing. Name, address and phone number should be attached for verification purposes.

Perth - Brisbane. Person wanted for December cycle tour from Perth to Brisbane via Snowy Mountains. Join me on any section of the tour. Contact Eduard Heinisch, 32 Glebe St, Alberton SA 5014. (08) 47 6534.

Brisbane - Sydney. Companion(s) wanted for a ride from Brisbane to Sydney via the Pacific Highway in early November. 7 days and 150 km per day. Motel accommodation. Please phone Ken Taylor on (02) 449 9069.

Melbourne - Perth. Cycling companion wanted for Nullarbor crossing. Melbourne to Perth. Easy going (100-150 km per day) Depart before end of '87. Phone Al on (03) 714 8584.

Europe. Companion wanted for low budget camping trip starting in Greece mid March 1988; then Yugoslavia, Austria, W Germany and Scandinavia. Join part or full 6

month tour. George Ritter 2/24 Gardyne St, Bronte NSW 2024. (02) 387 1813 (H)

Europe. Young 60 year old needs cycling companion male or female for leisurely tour of England and Continent May-August 1988. Contact Val (02) 452 1172.

Nth Queensland. Companion(s) wanted for leisurely tour starting July 1988, Cooktown to Lune River. Please write to Rob Wadsworth, Margate TAS, 7153 or phone (002) 672 443

China. Former World Bike Riders would like to contact other cyclists interested in cycling from Peking to Canton in China. No definite plans. Contact Mira Albrecht, Str 22, 655 Bad Kreuznach, West Germany.

ACCOMMODATION

Would you like to meet other bicycle tourists when you tour? If so, join the Cyclists' Accommodation Directory. This is a list of cyclists who are prepared to exchange simple hospitality in their home for similar hospitality in other cyclists' homes. Write to Bicycle Australia, PO Box K499 Haymarket 2000 giving your name, address phone and your location, eg 10km NE Ballarat PO. A donation to cover postage and photocopying would also be appreciated.

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TRAVEL & TOURS

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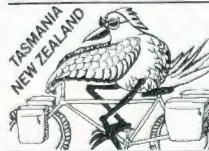
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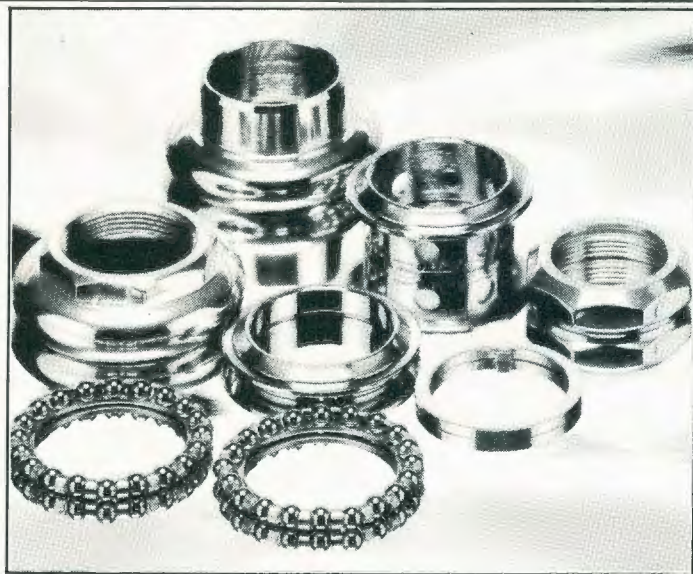
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National Calendar



Werner Wohlrab crosses the finish line to retain the Australian Mountain Bike Road Race Title. The titles were held recently in Brisbane.

Club secretaries, race directors and event organisers: help us to publicise your event by sending details to us early. If you are planning a ride in the coming twelve month period you should send your notice to *Freewheeling National Bike Events Calendar* now. We publish advance notice of all bicycle events both competitive and non competitive but because of our publication lead-times we need your copy at least two months in advance. Please note: we must have your event details in writing. Send your copy to PO Box K26 Haymarket NSW 2000 or phone it through on (02) 264 8544.

