



# Smoke Signals

Autumn 2025 Edition

*Iron Indian Riders Association*



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## Cover Pic

***Phil Pilgrim's Vindian which won the Best Combined Make Bike at this year's Vincent Rally down in Tassie.***



# President's Report

*Hi guys,*

So here we are in Autumn already the year seems to be hammering down the road. We had quite a nice dry summer which was great riding weather and not too many hot days which is always a bonus for a POM. 😊

Work has been extra ordinarily busy this time round. We have quite a few new products being launched which somehow have all peaked at the same time. So the new 750 101 and 750 standard Scout cylinders are now both in stock, as well as the 741 Belt drive and alternator system, another batch of 741 speedometers and a clutch of other parts we have been working on. Always something to do here which is how I like it.

Don't forget the next quarters events because as always it is all about you and your participation in these events make these things worth while. The AGM is especially important and I would urge any of you to step forward and bring some new ideas to the floor. We do have to keep things moving forward and we do that by changing with the times. Make a note of any ideas as you think about them on an old note pad and bring them to the meeting. In July. I will be back this time for the AGM so I look forward to seeing you there.

Dates and times for upcoming events are listed on the Events Page.

Next week I am heading off to Europe to see family and attend the Indian Riders Fest in the south of the Czech republic (now called Czechia). I have to say of all the very many motorcycle events I have ever attended this one has without any doubt the best organisation. This year is moved to Lake Lipno and taken over a whole town for the weekend. [www.indianridersfest.eu](http://www.indianridersfest.eu) I believe it is the biggest Indian rally in the world and it certainly is Indian premium event in Europe. Of course it is relatively easy to travel from almost every European country which helps, Although I suspect there will not be any Russian participation this year. Of course we also had some politics this year with the federal election. To be honest I am glad it is over. The same old BS, building a station to the airport blah blah and the inevitable

bidding war of what they will spend our money on. It really does make me sick of it all. In the end I think a lot of people were surprised when Labor won. But again does it make much different between Labor and Liberal. I think probably not as much as we would like it to be.

Finally new projects. If anyone is working on any new motorcycle projects pls contact the editor. It would be great to have a project section in the magazine for each issue about what you bought how you found it and what has been happening with your project. For us here at Crazyhorse we have a first year 1920 Scout we are currently working on. Its surprising the number of 1 year only parts Dave has had me scouting the world for various parts.

The latest part found was the cable operated decompressor which only last 2 years 1920 and 1921 before it was replaced with a rod. Despite the lever being a Bowden UK lever they have been very difficult to track down. But in the end one of my colleagues in New Zealand found one for me. Now just to make the rest of this very elaborate decompressor mechanism, it's really not surprising they did away with it.

That's all folks, enjoy the rest of the lovely Autumn weather and I hope to see you at the AGM stay safe out there

*Best regards*

**Mark**



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the Great American  
Desert on his Flying  
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# Editorial

## Welcome to the Spring edition of *Smoke Signals*

This issue we wave goodbye to the good weather after what has been a pretty good riding season, and of course that means that the Annual AGM is just around the corner.

As always, we are keen to hear from anyone willing to put their hand up and do a bit of work, and the nomination form is included in this issue.

The new financial year also means it's time to pay your annual subscription, and please make sure this is done on time, as it also affects your Club Rego if you have a bike on historic plates.

And don't forget to send in pictures as well. The club needs to keep track of all motorcycles registered under the historic rego scheme and it is very easy to lose track of who owns what and where.

This issue we get a closer look at Phil Pilgrim, and he has also sent us some pics of the early years or Union Jack, Mussetts and some of his machines through the ages. On the cover we feature Phil's Vindian, which won Best Combined Make Bike at the Vincent Rally held in Tasmania earlier this year - read the full report from Jason Douglas as Phil and Ownen both made the trip to the Apple Isle.

Phillip White is back with a report on his exploits at the Colombres Rally, as well as the All British Rally, and then providing us with a few gags along the way.

We have also added a 'For Sale' section, so if you have any excess bikes or machinery you, or the missus, reckons needs a new home, send us the details and we'll include it in the next issue.

There are a lot of events coming up, so keep an eye on the events calendar. I've also included the details and registration form for the Gypsy Tour of Tassie again which is fast approaching in March next year - prepare now if you're interested in attending.

And if you're just out for a ride up northern Victoria, a stop at the Black Swan Hotel is a must. I chanced upon this establishment a few months ago and was impressed by the array of bikes - not just Indians, but a good sprinkling of Italian marques as well - not to mention the refreshing ale.

## New Members

We have one new member since last issue, so let's welcome Tom Floyd to the ranks.

Cheers

**Ray**



CLASSIC STYLE  
**MOTOR  
CYCLES**

# Current Executive Committee Members

**President:**

Mark Barthelmie 0466229747 or [markbarthelmie@hotmail.com](mailto:markbarthelmie@hotmail.com)

**Vice President:**

Phil Pilgrim 03 94996428 (B.H) or [unionjackmotorcycles@gmail.com](mailto:unionjackmotorcycles@gmail.com)

**Secretary:**

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Phil Pilgrim 03 94996428 or [unionjackmotorcycles@gmail.com](mailto:unionjackmotorcycles@gmail.com)

Mark Barthelmie (signatory only) 0466229747 or

[markbarthelmie@hotmail.com](mailto:markbarthelmie@hotmail.com)

**Rally co-ordinator****Immediate Past President:**

Don McDonald

**Welfare officer:**

Phil Nuske J of P/ 0423 576609 or [pnuske@internode.on.net](mailto:pnuske@internode.on.net)

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South Australia:

Murray Johnson 0408 833511 or [kmbritbikes@internode.on.net](mailto:kmbritbikes@internode.on.net)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 2025

***Nomination of Office Bearers – Executive Committee Members***

Executive Committee Position	Person Nominated (members full Name)	Nominated By (members name & signature)	Seconded By (members name & signature)	Accepted by Nominated Person (members name & signature)
President				
Vice President				
Treasurer				
Secretary				
Machine Examiner/ Safety Officer				

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

1. Please clearly print the name(s) of your executive committee nominee(s).
2. Original signatures only. No computer images, no PP or such like. Please use blue or black ink. Check you have completed required information and provided all needed original signatures as forms with incomplete entries will not be valid.
3. Financial members of Association, other than Associate Members, are entitled to hold executive office, nominate executive office bearers and vote on the election of executive office bearers. [Association rule 13 and 14]
4. All executive committee positions are open for re-election. [Association rule 50]
5. You may nominate yourself and you may nominate for multiple executive roles however only the Secretary may hold multiple executive committee roles. [Section 76 of the Associations Incorporated Reform Act 2012]
6. Non-executive association roles.
  - a. In accordance with the rules of the association and its by-law number 2, non-executive or sub-committee members may include: Public Relations Officer, Event Coordinator, Club Captain/Ride coordinator, Editor, Webmaster, Regalia Officer, Social Secretary, Membership Secretary (as an assistant to the Executive Secretary as this role is defined in the rules as an Executive Secretary responsibility) and Vicroads administrator.
  - b. Vicroads Administrator. The associations Club Permit Agreement with Vicroads at section 1 of that agreement states that ONLY elected individual office bearers of the association may administer the agreement, as such this non-executive role is as an assistant to perform tasks for and as directed by the elected Machine Examiner/Safety Officer.
  - c. Holders of non-executive roles may attend any regular committee meetings however, as defined in the Association rule 44(2) and specifically by-law 2, they do not have any committee voting rights.
  - d. It is the responsibility of the elected executive committee members to appoint association members to non-executive roles. [Association rule 44]
7. This completed nomination form must be received by the associations Secretary no later than 60 days prior to the Annual General Meeting. [Association rule 51(4)]. Nominations received after that date will NOT be valid.

