

Smoke Signals

Iron Indian Riders Association



Powering Out of the Past - Cruising into the Future

April 2012 - ironindian.com.au

Inside: CHiPs + Tech + Great Race + News



From the Vice-President

Mark Barthelmie



Another quarter flies by - where does the time go? It's already been a fun-filled time, what with the Lakes & Craters Run, the washed-out Midnight Express Run and the Great Race. More followed with the Williamstown Motorcycle Club's Bikes by the Bay celebration of V-twins and then the Sitting Bull Rally.

The club continues to grow from strength to strength, with more new members again this month and our club rides seem to be getting bigger with more participation not only from Indian riders but also from other interested parties which we hope we lead in the longer term to Indian ownership.

There have been some changes at the top in the Victory organisation

and we await to see who will be in charge of the Indian distribution for Australia and NZ.

I want to highlight the contribution made by some of the people who organise the activities in which we all participate and enjoy. Firstly Phil Pilgrim and the amazing efforts he makes with the website over 80,000 hits now.

Thanks must go to club member Daryl Jenkins on his 1916 Power Plus, whose stellar effort must have had a significant contribution to Indian winning the great race 2012 for the second time.

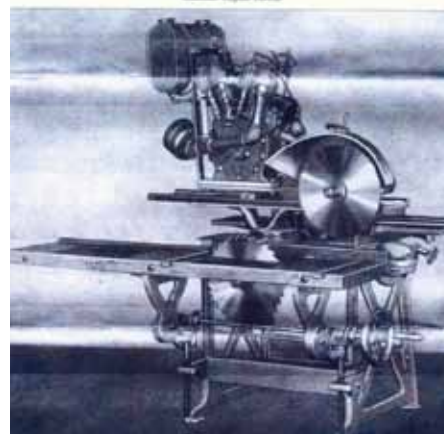
Finally to Ian Rhook whose constant commitment to finding new and interesting rides for us all.

On a personal note I must say thanks to Phillip White, who helped me when I left my Chief's keys behind on my way to the Great Race, ensuring I could participate in this wonderful event.

You may have noticed our Facebook pages - I would encourage you all to take a look. Chris Knoops' blog is also being posted there and I suspect this will be a long-standing story of interest as he builds his bike and then participates in the Canonball Run in the US next year. Enough from me, see you soon at a meeting or ride.

News & Gossip

1916 INDIAN POWERED
The "Master" Woodworker
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810 BRUSH STREET, DETROIT, MICHIGAN
INDIAN, VOL. 9
Classic Engine Edition



Be afraid

This little horror was sent to us by our friends at the Indian Motorcycle Club of WA (thanks to Murray Morell). Yep, it's a bench saw, which the Michigan-based maker pointed out was ideal for anyone out of reach of electricity (and reality, in our view).

The Indian twin would have ample power to carve a decent-sized forest into any shape you wanted, while the designer proudly claimed it was portable.

What we want to know is, where's the kick-starter?

Smoke
Signals
April 2012
Inside: CHiPs + Tech + Great Race + News



Our Cover

The happy smiling dial on our cover this issue belongs to Phillip White, riding CHiPs at the 20th anniversary Great Race.

You can read about the event on page 16 and the bike on page 22.

Gypsies are go

Organiser Chris Horner tells us the Gypsy Tour, from WA and back east for the Bay to Birdwood in SA is well advanced.

A good-sized crew has signed up for the September event.

From the **Ed**
Guy "Guido" Allen



What makes this mag, and the club, is the people. I was stunned by the candour of Phillip White in his ChiPs piece this issue, and by Pilgrim's generosity in making yours truly attend the 20th anniversary Great Race.

They are just two stories we have to tell. There are a lot more, and one of them will be yours. So don't be afraid to join in. Email me on guyallen@optusnet.com.au.

Smoke Signals is the journal of the Iron Indian Riders Association of Australia and is published quarterly. The opinions expressed in here are not necessarily shared by the club or its office-holders.

Our thanks to a zillion folk who helped to sling this mag together, in particular Phil Pilgrim and Phillip White. Apologies to anyone I've left out. All material is copyright. Permission to reproduce should be sought from guyallen@optusnet.com.au.

News



Treat yourself

Got a bit of cash to splash around? If so, and you fancy a modern Indian to supplement the old Springfield you're hiding the the shed, there is a wealth of choice out there.