COMPETITIVE EVENTS

1987

NOVEMBER

Saturday 7. Jacaranda Criterium. Organised by the Grafton ACC in the central business area of this northern NSW city starting at 2:00 pm. For information contact: Mrs Corcoran (066) 42 1083.

DECEMBER

Friday 4 to Sunday 6. First Australian Masters Games The venue for the Masters Games cycling events will be Launceston Tasmania. The Games are for veteran competitors (+35 yrs) in seven age groupings. Road race distance approximately the same as the 1986 Veterans World Championship. Track events - scratch races and points score events for all age categories. For an entry form contact The Australian Masters Games, PO Box 587 Glenorchy TAS 7010 or call (002) 74 0750.

1988

JANUARY

Bicentennial World Series A spectacular series of track carnivals featuring the top Australian amateurs competing against 16 of the world's finest in an exciting prelude to the '88 Olympics. Saturday 16 January, Sydney; Tuesday 9, Lavington; Wednesday 20, Shepparton; Friday 22, Launceston; Saturday 23, Melbourne;

Sunday 24, Adelaide; Tuesday 26, Alice Springs; Friday 29, Brisbane; Monday 1 February, Grafton; Wednesday 3, Newcastle; Friday 5, Wollongong; Saturday 6, Sydney. For full details watch this magazine closer to the event. Promoted by Ozwide Sports Promotions (02) 570 3855.

OCTOBER

16 - 29. Commonwealth Bank Bicentennial Cycle Classic One hundred and twenty cyclists will ride between Brisbane and Melbourne via Sydney and Canberra on the world's biggest amateur cycling race. Watch this magazine for details, preview and colour coverage. Promoted by Ozwide Sports Promotions (02) 570 3855.

CLUB CONTACTS

The Australian Cycling Federation and the state cycling federations will direct you to a club in your area if you want to get involved in bicycle road or track racing. Phone numbers and contacts for each state are: **NSW** Margaret Balmer (02) 27 2977; **VIC** George Nelson (03) 328 4391; **QLD** Mike Victor (07) 390 1489; **WA** Mike Poyner (09) 384 4130; **SA** Jean Cook (08) 255 1639; **TAS** Joy Bestwick (003) 31 2712; **NT** Shirley Davis (089) 208 798.

Riders wishing to take out a professional licence should contact the National Secretary of the Australian Professional Cycling Council, Reg Marriner, PO Box 120 North Geelong VIC 3215.

NON COMPETITIVE EVENTS

1987

NOVEMBER

Sunday 1. Murray Valley 200. A two hundred kilometre ride on mostly quiet roads. Starting in the beautiful Adelaide Hills, then following the River Murray between Murray Bridge and Mannum. A short course is also available. Rated hard. Come and enjoy the social atmosphere. Some refreshments and route maps provided. This event is part of the South Australian Touring Cyclists Grand Slam Series. For full details contact Peter Hunt (08) 384 2921 or Rod Austin (08) 271 6362.

Saturday 7. The Hard Hundred This ride is organised by the Knox Bicycle Touring Club (Melbourne) and held annually on the first Saturday following Melbourne Cup Day in the hills to the east of Melbourne. The 100 mile tour will commence at Bayswater and travel to the Upper Yarra Dam and return. A 100 km tour will follow the same route but turn around at the 50 km point. Cloth badges will be awarded to all finishers. Refreshments and full emergency support will be provided. For full details and entry forms contact Ian Pengelly on (03) 728 3180.

Saturday 7, Sunday 8. Audax NSW 300/400/600 km ride. Mt Victoria, Cowra, Yass, Mittagong, Sydney. Contact (02) 608 1125 or (02) 630 2977.

Saturday 14. Audax VIC 600 km Randonnee. Visit Victoria's venerated holiday playground on this south coast tour. The Randonnee starts at the Dandenong Police station at 8 am and goes to Wonthaggi, Sale and return. Contact Tim Laughler (03) 527 8581.

