

## 100 Years of Motorcycling In South Canterbury Motocross Booms in NZ with First International MX Series

The South Canterbury Motorcycle Club Inc held its first Gold Leaf International Motocross round on November 24<sup>th</sup> 1964 at Lyalldale, Timaru. Many thousands tuned out to see the Kiwi and International riders battle it out on the toughest course in the country at the time, with a crowd of over 10,000 at the first event. The cream of NZ off-road talent were there through the years including locals Ivan Boorer (NZ MX Champion), Wayne Johnston – Rickman Metisse (NZ MX Champion) and Ian Frew (Triumph Metisse) plus David Burns (DOT& Greeves) Ken Cleghorn – NZ Champion (AJS Cheney) Ivan Miller-(CZ), Robert Happer (Wasp), Allan Collison –(DOT), Gordon Holland - (CZ), Des Boyce (CZ), Kerry Miles (Montesa), Morley Sherriffs (BSA & Metisse), Colin Shultz-(Triumph Metisse), Hugh Anderson – (Husqvarna) Alistair Sabiston-(Triumph), Ken Kilgour (Matchless Metisse), Neil Currie (Greeves), Paul Docke – (CZ), Graham Terry (BSA & Greeves), Bill Veitch (BSA), Glen Wroblenski (AJS/Greeves) and Graham Stapleton (Greeves & CZ).

The Gold Leaf International Series & Rothmans Series ran from 1963/64 to 1970 and included many International stars, Arthur Harris-Triumph (UK), Tim Gibbes-AJS (Australia), Ronnie Moore-Greeves (World Speedway Champion), Paul Hunt-Metisse (USA), Max Morf- CZ, (Switzerland), Max Hauger –Waheba (Germany), Frank Underwood (GB), John Lewis (Wales) Gunnar Lindstrom – (Sweden), Bert Lundin – Lito (Sweden) John Lewis (BSA Works rider GB), J.N Roberts (USA), Keith Hickman & John Burton (GB), Freddie Postmann (Austria), Randy Owen & Gordon Adsett (GB), Laurie Alderton & Jim Dowsett (Australia) and finally in 1970 Dave Bickers– CZ (GB) and Jeff Smith-BSA (GB). After that it was a change of generations and machines, gone were the British 4 strokes and European 2 strokes of the 60s, and onwards went the rise of the Japanese 2 stokes, neither was ultimately better, just different machines for different eras and the Pall Mall Series events. And so with the wave of light powerful 2 stokes came longer travel suspension and the development of more rugged tracks and jumps, and ultimately the growth of stadium motocross (or supercross as it became known).

But long before International motocross came to America under the AMA Trans-Am series in 1970, motocross was a booming motorsport in New Zealand as early as 1962 thanks to the vision of Tim Gibbes and Ken Cleghorn in launching the first Woodville International Motocross. With the support of the Manawatu Orion Club plus their friends in the South Canterbury Club and a few other ACU clubs the first National Gold Leaf Series kicked off in late 1963. In fact the Rothmans Series was an Australasian series for a couple of those seasons from 1967/68 having four rounds starting out in Western Australia and even taking in Tasmania one year, plus either NSW, South Australia or Victoria as the fourth round, before crossing the Tasman for the NZ summer series that always started at Woodville in November/early December.

The International Series were run by a holding company, Motocross Enterprises fronted by Tim Gibbes started with a 1000 pound from the Manawatu Orion Club, and other clubs and individuals purchased 1 pound debentures to make up 1500 pound. 500 quid each was given to the first overseas riders Max Morf, Arthur Harris and Max Hauger. As Tim Gibbes recalls, ' We had to run a second Woodville event at the end of the first series to raise their airfares home as we didn't have enough money left, but we didn't tell the riders that of course. It was hard work running a bike shop, promoting and running the events, and riding as well, more especially when I developed the Australian rounds. I had great support from my South Island organiser Ray Johnston and had great times through those years.' Throughout the years various clubs ran rounds of the series at Christchurch, Blenheim, Nelson, Wellington, New Plymouth, Masterton plus Woodville always had

two rounds of the usual seven round NZ Series running from Nov/early Dec till the end of January. The Lyalldale circuit in Timaru was the feature event with largest crowds in the South Island.

At the South Canterbury 75<sup>th</sup> Jubilee in 1984 Life member Ray Johnstone & a small committee organised NZ's first classic scramble/motocross and had a great turn out of veterans and old machines. Many of those former riders still with us today, are travelling from around NZ and Australia to celebrate once again there common love of old dirt bikes and the happy memories. Events over Labour Weekend Centenary weekend include both modern and historic, road racing, trials, gravel hill climb, motocross and miniature TT, rally and mystery trial, plus socials and a dinner. More details on [www.kiwirider.co.nz](http://www.kiwirider.co.nz) and at [www.100yearsouthcanterbury.co.nz](http://www.100yearsouthcanterbury.co.nz) with entry and registration forms available on this site.