**Return this form by post or hand only to:**

The Secretary, Iron Indian Riders Australia, PO Box 2264, Werribee, VIC 3030. [association rule 74(3)]

# Upcoming Events

## AGM/ July Quarterly Meeting

Tuesday 29 July 2025 @ 8:00 pm - 9:30 pm

Grandview Hotel Fairfield 429 Heidelberg rd, Fairfield, Australia

Nomination forms should be returned a week before for your turn at committee

## August Quarterly Ride - Details TBA

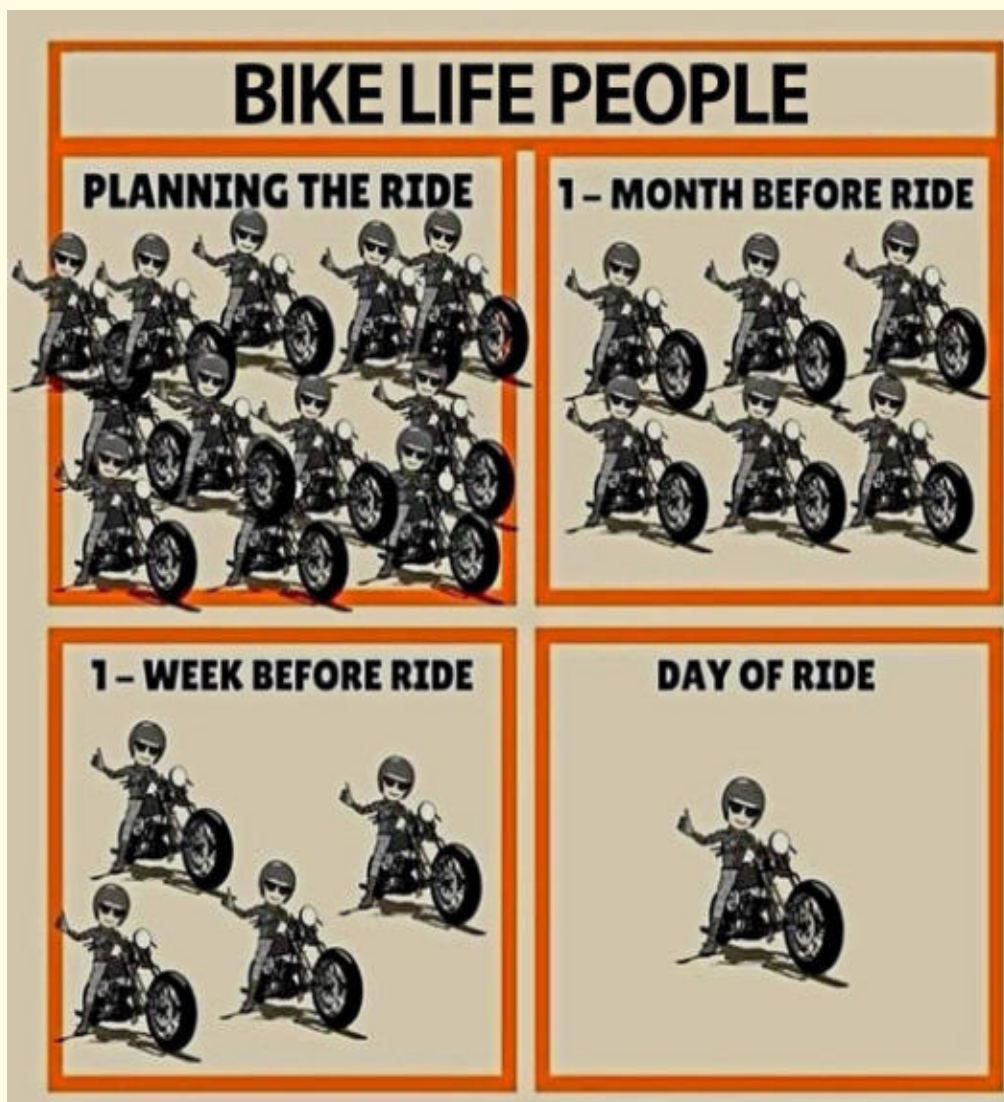
Sunday 3 August 2025 @ 10:00 am - 3:30 pm

## Crazy Horse Rally 2025 Myrtleford

Friday 12 September 2025 @ 8:00 am - September 14 @ 5:00 pm

Railway Motel 101 Standish st, Myrtleford, VIC, Australia

Accommodation Railway Motel Myrtleford 0423220810



# Upcoming Events

## **Pub & Grub Ride 2025**

Friday 17 October 2025 @ 10:00 am - October 20 @ 5:00 pm

Railway Motel 101 Standish st, Myrtleford, VIC, Australia

Details TBA

## **October Quarterly Meeting**

Tuesday 28 October 2025 @ 8:00 pm - 9:30 pm

Grandview Hotel Fairfield 429 Heidleberg rd, Fairfield, Australia

## **November Quarterly Ride**

Sunday 2 November 2025 @ 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

U-Go Service Station Mill Park 377 Plenty Road, Mill Park, Victoria, Australia

Destination TBA

## **IIRA Christmas Party 2025**

Saturday 6 December 2025 @ 10:00 am - 3:30 pm

At Wayne Smith's chateau details to be announced

## **Midday Express 2026**

Saturday 24 January 2026 @ 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Rubicon Hotel-Motel 1362 Taggert-Thornton rd, Thornton, Victoria

Book Rubicon Motel for Saturday overnigher, meet at U-Go service station in Plenty Rd Mill Park

## **Gypsy Tour of TASSIE 2026 and other things**

Thursday 5 March 2026 @ 6:30 pm - March 21, 2026 @ 6:30 pm

Argosy Motel Devonport Tasmania 221 Tarleton st, Devonport, Tasmania, Australia

# IIRA Gypsy Tour of Tassie

## March 2 - 13 2026



All of the organising is being done by those who wish to participate in the 2026 IIRA Gypsy Tour of Tasmania, so join us on this trip to Tassie, **THIS MEANS YOU!**

Firstly you must be a current financial member of the IIRA.

Secondly your bike will have to conform to a couple of things! namely Indian's of any era 1901 - 2026 and also any BEA (British, European & American) up to 1976.

Your entry will not be accepted if you will not comply to these requirements, no cars will be accepted only the vehicle luggage carrier - it's a motorcycle tour not a car and caravan event!

Your machine will be expected to be roadworthy and currently fully registered or club permitted and you will obviously have a current license, your tools and spares if necessary should be carried on your motorcycle.

There is nothing stopping you from going by yourself though, but people on this tour have expressed these rules to enjoy the camaraderie and adventure of this trip.

The dates are listed here and the preferred

accommodation list will be sent to you upon your entry fee being paid. There is a non-refundable entry requirement for \$150, or \$50 extra for a pillion, this will cover a luggage vehicle and it's fuel.

The luggage vehicle will carry one small to medium sports bag per person, the rest you must carry on your own machine.

These bags won't be able to be loaded till you're in Devonport as the owner and passenger are taking their own motorcycles in the van, weirdly two bikes and passengers in a van are cheaper than two separate motorcycles and riders!

It's strongly advised you are in RACV Total Care or similar institution in case you break down as they will get you home, we will not have a trailer for "dead motorcycles".

The criteria is all dependent **on you to book the ferry** so book early 2025 to avoid disappointment! You can probably book the day earlier or the day later return on the ferry if the ferry is overbooked.

If you find difficulty in booking accommodation after you return the form below at some places ring Phil Pilgrim 0400922022 for alternative venues, note some of the selected accommodation listed have grouped us together so those with contact names listed beside them please mention the IIRA motorcycle group.

Also in Queenstown there is an optional steam train ride which we are going on, please book this at least six months in advance as it's impossible to get on this trip randomly.

So what is a Gypsy Tour? You are free to take off either by yourself or with companions at anytime and travel anywhere you wish, you know your evening destination so if you wish to sleep in till 10am everyday and arrive at your destination at 2pm or even 10pm great, all well and good.

You might want to get up at 6am and ride flat out to the next destination that's fine as well, there is no prescribed conformity, you can do as you wish.

All accommodation details will be sent out after return of Expression of Interest form SUBMITTED and deposit paid, **this ride will be only for 16 people only so don't delay, in getting things planned**

Looking forward to 2026

**Tassie Tour 2026 Expression of interest**  
**RSVP by October 2025**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Pillion name \_\_\_\_\_

Motorcycle Brand \_\_\_\_\_

Motorcycle Model \_\_\_\_\_

Motorcycle Year: Indian's of any era (or **limited if a non-Indian to BEA up to 1976**)

\_\_\_\_\_

Queenstown Steam Railway tour PLACE YOUR BOOKING 03. 064710100 please tick

Are you interested in going to and possibly staying at Lake Pedder? Yes or No

\$150 To Iron Indian Riders of Aust COMMBANK BSB 063141 ACC 10486429

***Email form to :  
unionjackmotorcycles@gmail.com***



# National Vincent Rally

• Jason Douglas



In February of this year the Vincent Owners of Tasmania hosted the National Vincent Rally on the Apple Isle. The event attracted 65 Vincents from Australia and beyond, including our own Phil Pilgrim and Owen XXXX.

With every bike being at least 70 years old - and some of their riders even older - just about every model of Vincent ever made was represented.

The rally moved around Tasmania over 12 days stopping at areas of interest, motoring museums, or just for good food and a view.

One stop included the impressive private collection of Peter Binder who, along with his 15 Vincents, also has an impressive collection of 18 Brough Superior motorcycles and numerous other collectable bikes and cars of all vintages.

The event was obviously a great success and in part was a prelude to the World Vincent Rally which will be held in Tasmania in March

2027, where organisers will book a container from the UK for international riders keen to participate.

Below we have included a daily diary of one of the attendees, Jason Douglas, as a taste of the event and hopefully a tempter for Vincent owners all over the world to participate in the 2027 World Rally.

Also worth viewing is the YouTube video by Harvey Bowden who is well known in classic bike circles and has a long connection to Vincent.

The information in the report is excellent, but the main attraction for me was the beautiful soundtrack of 65 Vincents with their long-stroke V-twins gunning down the road, a rare joy and an enduring memory.

