

Early 20's 80-inch Indian Hillclimber A80-57

After over eight years in the Engineering occupation I decided that I needed a change and became a Flight Attendant with Qantas Empire Airways as it was called those days.

During my time scouring the globe for motorcycles and parts I started concentrating on the Indian as I found them more interesting and a greater challenge, especially when everyone here in Sydney called them agricultural machinery.

On one of my trips I came across a dealer in Los Angeles named Mike Eagan. He was as sharp as a tack and very astute with his wits about him twenty-four hours of the day. Nothing past his eyes and he had a story about everything he touched. I had visited him on many occasions while I was doing my rounds and was always keen to see what he came across. He didn't have many new repro parts but he always seem to have a host of used old parts and motors. His house was also full of rare memorabilia and he was such an interesting person to talk to. I was standing talking to him one day while he was tinkering with a motor on the ground when he said, "Hey Jaan (John in his American accent) anyone down under looking for a Chief motor"? "Oh yeah", I said casually, "Where is it ", I asked, "Over there, around the corner" he responded. I walked around the corner where about, ten or so Harley and many other motors were stacked. I was keenly looking for this Chief motor he spoke about. "Where", I asked. "Right by your feet" he said. "Don't you know a Chief motor when you see one?" I looked again at my feet and realised what I saw. It was one of those special factory built motors with the bronze timing cover. I didn't quite know what it was off or what sort of frame it belonged to but I knew it was Indian so I immediately said, "Oh yeah, I can see it" How much do you want for it? "Five and a half" he replied. Will you take five?" I said. "Ok" Mike replied, as he was obviously happy with his quick sale.

I took a longer look at it as it had unusually two oil pumps attached to the timing cover and a late model Chief Bonneville carburettor, not of the era. The cylinders were massive and the valves were double sprung. The small amount of money I had was left as a deposit and I paid the rest on my next trip.

I later found that these 80-cub inch Hillclimbers were the best Indian could produce until they built the 45inch Overhead Valve engine. This machine was one of the last 80inch Hillclimbers built with the twin oil pumps to increase the performance and to try and beat the Harleys.

Fast and powerful as they were, they were unsuccessful until that 45inch OHV Indian engine appeared and dominated the slopes.

A mate of mine, Mick Atkins bought an old motorcycle collection on the outskirts of Sydney. It consisted of numerous broken and shortened frames as well as numerous English and American speedway and flat track racers used on the tracks of earlier years. One of these broken frames were used and Mick and I rebuilt this A80 to its original condition.

Clive Weiss, a well-known steel craftsman of Sydney, made the tank.

Mick Atkins, in his Kenthurst restoration workshop, completed the rest.

All the nick plating is electric less and faultless.

The power plant is as it was found and has been completely overhauled to the highest standard. No expense was spared.

The painting is also impeccable.

The seat is a copy of an original and is produced in high-grade leather by Frank Craw, one of the only people to venture into remaking these old styled seats and this one has a rare Messenger pressing.

This number fifty-seven, 80 cubic inch Hillclimber is now in its original glory.

Owner, John MacDonald