Our Prez, John Smith, is keeping a stock of Kings Mountain machines, like the rare Chief Dark Horse shown here. See indianmotorcycleimports.com.au.

Not to be left out, our Vice-Prez, Mark Barthelmie, has a couple of Kings Mountain Chief Vintage for sale at zorros.net.au.

If they stretch the budget a little far, our webmaster has a Gilroy Chief Roadmaster up for grabs in the Trading Post section of our site.

News & Gossip



Big run

IIRA member Chris Knoop, partner Christine Hemphill and mechanic Ian Lihou, are tackling this year's Cannonball Run in the USA on a locally-made 1925 Invincible Jap.

Knoop explains, on his blog, "It was chosen to highlight a locally made, historically significant Australian motorcycle combination and showcase the engineering Melbourne Australia had to offer in the 1920s."

The machine is being partnered with a wicker sidecar on a Goulding chassis, with the whole plot currently undergoing an extensive restoration.

Right now the team is looking for two things: a generous sponsor, plus some practical assistance including a back-up driver in the USA.

Chris went on the 2010 run as a crew member for another team and is putting that experience to good use.

If you want to follow their adventures on the web, type "CK's Cannonball" into your search engine.

IIRA contacts

Want to contact the club? See the 'contacts' link at ironindian.com.au

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From the Webmaster

Phil Pilgrim



WELCOME TO IRON INDIAN RIDERS
ASSOCIATION



AUSTRALIA

Believe it or not, our website has hit 85,000 visitors - so now we're shooting for the big 100k.

Our sponsor Monti Media, which supplies the hosting services, has been a big part of the success and we can't recommend them too highly.

In the meantime, don't forget to pop in regularly, as the content is updated at least a few times a week.

For example, when was the last time you checked out our Video & Images page? Scroll to the bottom of the YouTube section and you'll come across the story of a 70-year-old riding from Brisbane to Brussels. Okay, not *that* special, perhaps? The twist is he's doing it on an FN!

Something else to keep in mind is

we're always looking for feedback. We're about to upgrade the club regalia section as the result of user input and are always open to new ideas.

On another theme, if you see anything Indian-related out there, get in touch and let me know. Old mags, ads and pics are always welcome.



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News & Gossip



Starving for fuel

Murray Morell in WA has some advice for Springfield owners: Having trouble with your bike not running right? This could be the problem - see the pic.

Fuel filters purchased from USA Indian dealers do not work. You install them and then your problems start. Scenario one, your bike becomes hard to start or will not run properly and you think it's a problem with the carburetor, perhaps it's blocked?

This is when people send their carbies in for overhaul, never thinking it's the filter. The remedy is to leave the filter out. Any rubbish coming from the tank will fall to the bottom of the bowl and will not come up and block the carburetor.



New lids

The devilishly handsome chap pictured here is modelling just one of a number of new helmets being brought in by Zorros. See zorros.net.au for more info.


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Club Rides Sitting Bull Rally

Pix by Peter Kime



It had been an incredibly busy few months, and the weather forecast looked ominous. Nevertheless, a good gang of Indian folk made it to Albury for the Sitting Bull (weekend of 24 March).

Webmaster Pilgrim reports the locals were friendly and the crew was led on rides that opened up areas most folk had never seen before. See ironindian.com.au (section news) for the full report.

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Lakes & Craters Run

The inauguration of a new rally is always a bit special. This event (weekend of 19 Feb) was dreamt up by Club Captain Ian Rhook who was born and raised in this general area. Most folk whiz on down the Great Ocean Road and don't venture inland, which is a shame because this region has a lot to offer.

First let's look at the really big, big picture. Around 30,000 years ago this was an active volcanic plain complete with hot steaming geysers, boiling mud pools and of course, volcanoes. There would have been mega fauna here too including thirteen foot kangaroos and wombats the size of delivery vans. However the only ancient creatures on this weekend were various old motorbikes...

See the full report, by Phillip White, online in the section news at ironindian.com.au.



Ian Rhook and Alvin the Scout.



Under the clock tower.



Ian Wallace (the General).

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Electric Clog

Looking for an electric leg? Phillip White tackles another solution, this time from the Netherlands...

In the Workshop



Have you noticed that your Chief is a perfectly easy bike to start except when it's not? My 52 starts first prod every time except under two circumstances. Firstly, when I have stalled it in the middle of rush hour traffic.