Search for Vincent Rally Tasmania 2025 or Harvey Bowden on YouTube, and you can also watch his interview with Peter Binder and a more in-depth look at some of the bikes.

## By Jason Douglas

A small group of four riders; Phillip, Owen, Garry and David and backup driver Jason, embarked on the 12 day National Vincent Rally around the undulating roads of Tasmania.

We had two major goals; we were to admire the beautiful scenery and sights that Tasmania has to offer and survive the entire rally without incident. We achieved the first goal, but as for the other, we encountered a few issues throughout the rally that included Phill's pannier bracket breaking.

We then needed to fix the bracket with a welder that Owen had brought from Nubee - an upmarket hardware store, in Devonport - and we all wondered why he had brought such a small welder, but it stood its own when we needed it the most.

The welder offered a small but mighty platform that we could use for maximum penetration, and when we needed it at a lower setting to fix the tab used to fasten the pannier to the bike it managed that as well.

We decided to make another bracket, just in case the other one failed, and just as well we did, because on the final day the second bracket broke and as we had another pre-made it made fixing the bracket a lot more efficient. We were left amazed why the pannier only had a flimsy bracket in the first place.

At least now it will hold up to whatever Phill can throw at it when it comes to the elements and rough terrain.

Owen's bike's starter motor failed and when



Phill removed the outer casing, he discovered that a gear had been chewed up. He removed the gear, which then rendered the starter motor unusable and Owen would had to kick start his bike from then onwards.

And so, our Rally began ...

On Days 1, 2 and 3 we used Devonport as a base.

### Day 1

On day 1 of the Rally, we drove 112 km from Devonport to Arboretum where we enjoyed a





that there was another garage with a whole lot more cars and bikes.

We went up to the other shed and when the door opened, our jaws dropped. There was nothing but cars and bikes as far as I could see. The number of items we saw was amazing.

Some of the cars and bikes included, Porches, a Lotus, Holdens, some Mustangs, a couple of GT Fords, a Subaru WRX, some vintage cars and all his sprint cars. I walked up a bit further and discovered that he also had collection of Ducatis

and Vespa scooters.

BBQ for lunch. From there we visited the owner of Sea Road, Chas Kelly's house, the cars were ushered onto the grass outside his house and the bikes were directed into his car port area.

There was even a bar which I was told was not for him because he didn't drink. It was instead for his friends to enjoy. From here we rode back along the roads to Devonport.

When we arrived, we were greeted with a semi-circle of luxury cars, which included a Porsche, Lamborghini, Ferrari, Ford GT, a couple of Maserati's and some Mercedes to name but a few. I started to hear a whisper

## Day 2

A ride to the Wings Wildlife Park for a coffee then onto the upper Atone and then we rejoined the Coast Road and rode back to Devonport.



### Day 3

A 192 km trek to Sheffield for a coffee then a small jaunt to Mole Creek where we enjoyed another BBQ for lunch.

While at Devonport we attended an awards night at the caravan park, a few awards were presented including for the people's choice and for the best special etc.

The best special was awarded to the best combined make bike, which this was awarded to Phillip Pilgrim for the marvellous effort he had put into the manufacture of his Vindian. Congratulations Phill, well deserved.

### Day 4

We shifted from Devonport to Strahan which took us 263 km along the A10 through Burnie, Elliot, Warratah and Julab, where we stopped for lunch. After lunch we set off again and rode through Zeehan until we finally arrived in Strahan.

### Day 5

This would be our rest day; we decided as a group that we would take a drive to Queenstown.

Normally we would have stayed in Queenstown, but because we were on a National Rally, they had chosen to stay at Strahan instead.

We took a stroll around Queenstown and enjoyed one of the local delicacies, a tub of Valhalla ice cream.

We had lunch at a cafe and Garry wanted to go to a local sawmill and get a slab of Huon Pine which he would use to make a guitar out of.

### Day 6

We left Strahan and set off for our next destination - Hobart. This leg of the journey would take some 302 kilometres, we drove to Queenstown and then onto Hobart. We encountered a lot of construction but somehow we still managed to get to Hobart in reasonable time.



### Day 7

We rode to Peter Bender's house and saw his collection of motorbikes. He had a lot of bikes in his collection which included, BSAs, Type A, B, C and D Vincents, some Broughs, and the very rare Black Lightning which cost almost one million dollars to import from America.

He even had some rare Phillip Irving items including drawings of a Vincent and other bike parts, and some school records. We





enjoyed lunch at Peter Bender's before returning to Hobart.

### Day 8

The trip to Bruny Island via the ferry. While the bikes were on the island, we explored the island and enjoyed a lunch of fish and chips.

### Day 9

We set off from Hobart for our next destination - Orford. From Hobart we drove over the Grass Tree Hill to Richmond for a coffee.

After our coffee break, we rode through Colebrook, Tunnack and then on to Oatlands



where we enjoyed a delicious lunch at the Callington Mill distillery. Some people in attendance even enjoyed a whiskey tasting experience.

After lunch we meandered along the back roads until we finally arrived at Orford. We had a scrumptious meal at the adjoining cafe and enjoyed a talk by an engineer named Terry Prince. He had ridden a Vincent for over 70 years.

He started off in England and then migrated to Australia in the 1980s. He made his own parts for his motorbikes because the parts on offer at the time weren't as high quality as he wanted.

To prove the parts were of the highest standard he started racing his bikes. He even managed to set a land speed record of 153 mph at the tender age of 70, and it has still not been broken to this very day.

### Day 10

A 243 kilometre journey from Orford to St Helens. We set off on the Lake Leake Road and made our way through Fingal and St Mary's to St Helen's. We had lunch at Banjo's in Campbelltown. There was a lot of road

works on this leg of the journey, and it was a slow old ride from St Mary's to St Helens.

### Day 11

A 213-kilometre trip from St Helens to Grindelwald. During this journey we discovered Derby, Seetstale, Idals and Exeter. We then travelled over the Batman Bridge to Grindelwald.

### Day 12

This would be an indirect route back to Devonport for Phillip and Jason. However, because some of the roads of the previous day's jaunt were missed by Owen, Garry and David, they decided to back track and see for themselves just how great the roads were from the previous day.

Our final dinner would find us at the Devonport Football Club rooms for a delicious roast and dessert of cheesecake,

fresh fruit and chocolate cake, served with ice cream.

This night also included an auction of motorcycle items, including a hand knitted Vincent jumper and the proceeds of some items would go back to the Vincent Owners Club and the money made by other items went to another worthy charity.



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# All British Rally

• Phillip White



The 2025 All British Rally was a mixed bag. It was, as always a great weekend with a plethora of bikes to look at and the pleasure of catching up with old friends and acquaintances, however "The times they are a changing" as Bob told us over 60 years ago.

This is the 47th year of this venerable event so we are rapidly approaching half a century of two wheeled fun. This is the premier old bike event in Australia, nothing else comes close.

The Newstead Race Course has been the venue since the year 2000 however the very first event was held in 1977 in Cheshunt, then for varying periods at the Nug Nug reserve, for one year only a paddock in the Western District, then Campbells Creek, Dunkeld and finally starting in the year 2000 at its current location at the Newstead Race Course.

Older rally goers will recall those very early days when such wholesome events as the Burn Out Competition, the Doughnut Competition and the Award for the Longest



## **“ ... such wholesome events as the Burn Out Competition, the Doughnut Competition and the Award for the Longest Mono down the Main Street ...”**

Mono down the Main Street of Dunkeld were well attended highlights.

In those early days loading camping gear and luggage on to a bike often consisted of simply wrapping a bottle of Stones Green Ginger Wine into an Army Blanket and heading off. Well that was then and this is now; It was noticeable that this years ticket sales were down about 20% on previous years.

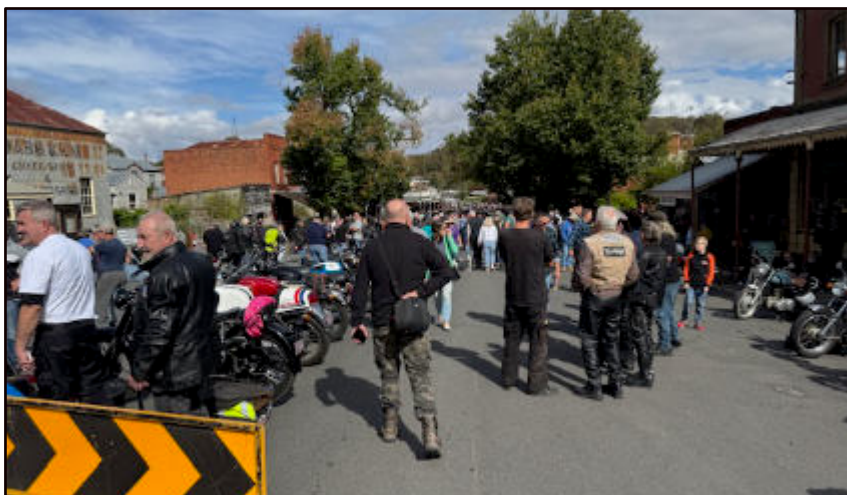
There are a number of factors that are currently impacting the old bike scene, however in this case the two chief suspects are the recent Covid epidemic and the demographics of the attendees.

