



Not The Spoken Word

Bi-monthly newsletter of The Western Australian Historical Cycle Club Inc.

Vale Peter Wells

Founding member Peter Wells died at Fiona Stanley Hospital on Monday September 13th. He was 88.

Peter had been club president for many years, a role he only recently retired from

Those who knew him will remember him not only for his his passion for WA made bikes, but for his passion for the club. His contribution to our club was immense; aside from his years on committee he was responsible for the newsletter and organised many of our rides and displays. His mechanical knowledge and generosity with parts and expertise to club members was second to none.

A number of club members attended Peter's funeral service and committal on Sept. 20th. The Riley Motor Club of WA led the funeral procession with great dignity and included Peter's own old Riley.

He will be missed.

below; Peter on a visit to ex-member Patrick Leverett, Melbourne 2010, photo courtesy Patrick Leverett



The Whologans, Pedals, People and Patience

It's been 50 years since Mundijong cyclist Geoff Wholagan pedaled his way into 'Donnybrook' history and achieved a dream in winning his second Collie Donnybrook Race. We need to back pedal to 1934 and trace the sequence of events to that win and why it was so special.

Geoff's father Jack rode from the 11 min mark and was beaten by W.A "Toti" Bonser (9 min)

Cycle on to 1936 and finding the winner of a handicap bicycle race such as the Collie-Donnybrook is difficult at the best of times but particularly when faced with a field of 66 contestants, the handicapper's assessments, the book-maker's values and rider's good form across the field.

Betting on the outcome of the 11th annual Collie - Donnybrook in 1936 was strong a clear indication that a keenly contested race was to follow. Sensational incidents unfolded at the finish of the race and dramatically a reversal of the order of the finish was later contested elsewhere and rescinded. Jack Wholagan (9mins) was defeated twice before the final result was posted!

Riding from the 12 minute mark, Harry Dawson of Northam was first across the line followed by Jack Wholagan (9mins) and veteran Collie rider John Riley (9mins). Riley had won the event in 1925 and 1927. Wholagan was defeated in a desperately close sprint for the line. It was claimed by Wholagan, that Dawson, in an attempt to gain those vital few winning inches, had deviated from a straight course causing interference. It was of little surprise in the large crowd of cycling followers when Wholagan filed a protest.

After a lengthy hearing by the stewards the chief referee of the day announced that Dawson had switched direction in the sprint to the line and in reversing the finishing order awarded the race to Wholagan.

What followed was even more dramatic and remains exceptional in the annals of the 'Donnybrook' as well as W.A. athletic events of the times.

Dawson's dissatisfaction with being relegated to second placing surfaced through a court writ.

He believed that any impediment to Wholagan was insufficient to influence the outcome of the race.

Following civil litigation Dawson's claim to the race was upheld. The judge overturned the result of Wholagan's protest, thus awarding the race to Dawson, so for a second time Jack Wholagan finished second in a "Donnybrook". This must have been a double dose of pain for Wholagan who had also finished second previously in 1934. The extraordinary importance of the result for Harold Dawson was enough for him to pursue the result through a court judgment and its associated cost. It is unknown whether Jack Wholagan had supported himself or which of the podium place-getters was at longest odds. Nevertheless, SP 'bookies' boards were part of the Collie streetscape each Donnybrook day through the era of the thirties, forties and fifties until SP betting was banned in W.A. in August 1958. Betting on the side continued for some years.

The popularity of professional cycling had grown during the years of the Great Depression in part due to the attractiveness of the prize money coupled to the potential for greater returns through a side wager with the 'bookies'. Northam riders in the thirties seem to have touched on the formula for success and had chased these rewards. Dawson's win in 1936 had been preceded by two other Northam Cycle Club riders winning in 1933 (Reg Merrick) and 1934 (W.A. Toti Bonser) and followed in 1937 by another in Edward "Stewie" Bonser.

One can only imagine how Jack Wholagan carried the burden of seeing 2 "Donnybrooks" slip away. Yet, life often brings consolation through the efforts of following generations. We need but wait, watch and maybe offer encouragement to those that follow.

In 1956 when Jack's son Geoff was of senior cycling age Jack suggested he "stop wasting time playing football and to give cycling a go". Geoff took up the challenge and was clearly motivated by what his dad knew might have been or what could be!