And, secondly, when it has been sitting out the front of a pub for an hour or so in the hot summer sun. After you start turning purple with effort,

the bike starts as if there never was a problem, least of all on its part.

So I decided to give myself an early Christmas present and purchased a Dutch-built starter motor system from Tony Leenes in Holland, who trades as Mr Indian. I had seen this unit displayed at the European Rally in Scotland a few years ago and it seemed a reasonably straight-forward design. The vendor assured me that the system would fit any Chief.

Imagine how funny I found that statement to be when I realised that "any Chief" did not include my bike, for the simple reason that the last examples have many detail differences in their frames, not least the deletion of the brace that holds the both the rear guard mounting brackets and the rear of the battery tray. On later bikes like mine, this is replaced by a welded in place battery tray which doubles as a frame brace.

It would not be possible to fit the starter unit as designed without modifying my frame to the earlier design, something I was loathe to do. When I contacted the vendor two things were made clear to me; firstly that he did not realise that the later Indian frames differ from their predecessors and secondly he could not care less about my problems and was not interested in assisting me in any way.

So the starter sat on the shelf for a time until purchased by club member Rod Leamon for his very original 1951 Black Hawk, which is called

In the Workshop

“Valencia” (it’s orange). The price included fitment, so I got the job.

What is it?

The unit consists of a chassis constructed from three substantial pieces of mild steel plate and two welded angle iron brackets. These three plates bolt together via the angle iron brackets to form a three-sided box.

The centrestand and original battery box are removed and the chassis assembly bolts to the motorcycle’s frame via existing mounting holes. Its front plate carries a conventional Bendix-type starter which appears to be of automotive origin, possibly Toyota. Bolted further down the plate is a stub axle which carries a ring gear, also acting as a flywheel, with 45 internal teeth. Fixed to the outside of the gear is a 25-tooth sprocket carrying a light chain (though not a bicycle type).

The gearbox main shaft is modified in place by extending the flats right down to where the shaft emerges from the output gear. On to the shaft is fitted the sprag assembly which is the same Borg Warner item as used in the Timmerman system. It’s made by NIC and the part number is CSK25P.

In operation, the starter is energised via a relay which is supplied with the kit. The Bendix drive engages the

ring gear, which drives the chain-driven sprag sprocket. When the engine is running, the ring gear is prevented from idling by a nylon brake shoe.

Installation

There is a financial consideration with this design. I had allowed 15 man-hours for fitment but it ended up taking longer than that due to a steep learning curve on my part. My estimate is that to fit this unit, together with a safety switch on the distributor, to prevent engagement other than in the retarded position, could take around 20 hours. If you don’t do your own wrenching this will add a substantial amount to what is an already expensive unit.

If you import the kit from Holland with associated freight and taxes and pay to have it installed at normal shop rates the bill could easily approach the \$6000 mark. Ouch! On the other hand, knee reconstructions aren’t cheap, either, so your call.

To understand why it takes so long to fit this thing we will look at how the frames on our beloved Iron redskins were built in the first place. Back in the day, the frames consisted of various malleable iron castings that were machined to accept lengths of tube. Workers assembled the frames

in jigs and, at each joining point, drilled the frame tube and casting and hammered in a small pin. The finished assembly was then sent to the furnace room where it was heated to cherry red.

At this point workmen would apply a long stick of cast brass called “Speltre” to the joints, which would melt and run in to fill the gaps. I reckon being a furnace man at Indian in summer must have been one of the all-time suck jobs. The upshot of all this is that no two chief frames are identical, so the Dutch kit can be made to fit any frame up to and including 1951, but it does not just plop right in between beers. Considerable finessing is required. For the installation, the most important tool is a four-inch angle grinder. It sounds brutal but there are reasons.

Firstly, this thing looks like it was the product of a Soviet tank factory, very heavy with an eclectic mix of A/F and metric hardware. At first sight the whole set-up looks pretty crude. As the installation progressed, I came to understand that considerable thought has gone into this design. Every component does fit eventually and there is zero room to put things anywhere other than as designed.

So let’s get to work. Assuming your bike is already assembled, remove the chain guard, battery and kicker pedal together with the kicker wheel and

ratchet assembly. Next use the grinder to cut the guard mounting tabs off the original battery box to enable it to be removed, otherwise the rear guard will have to come off and life is too short for that.

A word of advice here. The kit comes with a new battery tray - it is dished to allow the battery to sit lower between the frame rails to clear the starter motor. At the front it picks up the original battery tray lugs on the frame casting but at the rear you have to drill and tap the frame cross member.