Until fairly recently most people camped under the trees around the perimeter, with a minority in Camper Vans down on the Race Course itself. In Recent years that ratio has gradually reversed, and this year there

were visibly less campfires twinkling away at night.

More attendees are staying in AirB&Bs or motels and only visiting by day. This is understandable; camping gets tougher as you get older and this trend will probably continue.

Another noticeable change was the decrease





in the number of attendees actually riding to the rally, and those that do are mostly on modern Brit bikes.

The weather was generally kind except on Friday afternoon. It looked a bit threatening in the arvo but I wanted to try out my just completed Sunbeam S8 so a coffee in Maldon sounded doable.

A mate accompanying me didn't like the look of the advancing rain front and turned back. I kept on and just rode through a few sprinkles



on the road to Maldon.

I sipped my coffee while a few showers came and went. I found out later that when the storm front reached the campsite and just stopped right there, delivering a monumental cloud burst that flooded the site. Too bad I missed it!

Saturday in Maldon was, as usual, a smorgasbord of old bikes with a fabulous display of Britain's two wheeled heritage.

There was also a great deal of engineering talent on display, my personal favourite being a H engine four cylinder Douglas Dragonfly that looked like a factory product.

This years Gate Prize was a Hinkley Triple in excellent condition. It is sobering to realise this "Modern" bike is now Red Plateable! Tempus Fugit it seems.

However, roll on 2026! BSA Clubs are always the biggest and many thanks to the hard working lads and lasses who organise this mammoth event.

See you on the road.



- *The internet has given us some inspiration for your next DIY project.*

# Phil Pilgrim's Memory Lane

This month we feature our very own Phil Pilgrim, the blushing flower of the Iron Indian Riders Association, who was instrumental in the creation of the club and is a tireless worker in keeping it all running.

Never one to voice his own opinion - unless or course it involves politics, taxes, religion, the environment, EVs and of course motorcycles (and don't start him on solar panels) - Phil has been in the thick of the motorcycling community since the 1970s, and is a witness to the evolution of the industry to its current state.

With the news of Peter Stevens going down the gurgler, who at the time of their inception were criticised for buying up and then putting the mom and pop dealerships out of business, it is somewhat serendipitous that Phil and Union Jack survived the age of the internet and niche marketing as Peter Stevens sits in the hands of receivers.

This issue Phil has sent us some of his pics of the era, as well as a write-up by Grant Roff about him from *Two Wheels* to remind us of the halcyon days of Elizabeth Street, Mussets, Union Jack, Phil without a moustache and a selection of some of his bikes over the years.



A blue and white Triumph motorcycle is the central focus of the image, positioned in a workshop. The bike's fuel tank is white with blue side panels and a 'TRIUMPH' badge. It has a round orange headlight and a smaller orange side light. The handlebars and engine are visible. In the background, there are workshop shelves with various tools and parts.

WORKSHOP

# FLYING THE FLAG

The period of Triumph history in Australia between the collapse of Meriden and the Bloor era is an untold story. Phil Pilgrim, boss of Union Jack Motorcycles, knows where all the bodies are buried...

*Feature by Grant Roff*

**L**et's start with the business: Union Jack Motorcycles is pretty-much a one-stop shop in Australia if you own or are rebuilding a Triumph motorcycle built before 1988. It air-freights around 400kg of spares a month into its Melbourne warehouse. Phil will have what you want but, in the unlikely event it isn't in stock, you'll wait a maximum of three weeks before it arrives.

The business has around 85 per cent of parts for Triumph T140 (oil-in-frame models from '72 to '88) in stock and around 60 per cent of what you'd need for the unit dry-frame models from '63 - '70. Union Jack is also your best Australian source for pre-unit (up to '62) spares. The important thing here is that if Union Jack doesn't stock it, Phil knows how you can get it. In this business, knowledge is gold.

*Phil does engine rebuilds but by appointment only.*

## WORKSHOP

### PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

Phil Pilgrim started his working life as an automotive mechanic but found himself working on Vincent speedway machines rather than cars. This led him eventually to the original Victorian Motorcycle Wreckers in Melbourne where he eventually became frustrated by dismantling rather than building bikes.

His path eventually took him to Graeme Laing at the Melbourne Motorcycle Company (Suzuki) where he was considered for a job but was asked to wait a weekend for the decision. On the Saturday, he saw an advertisement for a job with Frank Mussett, the Victorian Triumph distributor. Laing offered the job on Monday but was too late – Phil had already been injected with British steroids and stayed with Mussetts from '73 to '78.

The Frank Mussett story is another feature in itself. Frank, as was the manner of the day, competed in just about every class of motorcycle sport (including the IoM in 1939) and, while a champion, proved to be an eccentric boss.

In 1979, Phil decamped to England, visited a number of Triumph businesses, and decided that he could probably go into business himself when he returned to Australia. He decided that the name "Union Jack" would tell the story of what he intended to do.

Meanwhile, back on the international stage...

Phil's engagement with Triumph coincided with the most tumultuous period of the manufacturer's history. Triumph's lack of development and England's flawed view of how the motorcycle industry would develop saw Triumph collapse and its workers take over the factory at Meriden.

According to Phil, the early Meriden co-op bikes were good but a poor decision in making Bonneville for the American market out-of-season tied up the co-op's capital and, from late '81, the quality of the bikes declined.

Here's a scoop: the potential buyers of Triumph included John Bloor (the rest is history), Les Harris and, surprisingly, Royal Enfield.

Bloor won but, while he was hatching his plans for Hinckley, he licensed the Triumph name to Les Harris who, over a period of eight years, produced 11,026 Bonneville and Tigers.

After a fairly major false start in Australia, Harris eventually appointed Phil as the Victorian and Tasmanian (later




The most desired Bonnie of all: the '69 model - in Union Jack's workshop.



The start of the Castrol Six-Day-Hour was always a mess but a Bonnie won in the first race in 1970.



Triumph header from the '40s onwards - all new.

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark jacket, is working on a motorcycle frame in a workshop. The frame is mounted on a red stand. The background is filled with shelves containing various boxes and tools. The man is focused on his work, with his hands on the frame. The workshop is cluttered with various items, including a large tire and a spring. The overall scene is one of a dedicated hobbyist or mechanic working on a custom project.

*Building a Vincati - a man has to do something in his spare time.*

## **SIX-HOUR WINNER**

The pre-Hinckley Triumphs were among the fastest bikes of their day. In the 1970 Castrol Six-Hour race, a Bonneville (with Len Atlee and Brian Hindle riding) won the race, four laps ahead of Craig Brown on a Honda CB750. A Bonnie also came third in the Unlimited Class with Jack Ahern and Graham Beeson behind the bars.

Other bikes in the 1970 event included Kawasaki Mack 111s and Yamaha XS650s

Massively overpowered by the emerging Japanese, Bonnies continued to race and as an example of how strong the engines were, 2Wheels climbed on a Peter Stevens-entry Bonneville at the end of an early '70s race and rode it 1000km back to Melbourne down the Hume Highway. It didn't miss a beat.

**WORKSHOP**



*Interlocker bolt for the Imbobulator -  
yes, we have it in stock.*



*Phil Pilgrim from Union Jack  
on the phone - as usual.*



## THE WHITE HELMETS

Among Phil Pilgrim's million stories is one about the White Helmets, the Royal Signals Motorcycle Display Team. The team originated in 1927 and today it consists of 30 active servicemen and women who do stunt and precision riding to promote army life.

2Wheels staff saw them performing on the Isle of Man during the TT in 2011 and couldn't believe they were doing it on what looked like vintage Triumphs.

Phil told us that the original bikes were supplied by the Meriden Motorcycle workers co-operative but that Les Harris, a devoted nationalist, had refurbished the bikes every 18 months. Wear and tear got to the original fleet and Les eventually built 40 new Tigers specifically for the White Helmets at his own cost. The Crustys might be more spectacular to look at but if you have to bet on precision riding, put your money on the White Helmets.

SA) distributor of Harris Triumphs. Perhaps less important than the bikes themselves was access to Triumph spares. Harris spares is still the major supplier of Phil's spares stock. Phil likes them because they're as good as original.

"They're not reverse-engineered. They don't have a physical copy of the part and work backwards. Harris has the original drawings and manufactures parts on this basis," he said.

Les Harris died on February 17, 2009, but the company survives and prospers. It's not, of course, Phil's only source of pre-'88 parts. When Meriden Triumph was sold up and the major factory buildings bulldozed, the receivers eventually noticed that there was another building in Meriden full of spares. It's now known as the Velocette Motorcycle Company and has a parts inventory at least as big as the Harris concern.

Such is the affection for early Triumphs, many other small manufacturers have become involved and it's possible still to produce a brand-new, Triumph T140 entirely from spare parts.

According to Phil, the same is almost true of the pre-71 bikes.