Sunday 15. Six hour time trial. Try yourself against the clock and last year's best of 182 km on a moderately flat course in West Australia. Contact Rob Masterman (09) 399 3071.

Sunday 22. The sixth annual Repco Sydney to the 'Gong Bicycle Ride. Australia's big one-day fun and fitness ride between Sydney's Belmore Park and Belmore Basin in the City of Wollongong. 85 kilometres of well supported fun complete with fashion parades and a mountain bike observed trials demo course at Flagstaff Point, Wollongong. Entry forms at Repco bike dealers from September onwards or elsewhere in this issue.

DECEMBER

Saturday 5 to Sunday 13. The Caltex Bike Ride. Nine days of cycling fun through Victoria's western

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districts visiting the Grampians and riding part of the Great Ocean Road. Contact (03) 650 2334.

1988

JANUARY

Sunday 3 to Saturday 9. New England Riverside Meander. A mostly down-hill summer-time trip from Armidale on the New England plateau NSW to Kempsey on the coastal plain then via Crescent Head to Port Macquarie and Wauchope. Short daily distances, sag wagon support. Contact Bicycle Australia (046) 27 2186.
Saturday 23 - Sunday 24. Bicycle Australia Annual Conference. Held in the Campbelltown area SW of Sydney. Day rides interspersed with the AGM on Saturday evening. For details contact (046) 27 2186.

MARCH

Sunday 6. Hills Cycle. The Lions Club of West Pennant Hills will be organising this day ride in aid of the Diabetic Association of NSW. 30, 50 and 100 km routes will take in areas of historic interest and natural beauty. Lots of prizes. Entry fees: \$8.00 individual, \$20.00 family. Riders who raise \$12 or more sponsorship money pay no fee. Contact Ron Jamieson (02) 872 3000 for entry forms.
Saturday 12 to Monday 14. Strzelecki Ranges of Eastern Victoria. A 135 km ride over the Victorian long weekend. Easy daily distances and superb views. Contact Bicycle Australia (046) 27 2186
Saturday 12 to Sunday 27. Bike Week 88 Albany to Perth Tour. Jointly organised by the Youth Hostels Association and the Cycle Touring Association of WA

this 800 km tour will average 60 - 130 km per day and trace the pioneers' coastal route through superb hardwood forests. Bus portage for riders and bikes to Albany and staying at Youth Hostels and other fixed accommodation. Riders will need to be self sufficient and be members of YHA or the CTAWA. For full details contact the tour leader Geoff Creighton (09) 459 4178.
Sunday 27. Mulga Bill's Walaroo and Wombat's Bike Centenary. A day ride around the Hawkesbury NSW area. 70 or 100 km courses. Part of the Bicentennial Bicycling Program. Contact Paul Hulbert (02) 212 5628 or (045) 76 1396.

APRIL

Friday 1 to Monday 4. Bicycle Victoria Bicycle Rally. A four-day rally held over Easter in central Victorian town of Castlemaine. Lots of day rides, a display of antique cycles and indoor activities are planned. For details contact Bicycle Victoria (03) 650 2550.
Friday 1 to Monday 4. The Second Canberra Monaro Explorer. A 256 km vehicle supported loop ride from Goulburn NSW through Canberra and the Monaro region. Contact Bicycle Australia (046) 27 2186.
Friday 1 to Monday 4. Tour of the Southern Highlands. The classic Bicycle Australia ride for self sufficient riders. Leader supplied and group catering organised. Penrith NSW to Bundanoon via the Southern Cross Trail and return to Campbelltown via Robertson. Local hall accommodation. Contact Bicycle Australia (046) 27 2186.
Saturday 10 to Sunday 17. Victoria's Bicentennial Bike Week. Big events planned include: **Sunday 10**

Melbourne Autumn Daytour (the MAD ride). Organised by the Melbourne Bicycle Touring Club. 100 km and 45 km courses; **Saturday 16 Melbourne City Bicycle Parade.** Come and join in. Criterion race and a high-tech show are also included in the Bike Week activities which will run throughout the week in the City Square; **Sunday 17 3KZ Bike-a-thon.** A 25 km morning fun ride along Port Phillip Bay to end on the banks of the Yarra near the city. For full details and entry forms for all events contact Bicycle Victoria (the new name for the Bicycle Institute) (03) 650 2550.