You can’t put loose bolts here because the only way to remove the battery is to unbolt the tray and drop the battery out the bottom of the frame. Therefore make sure you do this job before you put the bike on the lift. You will have to drop the machine onto its side then accurate drilling and tapping of the two holes is straight forward. Take this advice from one who spent many happy hours doing this job upside down with the bike strapped to the bench.

The starter chassis must be dismantled and at this point it will start to be obvious that the location and choice of hardware is cleverly thought out. Note where it all goes. On this bike the chassis components all had to have chunks ground out of them and even a shave off the frame here and there. Plus, the lug that locates

In the Workshop

the kicker spring needed a haircut. However, when the chassis is finally in place, it is obvious that it never needs to be disturbed again as all components can be quickly and easily accessed. I see this as a real strong point of the design. Everything is so robust that it should give few problems in service.

Now let's fit the sprag. Yep, it's our old mate the angle grinder again. Carefully extend the existing flats on the main shaft right back to the box. The shaft can be filed and it's really an easier job than it sounds. The kit comes with some ambiguous handwritten instructions but the idea is that, after the sprag sprocket is slid into position, the various kicker components have to be finessed.

The boss on the wheel needs to be shortened and the spring cut to a single coil. The pawl must also be shortened and a retaining plate made and brazed in. It becomes obvious that if you have not shortened everything to the max, the pawl cannot operate and the nut can't be fitted. The tin cup for the spring is omitted.

There is a nylon rubbing block fitted on the lower run to keep the big chain from eating the little chain. This is another part that must be custom-fitted to suit your bike.

Wiring is straight-forward and a relay is supplied. There was no



Above: the ring gear/flywheel assembly.

information on the battery type. What worked was Harley-Davidson 65958-04A which is from some obscure SoftTail model.

The retard switch is easy. It is an NTE 10 amp unit and so is the wiring. Careful here, as the switches all look the same but are usually only 2.5 amps - not enough. Cut the NC (normally closed) terminal from the switch and put a dab of Silastic on the wound. Make a steel tab the size of the switch, which is then welded onto the dizzy to oil pump clamp with a slight upwards tilt. Centre pop where the clamp sits on the pump as that's where it will have to fit forever more.

The fastening screws are countersunk and are fitted heads down for max clearance from the timing



Above: the assembly looks simple but requires a lot of customisation.

case. In operation, the nut and bolt clamp on the advance and retard arm contacts the switch arm. The switch arm can be bent for final tuning. Once again, all Indians vary, so you have to make the switch for your bike.

In operation this starter system throws an 80ci Chief over with tremendous enthusiasm. Mr Leenes claims it can handle any configuration of engine up to 92ci and I believe it. I rode the bike as much as possible around town and everything worked just fine. Rod has a lot of bikes and Valencia has not seen much road time since it was returned to him, however he reports starting the bike every other day with no probs. If any develop, you folk will certainly hear about them.

Phillip White

Timmerman Traumas

Let's talk Timmerman. So far Chris Horner's 80 has suffered one sprag failure, apparently because the ignition was not retarded on starter engagement. On the other hand, Phil Pilgrim's Chief has just eaten two sprags in a month. In addition, the flimsy Timmerman slim kick-starter fell to bits. (Chris's has been strengthened and works fine.)

The cause is unknown at this time, however a couple of solutions may be possible. It is possible to fit a decompressor to Chief heads.

I will say however that with several new starters available, I would not recommend doing any mods to the Timmerman unit unless you can do your own work.

Great Ride

In the Saddle

Some 160 hopefuls, split evenly between Indians and Harleys, head out across the Snowies to test their toys. Great Race newbie Guy Allen went along for the ride...

Chances are you've heard of the Great Race. But – and it's a big 'but' – if you haven't seen one in the flesh in recent years, it's damn near impossible to understand just how 'great' it's become.

Co-founders David Readie and Peter Arundel aimed to come up with something that could hold its head up high on the world classic rally stage and have succeeded in a big way.

From a less than promising start, where the group of 14 Harleys and Indians just about drowned during their inaugural 1993 run to Portsea in coastal Victoria, the event has grown to legend status.

What is it?

Open to motorcycles up to September 1957, it's a combo of classic rally and reliability trial, with a twist. Riders compete for individual and team points for things such as navigating their way to each of the check stations, through a comp for holding an average speed, to a rolling (no engine) downhill contest, where the

person who gets the furthest wins.