"The only things you can't get new now for a '69 Bonnie is the frame and the oil tank," he said.

## THINKING TRIUMPH

Phil has an interest in Indians and Vincents as well as Triumphs. He owns a few Vincents and has been involved in the building of around eight "Vincatis", Vincent engines in the chassis of Ducati GT750s. He's active in the Indian Owner's Club and he's currently building perhaps the world's third "Vindian", a Vincent engine in an Indian chassis. His first love, though, remains with Triumph.

"The pre-'88 bikes are still practical, useful units and fun to ride. They haven't been overtaken by the performance of modern traffic and, unlike many later-model Triumphs and Japanese bikes, parts are plentiful and inexpensive. If you look after your pre-'88 Triumph, it will provide a long service life and the bits that do eventually wear out will be both cheap to replace and available."

Phil also has an interesting take on his role as a keeper of Triumph knowledge.

"One of my early mentors told me to keep everything I had learned about Triumphs to myself. He told me that if I gave away information, I'd never make any money.

"I've thought about this over the years and decided the opposite is probably true. I know a lot about pre-'88 Triumphs now and I've found that I haven't been disadvantaged by sharing that knowledge.

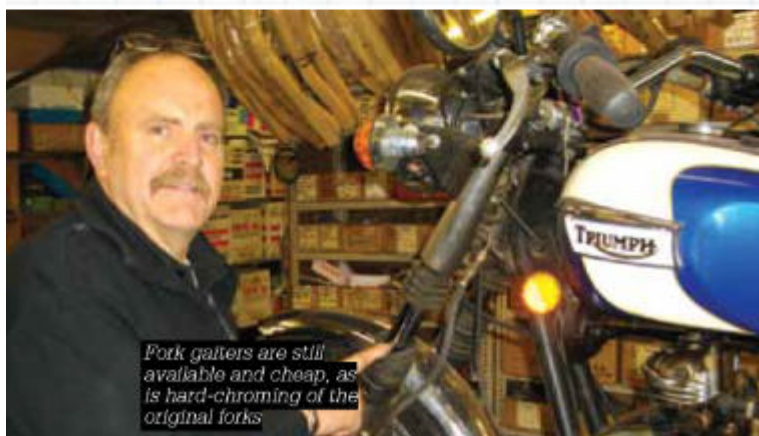
"I'm happy to give the necessary advice because I've found that those who ask will buy parts from me anyway. When I've moved locations over the years, customers have followed me. Yes, they want parts, but they also know I'll help them in any way I can to achieve their objectives."

## WORKSHOP

### CONTACT

Union Jack is now a one-man operation and Phil will only see customers face-to-face by appointment. The 2Wheels appointment stretched from half-an-hour to two hours because his telephone rang every five minutes from customers all over Australia seeking parts. He was able to fill every single order from existing stock.

You can call Phil on (03)94996428 or visit the business website on [www.unionjack.com.au](http://www.unionjack.com.au). Phil will send parts COD anywhere in Australia but, best of all, you can talk to him first and make sure they're exactly the parts you need. **2W**



• Above: Phil road racing a Vincent sidecar.



• Above: The Musset workshop.



• Frank Mussett on the factory 500 KTT VELO.

• This Page: All Union Jack, photo to the right before it shifted from 210 to 117 Lygon Street.





- *Left: Phil's first Indian 1921 Scout.*
- *Below: Phil's 1975 900ss and Velo Thruxton.*



- *Left: Smashed Velo Thruxton.*
- *Below: Phil with a mate on a 1948 Speed Twin.*



- *Left: The Vindian.*



• Left: the first meeting of the Iron Indian Riders 2011

• Below: Mussets showroom on Sydney Road.



• Top: Phil beside the Valiant ute in 1981 at Absolutely Motorcycle.

• Above: Pete White with a new bike in the Harley sidecar.

• Right: Phil's latest acquisition - a 1974 Ducati 750 GTE







The biggest shock in the motorcycle industry of late has been the announcement that Peter Stevens Motorcycles entered voluntary administration.

Peter Stevens is one of the biggest players in Australian motorcycling industry with over 400 employees and 15 dealerships throughout Victoria, NSW, South Australia and Western Australia.

KordaMentha Restructuring have been appointed as administrators and have continued operations while guaranteeing the ongoing entitlements of staff.

It was their \$65.9 million of debt that led to owners calling for voluntary administration, and while there is just \$42 million in assets and another \$5.7 million in deferred tax assets to cover the debts, the administrators are confident of finding a buyer as Peter Stevens Motorcycles has an annual turnover of around \$250 million and sell eight of the top twelve most popular motorcycle brands in Australia, including Yamaha, Harley-Davidson, Ducati, Triumph, making up 85% of all motorcycle sales in Australia and numbering around 8,000 new motorcycles annually.

The first creditors meeting on 29 May showed the full extent of the financial situation and the administrators are continuing to field expressions of interest from parties interested in buying all or part of the business.

It is noted that the administration doesn't affect Peter Stevens Importers or Monza Imports, which are separate businesses

handling motorcycle importation and accessories wholesaling, respectively.

In 2019, Vince's brother John Chiodo assumed full ownership and control of Monza Imports, a major distributor of motorcycle accessories and apparel in Australia. This move was the first significant step in separating the family's wholesale and retail interests.

Then, in 2021 Steve Chiodo and his son Paul took full control of PSI, Fox Racing Australia, and PSI Cycling. These businesses had been part of the broader Peter Stevens umbrella but were formally split from the retail group to allow each arm of the family to focus on different sectors of the motorcycle industry.

Today, these wholesale and distribution companies continue to operate successfully under the Chiodo name.

Jessica Chiodo-Reidy, daughter of the late Vince Chiodo, took sole ownership of the retail business in 2023 when the long planned separation of the company was completed.

Interestingly when speaking to industry insiders about the shock fall of the Peter Stevens Motorcycles there were few tears though some surprise. Many pointed to the company being run by middle managers obsessed by KPIs and bottom line performance with no real passion or feel for motorcycling.

Peter Stevens Motorcycles first hit headwinds during Covid when they were forced to restructure and seemed to emerge successfully after also selling their Elizabeth Street premises in 2020 for \$31.5 million.



# Shed Drunk

• Guy 'Guido' Allen

**(from the Travels with Guido series  
MT251, Nov 2011, posted May 2020)**

Indians and bee stings lead to rash promises  
at Chateau Guido ...

Ms M Snr just made one of those  
declarations that all husbands/spouses/  
partners dream of.

It all started with a group email from Prof  
Kingsbury, extolling the delights of a Norton  
victims club ride into the hills. It sounded  
tempting: loud noises, cranky motorcycles,  
tearful owners, lunch at a pub.

But I was on another promise – the Iron  
Indian Riders (or victims – take your pick)  
Association monthly ride and shed tour.

Sent the usual salutations to the Prof and

begged out of the Norton gig.

Then I got a response. Ms M, from all of 10  
metres away, at the other end of the house,  
asked if she could come on the Indian ride  
with her Suzuki. Via email.

Okay, so add 'relationship' to the burgeoning  
list of things to do, maybe a little ahead of tax  
returns and mowing the yard.

It's Sunday morning and I can see Ms M is  
not taking the 8:50am start time seriously. As  
she wanders around the house in various  
states of (un)dress, I try to assure her the  
Indian folk are (weirdly) models of  
punctuality.

"Yeah, yeah," she responds, "I know what  
your mates are really like." If it were the usual  
disheveled tribe of Spannerman, Snag and

Blackadder, she'd be right.

Sure enough, at 8:49:59, there's a rattle and roll of a couple of Springfield Indians in the driveway. Pilgrim and Horner have arrived. The latter, as I open the front door and shove Ms M back towards the bedroom to complete her preparations, asks, "Hello, can Guy come out to play?" As I look down from the height of the front stairs and scope the grin, he looks like a cheeky kid, and knows it.

I don't care what anyone says about motorcycling, those few seconds will remain forever. It's worth it. For just a moment, I felt a tenth of my real age.

We get out on the road, a bunch of old Indians and a gaggle of Japanese metal. Rhook is leading the gang through a gentle back roads tour between Melbourne and Creswick.

It's a skill, this, finding old and interesting paths that dodge the more efficient freeways. You can't help but be impressed.

All of a sudden he stops, gets off the bike, starts wandering around in ever-decreasing circles and the brains trust finally works out he's sick. Hit by a bee or wasp and having a bad reaction. The short version is he gets bundled off to hospital (and is now okay).

In the long interval as these things are sorted out, Ms M is given a dissertation on the trials and tribulations of buying a used grand

piano, by Knoop, one of our group. We're appalled to learn that a good one costs as much as a new Ferrari.

We eventually make it to Creswick and the American Hotel. Don and Yvonne, local Indian enthusiasts, greet us with their 1920s outfit.

That's when people start talking about the cost of Indians and Ms M is vehemently not listening.

We have an agreement on motorcycles: she never asks what it costs and I never tell her. This lot is unhelpfully talking grand piano numbers, while she starts talking loudly about the weather.

