

## 100 Years of Motorcycling In South Canterbury this Labour Weekend

After the initial launch of the club and a successful hill climb event their second event was very ambitious and involved a lot of planning and setting up. The club at this time had no club constitution so the secretary was instructed to write to an established motorcycle club in England to ask if they could have a copy of their club rules to assist them in furthering their aims in the region. So the second club event was a 24 hour trial to Dunedin in December. But let us first set the scene in New Zealand and the region at the time.

By this time Timaru had been settled for fifty years with the first immigrant ship the 'Stathallan' arriving in Timaru in January 1859, bringing settlers from the old country to build a town and farm the region. A few cottages, a woolshed and around 35 locals greeted the 250 migrants. By 1864 the population had swelled to 3,500 people and the Timaru Herald was born. On October 18 1898 Wellington MP and businessman William McLean had his private members bill passed into law, that allowed motor cars powered by internal combustion engines, to be driven on New Zealand roads. The act imposed a maximum speed limit of 12mph and a fine of 10 pound for excessive speed. By 1900 a Christchurch made Dennison car was the first to make the 160km Christchurch to Timaru journey. The first Automobile Association had been formed by five Auckland motor enthusiasts in May 1903, not arriving to Timaru till 1913. There was a cycle and car manufacturer in Timaru building machines from imported components, the former sourcing bicycle components from BSA in England to build their 'Caledonia' cycle.

Cycling was well a well established and popular form of personal transport, and in September 1906 the first Christchurch to Timaru cycle race had taken place. But we can only imagine at the conditions of the roads, mainly dirt for horse traffic and bullock wagons with the railway the main form of inter-town transport, or coastal shipping for inter-island travel. The farming of wool and meat, and their processing were the main industries for the region. The Timaru Post Office was opened in 1909, and the new motorcycle club started in September of that year, opened a post office savings account to run their affairs. Their initial hill climb event in October had a class for cycles but as only seven entries were received they were stricken from the event programme. So the new South Canterbury club's December 24 Hour motorcycle reliability trial to Dunedin was indeed an epic adventure for the time, considering both the road conditions, and the motorcycle design of the era.

It seems that the popular motorcycles of this era (1909) was the Triumph with the odd Matchless, Bradbury and Humber machine. The South Canterbury club minutes do not show the bikes used for this 24 hour event but the entries and results are accurately recorded. Riders left in threes at three minute intervals from 9am and had 115 minutes to get to the Waitaki Bridge checkpoint, 255 minutes to get to Palmerston South with a 120 minutes spent at lunch control with final arrival at Dunedin by 5pm, a total travel time of 360 minutes. The riders left on Dec 25<sup>th</sup> (yes Christmas day), stayed in Dunedin for Boxing Day, and returned on the 27<sup>th</sup> with the lunch stop for 60 minutes at Oamaru. Marks were awarded for reliability, petrol consumption and condition of machine. The trade class comprised six riders with Mr GB Brown wining, with two riders retiring. In the private owners class four of the starters finished with Mr H.Mays the winner. By March 2010 the club was running a three day reliability trial to Akaroa that included both a hill climb and petrol consumption test. Hill climbs were an important event for the club in these early years with plenty

of trophies and an official called 'Clerk of Scales' and Tycho Flat seemed to be a popular venue. At the December 1912 event of the 24 entries, there was a novice class, open light-weight, private owners heavy-weight and open heavy-weight classes with six riders on Triumphs, six on BSAs, three Matchless, a pair of Humbers and a Bradbury. Five riders are recorded as entered on Scott Hudson machines of 292cc and 482 and 499cc and these machines remain a mystery to many Scott owners. And after the hill climb events the members held the prizegiving and a 'smoke concert'. More news on SCMCC club history next issue of Kiwi Rider. Keep checking the Kiwi Rider website and [www.100yearsouthcanterbury.co.nz](http://www.100yearsouthcanterbury.co.nz) with entry and registration forms available on this site from mid June.