Let's not leave out socialising and catering, which for many (perhaps most) is more important than the contest. As Readie points out in the book produced to celebrate 20 years, "We have had banquets in warehouses, showrooms, shearing sheds, airport hangars, many restaurants and even at racecourses."

Along the way, it's attracted more than its fair share of media attention and visited a wild and woolly variety of locations from Sydney to Melbourne including lots of idyllic mountain hide-aways.

Based at Jindabyne's Station Resort, this year's event ran two loops: the first from Jindabyne to Cabramurra, Tooma, Khancoban and back home; the second to Lake Eucumbene, Dalgety and Cooma.

On the road

The Friday night before the start, people were quietly going over their mounts. Most machinery was probably towed to the remote location in



Above: Daryl Jenkins in action - he scored spectacularly well.

Below: Phil Pilgrim with Bonnie, heading off from Tooma.



In the Saddle

utes and the like, but many had ridden – either way, there were two big days to come. Old bikes have earned the right to be a little cranky at times, so the big concern was making sure the ‘auld dear’ would start the next day.

Everywhere you looked, there was a quiet little cottage industry underway, checking fuel, oil, linkages, chains and giving it a bit of a warm-up to ensure all was well. With riders paired up the next morning for exact start times at two-minute intervals, the pressure was on to make sure you and your mechanical friend (or is that ‘fiend’?!) didn’t screw up at the start line and lose points.

For some, half the battle was getting their head around whatever assemblage of controls and levers were required to actually ride the thing. If it was something built just either side of the Second World War, you might be practicing the manual retard/advance, plus the foot clutch and hand-change. Riders of machines from the twenties and even the teens often had far more complex routines to nut out.

In any case, they were subdued but smiling – overcoming a few personal mountains.

Come Saturday and it’s a little cold and grey. The first folk need to be ‘race ready’ by around 7.00am, while everyone is doing quick last-minute



checks. Starter nerves are in the air – you can’t photograph them, but can nevertheless feel them.

For newcomers like me, it’s somehow reassuring to see some very familiar Iron Indian faces, who are clearly comfortable, excited just to be there, and ready to roll.

The tension breaks as the first flotillas of riders are sent on their way. Before you know it, you’re out there yourself, reveling as the bike enjoys the chill air and tackles its first hill.

Today is a big ask for vintage and classic machinery – well over 300km of mountain territory that would count as a decent ride even on a modern motorcycle.

Somehow the morning disappears



in a blur and, before you know it, you’re rolling down the hill for a regroup and lunch at the Tooma hotel. The sun is shining, you’ve just experienced some of the best scenery the country has to offer and your god is clearly in his or her throne.

Get two motorcyclists together for a post-ride meal and you’ll hear the clatter of utensils and enthusiastic conversation over the sights, the sounds and some adventures. Get 160 (plus the 60-or-so supporters) and the noise is deafening. It’s great. People are swapping stories, parts and phone numbers.

For the afternoon, the task is to match the required average speed all the way to Thredbo. It’s quick enough



Far left: John Gee applies some TLC.

Left: Jon Munn gets away.

Above: Robert Gosper in the Snowies.

The results

For the first time since 1994, one of the two teams managed to take the race two years in a row – yes, it was Indian.

The margin was narrow and the end result hugely influenced by the older bikes in the fleet, which earn a scoring bonus. Models made before 1920 receive 30 per cent, 1921-33 receive 20 and 1934-1939 receive 10.

At the end of the first day Harley was leading by a small margin. On the Sunday, superb performances by the 1916 and 1919 Power Plus bikes of Jon Munn and Daryl Jenkins were to help sway the result Indian’s way.

Top Indian scorer was 19-year-old Patrick Arundel on a 1929 101 Scout, followed by Daryl Jenkins on his PowerPlus and Bianca Bonner on her 1927 Scout.

John Gee took out the rolling race for the third year in a row.

In the Saddle



to be a challenge and slow enough to be safe. There are all sorts of rumours and theories on how to hit the target, despite which most of us miss.

When we make it back to the resort, much of the conversation is around how many breakdowns there have been. Somewhere near a dozen, if you believe the scuttlebutt. Really? As the owner of a 1947 Sunbeam, I'm always pleasantly surprised if I make it to the local milk bar. Given the size of this fleet, and what was asked of it, the 'toll' was remarkably low.