Then, finally, we go for a run and enter the much-promised shed. It's the size of a suburb and we're only allowed into a corner.

In there, Don has several large machines designed to mill, drill and shape metal. There are also several motorsickles, ranging from Buell through to BSA, plus the odd Matchless and Kawasaki.

Ms M, by now mentally a little punch drunk, staggers out and utters those golden words: "I promise to never, ever, give you a hard time over your shed."

We'll see. As much as I'd love to hold her to that promise, I don't think she's had a good look in ours recently...



# The Colombres Rally

• *Phillip White*



The Colombres Rally has a mysterious hold on classic enthusiasts. For myself, I thought it would be a One-Hit-Wonder but this was my third rally and I'm already pondering a fourth.

My friend George from Melbourne had accompanied me on the 2022 trip and was keen to relive the experience. Our dear friend Neil in France, who had supplied bikes previously, has sadly passed earlier in the year. That meant we had to buy and insure bikes ourselves – no easy task as the UK is no longer part of the EU.

That experiment has failed and I expect that Europe will continue to fracture across ancient ethnic and cultural lines. To me it

already looks more like 1930 than 2024!

George purchased a bike in Somerset. I needed to buy two, one for me and another for my Aussie mate - Adam.

I chose early Moto Guzzis because I think they look cool. Check out "Harold and Maude" which is still an outrageous movie, to see a Police Guzzi in action.

I bought them from a shop in Northern England. My bike is a 1974 American Police Model which has had the same owner for 35 years. They had a second bike in stock, also a 1974 model but very Ratty (see picture) with an unknown history.

The Vendor said that the machine came from



***Well, three old bikes, three old Geezers all with a combined age of around three hundred and fifty years. What could possibly go wrong?***

Switzerland near the Italian Border, that the ignition switch was so worn that the key had to be tied in. It has a bar on the tool boxes that have the Italian Flag colours so I suspect the bike started life with the Italian Carabinieri.

I asked the vendor if he thought it would make it to Spain? He said he had ridden it up and down the alley at the back of his shop and the gears seemed to work OK. Good enough.

Well, three old bikes, three old Geezers all with a combined age of around three hundred and fifty years. What could possibly go wrong? England to France to Spain, three countries later ...

I have done this trip twice before, but always from Southern France. With generally pleasant scenery and quiet roads. Not this time. Imagine tooling down a very busy English freeway in the pissing rain on an unknown old clunker with a large truck on each knee and one would get the impression that this part of the journey was difficult verging on horrendous - and one would be right. I am starting to suspect that I am no longer 25!

We really should have taken a few extra days and travelled more scenic routes. Well lesson

learned! George was making his way up from southern England and we all met up at the Ferry to St Malo.

Accommodation was ok except for the French City of Bayonne. We had rooms over a bar in the old town. I am sure the building predated the Black Death.

It had five rooms for rent, one on each floor of this tottering ruin. The staircase was vertiginous and could have been rented out as a setting for a horror movie all by itself. It was a struggle to get luggage up the stairs but getting the stuff down was dead easy - put the boot in and let gravity be your friend.

We had various forms of rain accompany us virtually the whole way, everything got damp. Slipping into yesterday's clammy jocks is an unpleasant experience.

However spirits lifted when we finally arrived in the town of Colombres where we had an overnight prior to heading off to the first of two rallies "The North of Spain Rally"! which is based in Parador, a renovated monastery of a modest 365 rooms, one for each day of the year.

The scenery around this area is spectacular. The colours of the vegetation are vivid beyond belief. It makes one realise what a



truly harsh environment Australia really is. So it is to be 'Fun City' from here on in. It's beer o'clock now, time to find the lads.

Rally number one is in full swing but unfortunately it has to get along without me as it has been raining off and on without a break.

It looked OK yesterday so I took a punt minus rain gear. Of course this is mountain country and I went from young [relatively] and care-free riding in bright sunshine to soaked to the skin. So back to the Parador to dry out.

There is an old joke where a patient tells his doctor "Doctor, it hurts when I do this." The Doctor says "So don't do that." and that's exactly what I have done today, nada.

Old bike enthusiasts are a diverse bunch. So far I have met a bee keeper who lives on a farm so remote that they have to generate their own electricity. His second side line is importing horse drawn carriages, [as one does].

I also struck up a conversation with a chap riding a Sunbeam, exactly the same mashed pea colour as my own back in Oz. He is a merchant banker and inherited this machine from his dad. His dad was forced to sell this

bike back in the 1960s. My new acquaintance tracked it down and gifted it back to his dad, who rode it into his eighties.

Another interesting fellow is Catalanian. He noticed me rubbing my arthritic knee and gave me a pint of his home brewed massage oil. It is marijuana based and I am wondering if that would be legal to take back to Oz? I hope so, it's still in the panniers of the Guzzi!

Another observation I have made is that men who mess about with obsolete old bikes seem to stay married for ever. Perhaps it is because they are usually in the shed and therefore not underfoot as far as wives are concerned? Discuss?? Perhaps over a cerveza or two!

Well, here it is - another gripping yarn of life on the edge! Well not really, today's piece is about dealing with increasing decrepitude, but with a positive fucking attitude.

Today was the first day of guaranteed good weather. I was determined to make it to the start on time and I very nearly did.

The main rider group had gone but the back-up vehicles were still there. It was warm in the hotel but freezing outside. I realised I did not have my woollen pullover. As mentioned



there are 352 rooms in this building, my room being 351! By the time I got back down - the courtyard was deserted.

Fortunately El Club Moto Indianos thoughtfully sticks card board arrows at strategic locations to help the geographically challenged, like Moi.

So I rolled out the entrance to see not one but two arrows, pointing one hundred and eighty degrees apart. "Sugar" I said, and "Golly Gosh" I chose to go left which takes one up and up through spectacularly beautiful mountain country which unfortunately is also spectacularly cold at this time of the day.

I only had thin summer gloves on and now for the spoiler: Anyone under 70 reading the following can empathise with the next bit while at the same time enjoying a feeling of schadenfreude [look it up] well guess what suckers, your time is coming.

In the last few years I have made the acquaintance of a certain Mr Arthur Ritus. Having developed the condition in both knees and now my left shoulder. It's a common occurrence and can be treated, but I am still trying to figure out the best course of action.

The 50 year old American Cop Bike I am riding would be the Ducks Guts on a Balmy L.A. Freeway, which is what it was designed for.

But it is a ponderous lump on these damp mountain roads. These bikes have a very heavy clutch pull and the front brake lever is so far away from the handlebar that it needs to be a clear day to see it properly.

After a solid hour of zero fun and increasing discomfit I did a u-turn and headed home. I am a firm believer in No Pain, No Pain.

I am writing this in the afternoon, so I don't know what sort of day the other chaps had.

Excellent I hope but now back to me. Since I couldn't feel my extremities the idea of a hot bath was appealing.

At this point, for Comic Relief, we will skip back to our rain lashed journey down through France.

One Day we overnighted at a wee seaside town, the name of which has passed into history. George has a talent for picking comfortable but not overly expensive accommodation.

Our overnight was a 60s hotel straight out of an old Bond movie [although it did boast a one star Michelin restaurant].

I tried to take a shower there but could not navigate the Baroque complexities of French plumbing. I could not get the shower to work but the bath faucet was ok. I have not had a bath for decades but I thought I would give it a go.

The bath tub was both deep and narrow. The hot bath was wonderfully relaxing until it was time to get out. I reached for the hand rail only to discover their wasn't one, just acres of tiny little tiles.

This was a problem as I now require a hand hold to get vertical. I tried everything to get out of that damned tub.

I saw a David Attenborough show once that featured a distressed Beluga whale wallowing about, a creature I now empathise with. Eventually I hooked my legs over the edge of the tub and levered myself out. The point being that life does not necessarily get easier as one gets older.

Back to today, the vast tub at the Parador did have a grab rail, so no esta una problema.

Tomorrow we head back to La Franca for the Main Colombres Rally. It has a bigger turn out and a greater variety of old bikes plus the terrain is somewhat less challenging. Gosh, beer o'clock has rolled around again!!! Hasta Luego Amigos.

Monday was the official start day for Rally number two - XIII Rally De Colombres. The Bikes gather in the Square of the town of Colombres.

It's pretty tightly organised and all entrants have to display a crécete on their machines to gain entry to the starting point.

I first did this rally about ten years ago when my wife and I were resident in the South of France. I recognised quite a few of the riders but oddly, they seemed older ...

Spain is geographically quite diverse, if one



heads south past the city of Alicante and inland a little there is an area that one would swear was the Bad Lands of New Mexico.

This is where all those fifties and sixties Spaghetti Westerns were filmed. We are in the region of Asturias, right on the Bay of Biscay. This means that there is a lot of rainfall.

As moist air rises up the Cantabrian Mountains and condenses out. The landscape is incredibly green and lush.

The Native people of this region have Celtic roots. The National instrument is the bagpipes, they are always black with black flags attached. We saw them being played at a wedding.