Jack trained son Geoff over the next 3 years and no doubt passed on his "Donnybrook" experiences and the essential desire to win this classic. In 1959, 21 years after being defeated in 1934 and 23 years after losing the Donnybrook to Harold Dawson, Jack Wholagan received some recompense by seeing his son Geoff win the "Donnybrook". Geoff redeemed the Donnybrook prize for the family when he led young Collie rider Peter Hart on to the Collie Velodrome with one lap to go and was not headed. His father was on hand to celebrate the victory and later, just to remind the cycling fraternity that the name Wholagan had been clearly stamped in the winner's records.

Following his 1959 win Geoff Wholagan was full of

praise for his young Collie mark-mate Peter Hart who in part helped him to ride away from the rest of the field through the Mumbalup hills into town. Sadly, the 1959 Donnybrook was Peter Hart's last as he tragically died in a car accident months later. 1966 saw Geoff win another Donnybrook. In doing so he joined just 4 other dual winners; John Riley 1925 & 1927, Joe Casserley 1943 & 1944 the first win a dead heat with Collie rider George "Pud" Ferris, Geoff Wholagan's wins 1959 & 1966 and Mike Dye's wins from scratch in 1974 & 1975. The Wholagan name had been clearly stamped in the winner's records. Again dad Jack was on hand with his brother Ken to celebrate the win and also follow the bookie up the main to recover the bets they had laid with him. It was to take from 1934 to 1966 for the Wholagan to etch 2 "Donnybrooks" into the records.

Geoff's win was remembered on Saturday Aug 20 2016 with a presentation from the Collie Cycle Club.

Evan Strudwick



above: Jack Wholagan left and Son Geoff

The Inaugural Percy Armstrong Goldfields Ride

Coolgardie to Ora Banda August 19th and 20th, 2016

The Inaugural Percy Armstrong Goldfields Ride, which traced the first delivery of the Coolgardie Cycle Express Co in 1894 by cycling Pioneer Percy Armstrong, was undoubtedly an overwhelming success. Six riders and one catering manager enjoyed a memorable 70km riding experience spread over two days. Someone has surely put together a cycling routes bucket list, but I'm afraid it needs updating as the Percy Armstrong Goldfields Ride has to be added.

Great Southern WAHCC members Glenn Huffer, Nick Raven and Murray Gomm were joined by Perth members Viv Cull and Robbie Harrold. Kalgoorlie vintage cycling enthusiast, and unofficial tour guide, Paul Day also completed

the ride. Great Southern member Collyn Gawned, incapacitated by recent shoulder surgery, was the catering manager and against doctors' orders, completed the final ride into Ora Banda.

Accommodation was swag or tent and meals were around the campfire with Collyn's lamb casserole followed by dumplings for dessert a clear favourite. Generous amounts of bacon and eggs and no shortage of porridge for breakfast ensured riders were well prepared for the day ahead. Collyn also bought along some homemade Percy Armstrong Ale. Murray shared his Coolgardie Cycle Express Co port and Viv's whisky ensured riders all had a solid night's sleep.

Unsurprisingly, it was cold overnight with zero degrees the norm. We fell on our feet with the daytime weather as the conditions were perfect for riding with blue skies, little to no breeze and not a single bushfly sighted over the entire trip. Thanks to generous rain in the region prior to our ride, the roads were in great condition to ride. They were firm and compacted, no mud was traversed. Taking in the scenery did have to be combined with eyes on the road to avoid corrugations and ruts however.

An unexpected bonus throughout the ride and around the campfire was the amount of local knowledge Paul Day provided. Paul was a pedalling encyclopaedia on the history and flora and fauna of the region. The highlight of his wisdom was undoubtedly stopping at three abandoned bush velodromes that could still be seen.

The bikes that were ridden were sympathetic to the era with Nick riding a 1920's Ren Star with Kelly bars, Glenn on a circa 1940's Flying Arrow (previously owned by Phil Harris), Robbie on a Triumph with nickel plated handlebars so definitely some age there, Viv on an old safety inspectors bike, Murray on a 1936 Malvern Star and Paul on a bike modelled on an old Goldfields bike in a photo. He started with a BSA chain ring and then built the rest.

There were a number of keen fossickers that spent many a daylight hour looking for treasures along the way. Robbie set the standard five minutes into the ride by spotting an 1896 English threepence at the abandoned Coolgardie bush velodrome. After day one a number of old bicycle components were found and the challenge was laid down to find enough parts of old Goldfields bikes to make a complete bike to ride the Percy Armstrong Goldfield Ride in the future. Robbie was up to the challenge and got up at dawn the next day and scoured the Ora Banda tip with a fine tooth comb and came back with an armful of parts. Clearly we will need to complete the ride again and fossick some more, but the challenge is looking definitely doable!