Day two is a later start and a shorter ride. The atmosphere is very different too. Aside from a few late-night rebuilds, the crew is generally relaxed.

On the road to Lake Eucumbene,

you can see people are more comfortable with their mounts and enjoying the (once again) sensational scenery.

Lunch is at one of the treasures of the Snowies region, the Dalgety pub, and the whole pace is so relaxed you start to worry over how many folk are likely to fall asleep in their lunch.

The organisers have a little surprise in store to liven things up. Just a few kays out of town, they've set up the infamous rolling 'race', where the challenge is to ride as smooth and far as you can, sans engine. This is where the folk with the most powerful motors suddenly find they have no advantage whatsoever. Now it's down to a combination of cunning, skill and really good machine preparation that



minimises rolling resistance.

By the time the crew makes it back to the resort for the final night's noisy festivities and award-giving, the rolling race is a topic of hot debate. It gives the term 'bench racing' a whole new meaning.

Give it a go

If you've been wondering whether this run is worth all the effort of finding a bike and the time, stop right now. I've been reporting on and participating in motorcycle events for well over 25 years and this is one of the greats.

Some of it is the machinery. This

is an all too rare rolling museum where you really can touch and feel the exhibits. Even better is the mix of people. You might one minute be chatting with a bloke who is a carpenter, another a surgeon, the next to someone half his age who builds the country's best GT-HO Falcons ('hi' to Daniel – another Indian rider) and the next to a young woman who is working out what to choose as her next classic mount.

If you get the chance to do it, don't miss the opportunity.

Guy Allen

The CHiPs story

Owner report

Someone got the bright idea that it was about time we started featuring some of the bikes ridden by our members. So Phillip White kindly jumped in to start us off, with a little story about his infamous Chief, called (for obvious reasons) CHiPs...

Your esteemed editor has asked me to kick off this series with a few words on how I got into Indians and the history of CHiPs. I got into bikes at the age of 16, which was learner legal in NSW in the sixties, and got my commercial pilot's licence at 24, then my car licence at 27. So, for most of my youth, I went everywhere on two wheels.

I had no role models for my fascination with bikes except that I knew that my dad, who passed away when I was 10, had a J model Harley back in the thirties. He used to pull the exhaust cut-out when riding past the local 'talent' at the bus stop. Said talent included my mom, who wanted to know who this noisy chap was. They met and married, so I can reasonably assert that the Motor Company had a hand in my genesis.

Unlike my Jap bike-riding con-

temporaries, I was always into old pommy gear and rode and fettled endless Ajays, Triumphs etc. I was an airframe and engine apprentice with Qantas and I well remember chucking a rod on a 500 AJS twin coming home from evening shift travelling flat-out on the expressway. We limped home and I spent the rest of the night installing an old 500 single that was laid up in the shed. I made it to work next morning. It was a time when I had loads of Vincents because the speedway boys were dumping them for Honda fours. I sure wish I'd kept a few for my super!

I had a 10-year break from bikes and got back into them about 20 odd years ago via a Harley ElectraGlide on which my wife and I did many happy touring miles. One day a friend of mine invited me to a car show and there were all these old bikes there. It



Owner report

was like seeing old friends again and I was hooked.

Indian who?

I knew that there had been an American bike called an “Indian” but had never seen one. The first photo I saw was a still shot of a scene from the movie *Tora Tora Tora*, where a telegram boy on a bright red skirted fender Scout is trying to deliver a telegram warning of imminent attack, whilst bombs are exploding around him. (The scene was cut from the film.) I thought the bike looked fantastic and bought a copy of *The Iron Redskin* and *The Indian Buyers Guide*.

Indian riders now are quite used to seeing all sorts of Indians on runs and for sale but that’s not how it was in those not so distant days. There were none to be seen at rallies or on the road that I knew of. These bikes really were the stuff of myth and legend.

On a visit to America I found a dismantled 1947 Chief which cost the princely sum of \$2000. I had it shipped out and restored it. It was a handsome machine, dark red with fringed chummy seat, studded saddlebags and white wall tyres.

After some years navigating the ‘joys’ of six-volt electrical systems



and the dangers of clapped-out barrels, I negotiated to sell it to a Japanese gent for \$16,500 – a lot of money during the recession of the late eighties.