Of course the Celtic diaspora includes Scotland, Wales, The Hebrides and the very north of Spain. It is also my ancestry.

I was speaking with a Welshman on the rally who lives on a farm with a sizeable Pixie Population. Apparently Pixies are very family orientated and if you treat them well, there are no problems. Cross them however, they can be right little bastards and are particularly fond of hiding tools. In Australia we call them "Shed Faeries". Doubtless imported from the old country.

The riders were dispatched in groups and it was a pleasant and undemanding canter from coffee to coffee.

Lunch was held in the remote village of

Sardella. The twist to this one is that the entry road runs through a cave. A real one with mighty stalagmites [they are the ones that might get taller] and stalactites, [they being the ones that cling tightly to the roof].

Now the idea of a cave is quite charming. It conjures visions of lit up interesting rock formations, reflective cats eyes on the road and safe guard rails. Well, that ain't this cave.

The road twists and turns and it is absolutely pitch black inside. The Stygian darkness is unrelieved by so much as a shiny bottle cap in the road. Without road markings the rocks seem to just soak up headlight beams.

Adam was riding the mighty Rat Bike. Adam is a minimalist, which is just as well as the Rat Bike has Minimal Braking, Minimal Muffling, and NO lights whatsoever!

He had set up his phone to take a video and this is what saved the day. The phone was able to present a faint and ghostly image of the road where the human eye could not so Adam was able to ride by looking at his phone! Well done that man!

It was time for lunch after the nerve-wracking cave but I didn't stay for lunch as the siren call of an afternoon nap was irresistible. Let's see what tomorrow brings.

I decided to have a quiet day on Tuesday and write up Monday's ride. As Robert Burns said "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men





Gang aft a-gley, An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain For promis'd joy." Truer words were never spoken.

It was supposed to rain; however, the morning weather was beautiful and Adam announced he was going on a serious 'Pastry Hunt' somewhere up in the hills less than an hour away. That sounded tempting to me so off we went.

I did not bother with the GPS as Adam was leading. The Panadería was as advertised with good coffee and flaky rich pastries made with super lo cal butter [just kidding].

After satisfying our morning sweet tooth, Adam thought he would like to ride a little further so we parted company. First, soon to be near fatal, mistake!

I punched in the hotel destination of La Franca and off I went. It did seem to be a lot longer return ride but Adam had used his phone so I presumed it had a different route map.

At one point I actually encountered the rally coming towards me - that should have triggered a warning but I have a child like faith in GPSs as I was born with no sense of direction oddly enough, I never got lost flying as everything is planned before hand and when in doubt just

look out of the cockpit window and follow the roads below - called IFR navigation (I Fly the Roads).

Anyway I just kept plugging on. Second near fatal mistake.

The GPS showed distance to destination but that seemed to fluctuate up and down but always further away.

A couple of times I stopped, put my glasses on and reprogrammed the route. By this time my 50 minute return journey had stretched to three hours plus and at this point I ran out of gas.

The correct position of the fuel return taps on old Guzzis is a closely guarded secret known only to true cognoscenti. However after a few false starts I 'got my motor runnin'-as the song says.

I had to go and retrieve the GPS from the bushes where I had hurled it! Found a gas station and tried to figure out the problem.

This GPS is a 'Tom Tom' - a unit so 'good' that they no longer manufacture them, which is good news! while I am familiar with Garmin units.

Before we left Oz, George suggested that if we had the same unit he could program the routes including the one from the old Monastery we last stayed at a few days before. Bingo! I had chosen the programmed route and the zero artificial intelligence unit was trying to take me back to the last starting point - hundreds of kilometres away at the old Monastery!

Now I could have looked at the instruction booklet but one of my saddle bags leaked in the interminable rain on the way down. When I opened it all my tools were a couple of inches under water obscured by what appeared to be gracefully waving seaweed but was actually the disintegrated remains of my GPS Instruction Manual ,, Golly Gosh Sugar yet again!

Having figured out my mistake I finally re-programmed the unit. There did appear to be one problem, the infernal machine was smugly informing me that I was 180 km away from the hotel, and it was already after 4 pm.

Well, I figured I would soon be on a nice well-lit motorway, not realising where I really was in relation to the hotel bar.

Los Montanas de Cantabria have two major ranges. Imagine an orange rolling out of sight under a sofa. Imagine that it remains undiscovered for a very long time. Imagine that it collapses into a wrinkled mass covered



in bright emerald mould and you may get some idea of the terrain. I was on the wrong side of these mountains and would have to cross both ranges on interminable slimy little roads, in the dark - all by myself.

Cheerfully I set off and soon the road began to climb. This area is all National Park. Do you know who visits National Parks that late in the day? The answer is absolutely nobody.

The first range climbed above the tree line and I started to notice warning signs to motorists and hikers. All in Spanish but the translations are 'Beware of Cattle'; 'Beware of Horses'; 'Beware of Deer' and my personal favorite 'Peligroso Osos' 'Danger Bears'! Oh great I thought I'm going to run over some stupid bear cub and have to deal with its irate mum.

Now I would like to introduce Faeces. I can't be bothered typing that again so from here on it will be referred to plain old crap/shit of which there was a veritable smorgasbord on these roads.

This is an important subject if one is on two wheels. The Guzzi is not as heavy as a Harley but is still a sizeable lump and many of the corners are switch backs. I guess my most favourite was Horse Shit - easily spotted mounds and relatively solid.

My Least Favourite was cattle. These creatures seem to have permanent gastric problems and I had a few slides on the product.

The worst of all was vegetable. There is a common tree on the lower slopes which produces a fruit nobody wants as it is left to rot in vast quantities. Mashed by traffic and mixed with rainwater it is an exceptional lubricant.

These trees seem to be particularly fond of growing on hairpin bends and I had to tippy toe through hundreds of yards of the damn things.

Actually I kept my speeds way down, an accident here at night would not be fun. Even dropping the bike would be serious as I am unsure if I am capable of getting it upright, possibly I am, but I was not inclined to find out.

The one thing I had in my favour was that the Cantabrian twilight seems to last a very long time. In fact, I only hit complete darkness in the last hour.

By now I was in the High Country and the road was often blocked by meandering moo cows in the mist. These animals have long razor sharp horns but fortunately seemed unfazed by the chugging Guzzi. ]

Just as well as I had to thread through so many herds that a quick twist of the cows head would have skewered me.

Eventually the road headed down and opened up a little so up went the speed a tad. I kept looking for my cozy freeway but the road once again started to climb up into the clouds.

That's when I realised there were two ranges. The human mind is a strange thing, I was so exhausted that suddenly the whole thing seemed enormous fun and I started laughing and quite enjoying myself.

The second range was perhaps a little easier except at this point the light was totally gone and it started to piss Pick Handles. I had no hope of seeing through my visor so I had to go Au Naturel in the vision department. I felt like a human dart board as the rain really stung.

All good things must come to an end and eventually I recognised where I was. Still no fun as now there was traffic whipping up spray.

The Hotel Miramar [Sea View, what else?] is a half a km off the highway and has this murderously steep and curving access road. I was so exhausted that I jammed on the brake, put my feet out and just waddled around the corner.

I arrived at 8.30, smack on dinner time but missing Beer O'clock! Four and a half hours of solid fun. Why would one want any other hobby? It just feels so good when you stop!

Yesterday's ride took in the Picos De Europa [The Peaks of Europe] so called because they are the first glimpse Europe mariners would get when entering the Bay of Biscay.

It's a challenging ride with many fast mountain corners. I have done it twice before so I was quite happy to take a gentle Bimble down the coast for a quiet lunch.

Today marked the official end of The Colombres Rally. Very pleasant riding (sans the rain) in spectacular scenery. In my last communication I mentioned skidding about on some sort of unidentifiable Veggie Mash on the road. I have since identified the offending foliage as chestnut trees.

At one time they were a vital commodity and are very common. It was not practical to grow wheat in this environment so in days gone by chestnuts, ground to flour, were a vital food source.

The landscape continues to amaze. Because the terrain is so steep, towns tend to be tucked into the crevices. It is always a surprise to exit an absolutely deserted wee road, that one would swear saw two vehicles a week, and run slap into a traffic jam and a bustling commercial centre.

On exiting via the next teensy mountain road, the town just seems to vanish. It is worth noting the high quality of Spanish roads.

Truly amazing for a middle income country and far removed from the tyre bursting goat tracks that masquerade as roads in Australia.

We have a short ride to Santander tomorrow followed by a long ferry voyage back to the U.K. and thence home.

The Guzzis have performed very well, even the scrofulous "Rat Bike".

See You on the Road.

Adios Amigos





BLACK SWAN HOTEL

EST. 1873

# **Bikes, Blues and Brews in Bendigo**



**If you're ever** up Bendigo way, make sure you stop in to the Black Swan Hotel just past the centre of town - depending which way you're travelling of course.

The Black Swan Hotel at 117/119 McCrae St Bendigo, is one of the city's most historic buildings as it was the home of Bendigo's first liquor licence back in 1873.