There were only a couple of minor breakdowns, Nick had a chain guard rattle loose and Murray lost both soles of his boots. Fortunately there was plenty of rusty fencing wire on hand to twitch up the latter.

Event Coordinator Glenn Huffer and Catering Manager Collyn Gawned, who also drove the sag wagon, deserve special mention for all the hard work they put in that resulted in a ride of great substance that was enjoyed by all.

Murray Gomm



Club Calendar

Sunday October 9th 10am - Display Kalamunda Districts Historical Society

Travel to the top of Kalamunda Road (Stirk Park on the left hand side), continue east on Stirk Road to the History Village which is bounded by Railway Road and William Street. Enter through the coach entrance on William St, our display is near this entrance.

Attending Club Members - bring a chair and dress in period costume (not compulsory). Displaying members should be set up prior to the 10am start time. The event finishes at 3pm. There will be food stalls amongst the other displays.

For further information contact Merv Thompson 94502579.

Sunday October 9th - Beverley Heroic

Endurance riding on vintage bikes in the inner whetbelt celebrating the Beverley to Perth Race heritage, 50 and 100 mile options - theheroic.com.au

Wednesday October 12th - Display

Ride 2 Work Day Elizabeth Quay

6:30 - 8:30 am Geoffrey Bolton Drive, Elizabeth Quay. Parking info TBC contact Robert Frith 0411555607

Meeting - Monday Oct 17th 7.30pm

Ardross Clubroom. Our regular monthly meeting spiced up with a handful of vintage goodness, up for auction are;

- Aussie, complete bike with some interesting modifications
- Watch the club website or Facebook page... at least two more donated bikes coming!

Wednesday November 9th - Display

Have A Go Day, Burswood

Details TBC Merv Thompson.

Sunday November 13th 10am - Ride

Herdsmen Lake

Meet at the north carpark at 10am. (Entry off Jon Sanders Drive just west of Selby St North). 7km around the lake. Ride organiser Robert Hunt.

Meeting - November 21st

Ardross Clubroom.

Sunday November 27th - Christmas Party!

Kings Park (exact location TBC)

No meeting in December

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Vice President: Merv Thompson
Treasurer: Malcolm Bell
Secretary: Robert Hunt
Committee Members: Malcolm Buckland

DISCLAIMER The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the WA Historical Cycle Club and the accuracy of information published herein is not guaranteed.

Dear Members,

I live in Leederville and fondly remember the old Velodrome in Mount Hawthorn.

I'm trying to convince the City of Vincent to reinstate the name Lake Monger Velodrome.

As you would know the venue has tremendous historical value, being the venue for the 1962 Empire Commonwealth Games Cycling. It is sad that in 1998 the cycling track was removed, however everything else remains the same apart from being rundown.

I only discovered today why the stadium is now called the Litis Stadium; Litis donated \$150,000 to help renovate the stadium for soccer. In my opinion the stadium should have been preserved and its name should never have been changed, its like desecrating a sacred site.

It was a fantastic achievement by W.A to host these games at that time. I look at W.A today and wouldn't think we would be capable. It's too late to save the track, but we can protect its name and place a memorial so everyone passing by will remember this great achievement and its importance to cycling in W.A.

Australia seems to have won all the gold medals and most of the silver at this cycling event which is amazing.

As far as I know this site and Beatty Park are the last two sites in existence from those games. Any support, would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Mark Bertolini via email



Cyclists road training at the 1962 Perth British Empire and Commonwealth Games

For Sale

- Swansea 2 swan ladies cycle 1945 complete with good Lemet Wiset saddle, backpedal brake, mudguards and rear rack. Tyres even pump up. \$125 to members
- Mens 1949 2 Swan Swansea complete including saddle frame, chain and pedals. \$125 to members
- 1959 Sturmey Archer AF four speed hubgear 40 hole NEW in its original box complete with changer, pulley and cable. \$100
- Moulton Frame that has been rebuilt with good suspension and painted in a basecoat of white paint asking \$125 for frame or \$150 frame plus wheels etc.

Contact Mal Buckland - 95279427 or bucklandm@westnet.com.au