Friday 22 to Sunday 24. SA Festival of Cycling. A bicycle rally to be held in the beautiful Adelaide hills. Three days of activities centred on a good camping ground with alternate accommodation also available. Day rides, displays, exhibitions and nightly entertainment provided for riders of all ages. Bring the kids and your friends. Watch *Freewheeling* for details or contact (08) 388 8331.

Saturday 23 to Sunday May 1. The Southern Cross Trail in Victoria. A three-day or nine-day ride along Bicycle Australia's Southern Cross Trail northwards from Melbourne. Contact (046) 27 2186 for details.

JUNE

Wednesday 1. Bicycle Australia in '88. This date marks the commencement of Bicycle Australia's major rides programme for the Bicentennial year to celebrate the first century of cycling in this country. Riders may ride all or part of the 10,400 km route around the coast from Cape York to Perth. Contact Bicycle Australia for details on (046) 27 2186.

OCTOBER

Saturday 1 to Monday 3. The fifth Four Rivers Ride. Bicycle Australia's tour of the Hunter Valley region. Sag wagon for luggage, evening meals and breakfast provided and hall accommodation. Contact (046) 27 2186 for details.

NOVEMBER


Sunday 20. The seventh annual Repco Sydney to the 'Gong Bicycle Ride. Australia's big one-day fun and fitness ride between Sydney's Belmore Park and Belmore Basin in the City of Wollongong. 85 kilometres of well supported fun complete with entertainment. Entry forms from bike shops during September and from this magazine.

Saturday 26 to Sunday 11 December. The Big Bicentennial Bike Ride. This year to celebrate the Bicentenary cyclists will ride en mass from Melbourne to Sydney. Full support. Organised by the people who bring you the Caltex Bike Ride. Enquiries: (059) 78 6000.

CLUB CONTACTS

These clubs regularly run rides in their cities and welcome new comers. Some even publish touring calendars listing forthcoming rides. Contact them for details.

Armidale Community Cyclists (067) 72 8951. **Audax Australia** (03) 435 4437 (02) 608 1125. **Bathurst** Bicycle Touring Group (063) 31 9459. **Bicycle Australia** (046) 27 2186 (after 9pm). **Brisbane** Bicycle Touring Association (07) 369 9326. **Brisbane** Mountain Bike riders interested in forming a club should contact Mike or Kelli on (07) 359 1244. **Canberra** Pedal Power ACT (062) 49 7167. **Geelong** Bicycle Touring Club (052) 96 234. **Illawarra** Touring Cyclists' Club (042) 83 6524. **Melbourne** Bicycle Touring Club (03) 818 4011. **Melbourne eastern suburbs - Knox** Bicycle Touring Club (03) 754 4069. **Eastern** Bicycle Touring Club (03) 762 7928. **Victorian Pedal Clubs** provide fun and training in bike handling skills for children of bicycle riding age. Call for information on a club near you: (03) 337 6399. **Newcastle** Cycleways Movement (049) 46 8298. **Bicycle Institute of New South Wales** (02) 212 5628. **South Australian** Touring Cyclists Association (08) 272 6406 (08) 388 8331. **Sydney** region bicycling clubs can be contacted through the Bicycle Institute of NSW (02) 212 5628. **Tandem** Club of Australia (03) 241 4453. **Cycle** Touring Association of **West Australia** (09) 330 3659. **Darwin** Hufflers & Puffers (089) 81 2141. **Wagga** Bicycle Touring Group (069) 21 6787. **Vintage Cycle clubs** **Vintage** Cycle Club of Victoria (03) 527 5759. **Southern Veterans** (Sydney Vintage Cycle Club) (02) 587 8017.



