

## 100 Years of Motorcycling In South Canterbury Grasstrack & Birth of Motocross

The South Canterbury Motorcycle Club held a couple of Mile grass meets at the South Canterbury Jockey Club venue at Washdyke in 1915 and 1916 to raise funds for the Red Cross, and again in 1919 with proceeds going to the RSA and YMCA. This latter meeting was a huge success with top riders from the North Island attending as they were also racing for the Pioneer club at their Sockburn meeting in Christchurch, the previous week. When the club approached the jockey Club for a meeting date in 1920, the trainers objected and so ended the sport in the region.

Grass hill climbs became popular in the 1920s and in the late 1930's a grass track at Kingsdownbe was very popular and a Miniature TT event was started. By July 1940 the club went into recess for the duration of the war. The club got underway again in late 1946 and but for the petrol ration problem, ran Tycho hill climbs and 4 hr trials and started to get up some momentum with a full range of events. The quarter mile grass meetings became very popular through to the mid 50s with up to 5 meetings a year, plus the 4, 8 and 24 hr trials, miniature TT, grass and gravel hill climbs plus sporting and pillion trials. In the late 40's the club even advertised the Taiko Hill Climb on slides for 2 pound a week in the two Timaru Cinema, ran special buses to the event and had cordial for sale plus schoolboys selling programmes.

By July 1956 a new event was being run, a mud scramble at Appleby's farm Landsborough Road. The Timaru herald article was headed up 'Ivan Boorer Thrills Spectators at Mud Scramble.' Ivan went on to win many South Island and New Zealand Championships, and became the first South Canterbury Club member to win a NZ Title, the NZ Hillclimb at Nelson in 1955. Down the road a bit, his main competition in the south in this era came from Bill Vietch of Dunedin. Bill was a great allrounder as well, grasstrack, miniature TT and scrambles, winning in total 13 NZ titles. His first major win at Timaru was in the 1958 South Island 500cc Miniature TT title, when he fought off a strong challenge from Ivan Mauger to win the championship. Another Kiwi world speedway star fronted in Timaru to win the NZ Grasstack title on his JAP in 1962, one Barry Briggs. But in the early 1960's there was a change occurring in the offroad scene in NZ when Tim Gibbes and Ken Cleghorn returned from riding the professional motocross circuit of France and Europe. In 1964 they held the first motocross event in NZ at Ken's uncles property at Woodville (still running today on the same property as the Woodville MX GP event). After setting up a company Tim and Ken expanded the idea to create the Gold Leaf International Motocross Series that in the next few years was to become both the first International Motocross Series in New Zealand, including events in both Canterbury and South Canterbury, and then Australasia in the later years as the series would start in Perth and have up to three rounds in Australia before crossing the Tasman. More news on the Gold Leaf Series and the birth of motocross in NZ in the next issue of Kiwi Rider.

Events over Labour Weekend Centenary weekend include both modern and historic, road racing, trials, gravel hill climb, motocross and miniature TT, mystery trial, plus socials and a dinner. More details will at [www.100yearsouthcanterbury.co.nz](http://www.100yearsouthcanterbury.co.nz) with entry and registration forms available now.