When delivering the bike to him I made the mistake of gassing it on wet grass. The bike swapped ends and spat me off. It slithered across the grass and hit the concrete paving at some speed, bending the front fender and grinding the crashbars in a spectacular shower of sparks. The buyer spoke as much English as I do Japanese, which is nil. He was gesturing to the damage but I had a flash of inspiration and bowed to him.



He bowed back and handed over the dosh. Perhaps he thought that bikes were normally delivered this way in Oz...

All sorts of Indians followed, including a 96ci monster built from junk with a disc front end and a reversed Honda four rear wheel. It carried really tall gearing and went like stink. It never blew up though the bike was known in Indian circles as “The Grenade”. The bike I had the longest was an old 344 with US army guards. It was various shades of khaki and was a tad rough in appearance but had an 80ci engine and was a fast machine for a classic. It delighted in

surprising many chaps on Tridents and Commandos as it whizzed past them, especially on hills.

Black Hawk down

Eventually I felt the urge to own a Black Hawk, as the telescopic Chiefs are called. I had ridden Jim Parker’s faithful old tele-forked blue bike and really liked it. He put me on to what we thought was a 1948 basket-case with black and white guards and the remains of a siren - so it was clearly a cop bike. The frame number, usually on the rear shock lug, was missing and turned up on a footrest hanger. That meant that it was a very late

Owner report

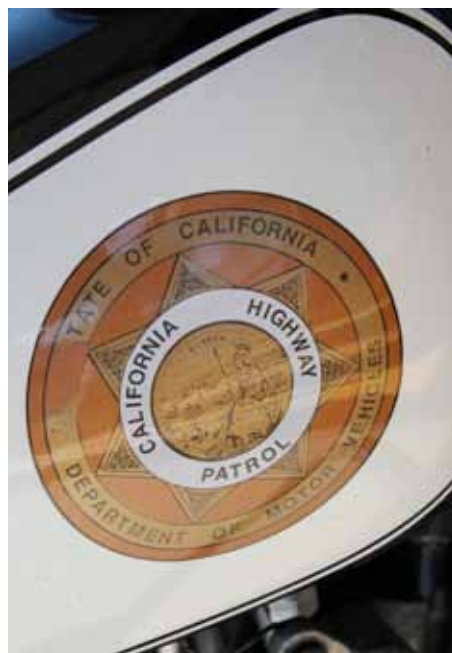
chief indeed – a 1952.

(A little tech note here: By the fifties, Indian was in trouble and they hooked up with The Vincent Company in England to see if they could do a joint venture. Indian commissioned various prototypes including the much-copied Vindian, which was built in England and featured a Vincent engine in a 1948 Chief chassis. Another prototype was the one and only Indian Vincent, which was a touring Vincent Rapide fitted with Indian lighting, horn and electrics, plus left-foot gearchange, with bars and guards to suit American tastes. This very rare Indian is owned by club member Phil Pilgrim.)

The last Chiefs were designed with relocated footrest hangers so that a cast alloy cover could be placed over the side valve engine to make it look more modern alongside the high-tech Vincent. This necessitated a low level exhaust system which eliminated the interesting Indian trait of setting fire to the right hand saddle bag!

By 1952-53 an Indian cost about the same as a basic Chevy, so most of them were in fact cop bikes. Surprisingly few people restore them that way. I decided CHiPs (California Highway Patrol) deserved to be preserved as originally intended.

I did the restoration myself. Whilst I admire people who turn out abso-



lutely correct nut and bolt restorations, that's really not my thing. The mission was to have a bike that was both rideable and a bit different. I opted for an 84ci engine. Indian themselves found that this configuration produced the best torque but, since it required special pistons, they opted reduce the stroke back to 80ci. I ran with the original three-speed box for a few years but found that that old bug-bear of the ever-loosening clutch hub nut became a problem. This happens occasionally on 74s, but seems to be worse on big motors.

There are endless photos of me stuck on the side of the road using a big screwdriver as a chisel and a house brick or rock to bash the nut



tight enough to get home.

Eventually I invested in a four-speed, which in my opinion is a must-have mod for a regular rider, though I am aware that not all enthusiasts would agree. After spending the national debt of Brazil on my original generator I binned it in favour of a Cycle Craft unit which has proved trouble-free.

A few years ago my wife and I did the IMCA Scottish tour aboard CHiPs, over 4000km with no serious problems. Because, by Indian standards, CHiPs is a fast bike we ended up doing a lot of marshalling as well, which is nice because you get to see all the bikes in action.