After being closed for six years, the hotel re-opened in early 2023 after Dr Dugal James spent a boatload restoring and refurbishing the premises to optimal bar standards, and to



house part of his considerable motorcycle collection.

Dr Dugal is also one of Australia's premiere Indian collectors, and in an interview with a Bendigo tourism journal he said:

“We have incorporated a range of images, memorabilia and restored bikes into the contemporary decor, creating an inviting space to socialise with friends.

“The bikes add a new element to the historic features of the building, which is primarily a bar with lounge areas at ground level, a function space above, and soon, the fully renovated underground cellar bar will also open to the public.”

The Black Swan Hotel has a rare 5am licence and hosts an annual ANZAC day pre and post





Dawn Service crowd, offering a complimentary Gunfire Breakfast to all their locals and friends.

The Dawn Service starts at 6am, and they have the coffee brewing and snags cooking from 5am. The turnout last year was over 70 motorbikes parked out the front of the hotel.

The Classic Motorcycle Club of Victoria visited the museum, organised by the Bendigo Historic Motorcycle Club, allowing members to appreciate the extensive collection of vintage motorcycles.

The Moto Guzzi Club of Victoria planned a ride to the Black Swan Hotel on August 11, 2024, offering participants a scenic journey culminating in a lunch at the venue, further cementing its status as a favoured spot for motorcyclists.

The Black Swan is what I'd call a boutique bar featuring local produce, especially beers and wines, and the go to great lengths to source the best possible produce to ensure quality and consistency, and that we are showcasing the best of the region.

Beyond just a bar and snacks, The Black Swan also has a commitment to live music, and is a premiere music venue featuring great bands such as Elly McK & The Unbelievers, Burning Lovers, Vida Jazz and The Moondoggies on a Sunday arvo, and what better way for a band to get your attention than to put three chopped Indians behind them.

The Black Swan also caters for private events and all areas can be booked for special functions, so if you're up that way and planning a shindig, there's no better way to impress your mates than by surrounding them with some of the most righteous rides around.

## The Black Swan Hotel

117/119 McCrae St,  
Bendigo VIC 3550  
(03) 4420 4830

[info@blackswanbendigo.com.au](mailto:info@blackswanbendigo.com.au)  
<https://blackswanhotelbendigo.com.au>





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# FOR SALE

There are a few bits and bobs for sale around the place so we figured this was as good a place as any to list them in case any fellow members are looking for a new project, distraction or something else to piss the missus off with.

If any other members have items that might be of interest to fellow club members and readers of Smoke Signals, then please feel free to contact Ray or Phil to list them here.

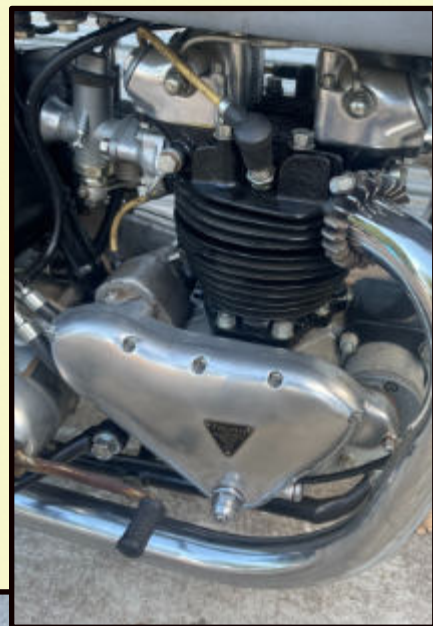
## Triumph 1952 Speed Twin

Matching numbers, engine and Trans and forks overhauled by previous owner, running and very original, new engine pipes fitted and rear chain, needs a wiring harness and mufflers and a battery which are available at extra cost.

\$9,500 CASH

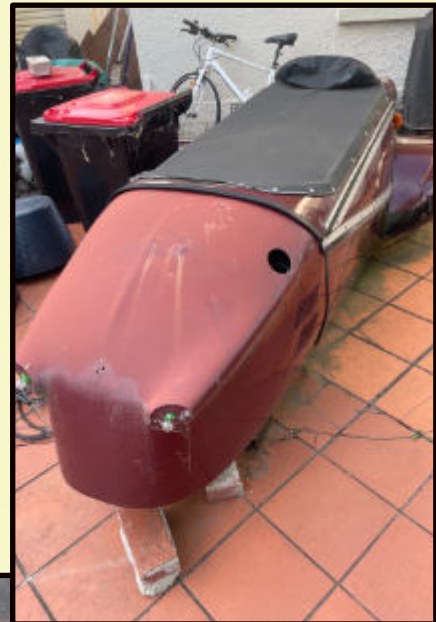
Phil Pilgrim

040092202



# Messerschmitt 1958 KR200

A bit of a project, was running before being put aside for some TLC which never eventuated. Most parts seem there, but can't be certain and paint on the rear of the body is quite faded. Some parts ready for restoration included. Frame #67882. All wheels are present. Call Ray: 0487 899 814 Reasonable Offers Considered



# Triumph 1952 Speed Twin

Non matching 1968 Triumph 650  
TR6C Trophy with a 1967 T120  
Bonnie engine.  
Phil Pilgrim  
040092202  
\$8,500 cash



# FOR SALE

## BMW R80 RT to S specs

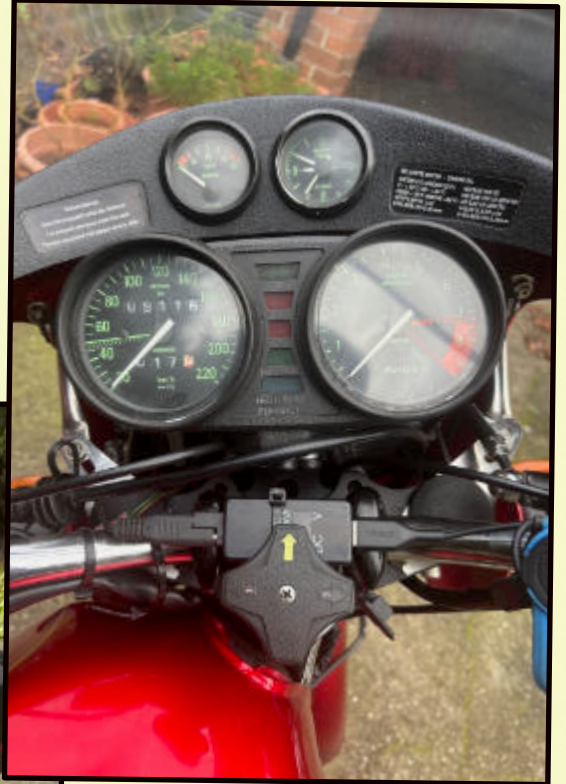
BMW R80 RT to S specs with bikini fairing, original 48,000 klms from brand new California import, with VASS so it's currently on club permit.

Since buying it and fitting the new fairing (Flat Racer). & new 90s stainless bars, headlight brackets and front indicators & stems, magnetic drain plugs, KPH Speedo, 13mm front master cylinder, Venhill front brake line kit, ECCO engineering cast iron brake rotors, LED globes, Li-ion battery, rebuilt seat, blasted painted and Sibenrock cover, solid mounted diode board, repainted seat ducktail, sidecovers, front guard, and the new fairing, comes with genuine BMW panniers and racks, Brown's replica sidestand, new left handlebar switch so headlights can be turned off, gear change lever ball adjustment linkage instead of "bent" wire comes with original RT Fairing and handlebars ,

\$12,500 with RWC or \$12,000 without

Phil Pilgrim

0400 922 022



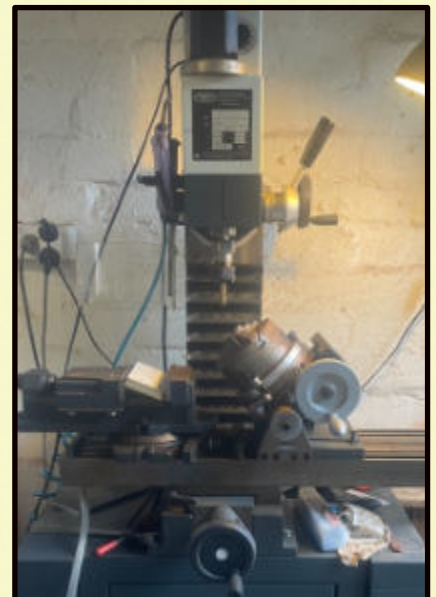
# Indian Chief 1946

1946 Indian Chief. Running, but needs a bit of TLC. Standard DuPont classic chocolate colour, registered until quite recently, and has had little use over the last few years. All reasonable offers considered.  
Call Ray: 0487 899 814



# Mill and Lathe

Barely used Wabeco D6000E metal and wood lathe and Wabeco F1210E mill. Some surface rust but otherwise excellent condition and both machines include many extras. All reasonable offers considered. Call Ray: 0487 899 814





*Phillip White's Quarterly Chuckle*