FESTIVAL OF CYCLING


OAKBANK, SOUTH AUSTRALIA
22/23/24 APRIL, 1988

Co-ordinator -
P.O. Box 60
ECHUNGA 5153
Ph: 3888331
271 0426


- Ride-Your-Bike-To-Work Day
- Parade of Bicycles
- Cycle in the beautiful Adelaide Hills
- See veteran and vintage bicycles
- Displays, prizes, exhibitions
- Bush Dance
- Camp in spacious grounds
- Demonstrations
- See modern racing bikes in action
- SEE YOU THERE!

IT'S ALL HAPPENING AT THE FESTIVAL
COME AND JOIN US AND HAVE SOME FUN
THE CYCLING DATE FOR EIGHTY EIGHT

FOR INFORMATION WRITE TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS



A Registered Bicentennial Activity
Organised by South Australian Touring Cyclists' Association.



ALL HELMETS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL



What do YOU want from a Bicycle Helmet?

- **MAXIMUM PROTECTION** - World recognised twin shell, patented construction offering maximum protection in all situations.
- **PERFECT FIT** - Fully adjustable head suspension unit offering intimate sizing to suit all heads.
- **LIGHT WEIGHT** - Only 500 grams.
- **VENTILATION** - A distinctive airflow ventilation system works even while stationary, no need for holes in the shell. The Dalyte helmet is suspended away from the head, a design engineered to allow the flow of cool air to circulate between the top of the head and the helmet.
- **STRENGTH** - The full shell construction is not weakened by holes which also prevents entry of bees, insects and rain.
- **ADJUSTABLE STRAPS** - All straps are fully adjustable to provide maximum comfort and stability. Chin strap features a press-lock fastener for quick release.
- **SEE AND BE SEEN** - Provides maximum visibility in traffic with bold red reflectorised strips for night riding. A contoured, unobstructed rim allows for clear vision.
- **HYGENIC** - The smooth inner shell allows for simple, speedy and effective cleaning and also has a removable, washable sweatband.
- **SAFETY COLOURS** - Available in white or road safety yellow.
- **STANDARDS APPROVED** - Tested and approved to AS-2063 safety standards in the interest of cycling safety.

TOTAL

10 = APOLLO DALYTE



WE KNOW WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A GOOD HELMET

Apollo Dalyte Helmets are available from your local World of Wheels dealer (consult the yellow pages for the one nearest you) or contact - Apollo Bicycle Co. Pty. Ltd., P.O. Box 167, Wahroonga, 2076 N.S.W. Telephone 487 1900.

Anatomy of a Pro.

Whether it's the muscular test of a Triathlon, the lung-burning sprint of a roadrace or the bone-jarring obstacles of an all-terrain challenge, Bell's V1-Pro is built for competition.

It meets bicycling's toughest helmet standards. But it also embodies the driving need reflected in every serious competitor's attitude.

ABS-plastic outer shell

Custom built-in vents

Available at better bicycle shops.

The need to be the best.

To meet ANSI Z90.4 and Snell performance standards, we combined a tough ABS-plastic outer shell with an expanded polystyrene liner. These materials create a lightweight helmet with proven characteristics.

Shell and liner form a compact, aerodynamic shape. Custom built-in air vents dissipate heat quickly and permit cool air to

enter freely. And for improved visibility, especially when you're on the drops, we trimmed the V1-Pro's lower edge.

There's also a fully-adjustable quick-release chin strap. And removable brushed nylon pads that come in a variety of widths for a snug, proper fit.

In fact, everything about the V1-Pro reflects commitment to the competitive rider.

The V1-Pro from Bell. It's built for the best.



THIRTY YEARS AT THE TOP



Fully-adjustable chin strap



Supplier to the
U.S. Cycling Team