The feature on this bike that people

most notice is the excellent rear wheel driven siren. There are a handful of American police and military bikes on the classic scene with sirens, but none of them are as ear-splitting as the one on CHiPs. Most enthusiasts like it, there may be a few who don't - who knows? (You can't hear them over the racket – Ed.)

With its high gearing, it can rumble along the freeway at 110km/h-plus all day long with no problems and little vibration. It is very comfortable, particularly with the windscreen fitted, and reliable.

CHiPs is far and away the best classic I have owned.

Phillip White

Hand-change terrors

In the Saddle

Ever wondered what it is like to wrestle a 60-year-old monster with a hand change? Guy “Guido” Allen didn’t really, but found out anyway...

Over a quarter of a century down the proverbial track, I should know better than to respond when Pilgrim gets on the speaking trumpet and says, “I have a plan...”

It has at various times led muggins into all sorts of weird and wonderful situations, such as working for Triumph (a long story for another day) and, more recently, buying my own Gilroy Indian at great expense.

The latest wheeze was something along the lines of, “You’re going on the Great Race (note the lack of choice here – Ed), and it’s about time you grew up and learned to ride a proper hand-change motorcycle.”

Okay, I’ve had sillier proposals, and wasn’t about to dispute his judgement or generosity.

The bike

In case I missed the point, he turned



up one morning on Black Bastard, a 1948 Chief with stock 74ci powerplant and looking a little rough around the edges. I liked it, though riding the beast could be a whole

other nest of vipers.

“Listen up,” he began, “you use full choke and give it a few priming kicks. Then, back the choke off to two clicks, switch it on, give it a

touch of throttle and boot it.”

Okay, that I can live with. And the catch?

“That’s the clutch,” he explained, pointing at the left-side pedal. Now

In the Saddle

that's a silly bloody place to put it. "This one will be easy," he went on, "it's got the throttle on the right-hand – standard, they had them on the left."

So I guess that means the giant knob on the left of the tank (normally on the right) is the shifter? Yup.

"Don't dither," went the briefing, "once it's running just shove it home. You're really gonna have to practice with this thing. I don't want to see you stuffing up on the Great Race start line by not getting away – they work to two-minute intervals."

Great, so no pressure then.

Eventually, I got around to borrowing BB for a morning (pre-race) and used it to lower the real estate values of the leafy suburb of Ivanhoe for an hour or so.

I've ridden foot clutch motorcycles before – one was powered by a Subaru engine and the other a Chevrolet V-eight. Neither had hand shifters and, in fact, the builders hadn't bothered with anything as refined as a gearbox. Though holding their own terrors, neither experience was much use.

I managed to wobble out of sight of Pilgrim's workshop and completed all of five minutes' riding before I cocked it up and stalled. No worries – BB was in a good mood and we got going again.

The process repeated a few times

until I finally worked out the secret. An Indian twin, even one this old, has a ton of grunt and is quite forgiving. So forget finesse. Just squeeze, turn and release the appropriate levers and concentrate on making sure it was pointing in the right direction.

Sure enough, even when I stuffed up the clutch release, it would bumble its way through.

Mountain climbing

Riding in the suburbs is one thing, doing several hundred kays through the Snowies is another. And this is where I got the biggest surprise.

The handling was primitive and vague, but perfectly predictable and stable. Its brakes were nothing to write home about, and I've used worse.

What really shocked me was how comfortable it was. It could teach a lesson to a lot of modern cruisers.

Cut loose on the open road, that big and lazy powerplant is a gem. I've ridden a variety of Brit classics over the years (and own a Sunbeam of similar vintage), but this big American was a whole other experience. Just give the damned thing its head and it would pull through.

Okay, so the occasional first-gear switchback sometimes had me scrambling for levers in some weird frenetic dance, but we got there. And even the odd time when we rushed



into an intersection way too quick was survivable.

Black Bastard and I became friends. I really didn't want to give him back.

Dammit, where's that bank manager...?

Guy "Guido" Allen

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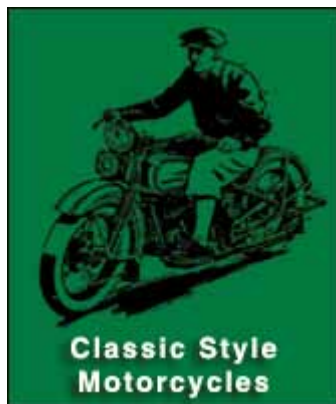
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