

SoleXoz

NEWSLETTER # 18, May 2009

www.solexoz.org

NEWS

Our run on May 3 was yet another bumper ride; Ted hatched this run some month ago. The run covered an area of Melbourne that many of us were unfamiliar with along the Maribyrnong River from Melbourne's Docklands out to the Boathouse Café overlooking the banks of the rejuvenated and scenic riverbank.

The weather was superb, a perfect autumn day that started out cool and frosty, then bursting into a beautiful sunny day without a breath of wind, Melbourne at its best and perfect weather for Solexing.

The official start was under Melbourne's infamous Southern Cross wheel, (Cracked Wheel). It is hard to believe in this day and age, this Multi Million dollar debacle, designed and built by tertiary educated designers and engineers and built by highly skilled trades people now has to be dismantled and completely rebuilt. However did we build structures such as the Sydney Harbour Bridge nearly 80 years ago, in a time of abject poverty and without today's technology, when today we cannot put up a modest structure only 5 percent the size of the Bridge?

We welcomed members Marc and Graham on their first Solex run; it was great to see them enjoying their Solexes. Marc's Solex is an orange 3800 export model that features high rise handlebars and a 5000 headlight. What a great machine.

Participants were; Ern, Ted, Marc, and Geoff on 3800s, Helen, Don S and Graham on 3300s, Bryan and Don D. on 1700s and Frank on the very fast 5000. Thanks to Ted for his idea for this memorable run.



A stop along the Maribyrnong River. Photo by Marc.

VELOSOLEX DEALERS IN AUSTRALIA

In the late 1950s the Solex Company opened dealerships in many countries throughout the world. There were many in our region including various parts of Asia and in New Zealand. It may come as a surprise but four Solex dealerships were also opened in Australia. These dealerships were based on the tried and tested model started in France, having service centres including all the service equipment, tools, Solexine pre-mixed two stroke fuel and even dynamometers for testing Solexes.

The four Solex retailers in Australia were situated in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. Only the dealer in Adelaide survived for any length of time - in fact we believe it was still in business up until the 1980s.

The other three dealers only lasted a few years as the cost of importing and registering Solexes made them as costly as a new Vespa. The dealer in Melbourne was a cycle company known as General Accessories, situated in Clarendon Street South Melbourne. Member Frances has done some research and worked out that this company operated out of premises nearly opposite where the Crown Casino now stands.

Ern has the only Solex Dynamometer still surviving in Australia. It was part of the equipment from the Brisbane Dealership and this Dyno somehow turned up in Mackay Qld, where Ern found it a few years ago.

This is yet another exciting piece of the Solex puzzle in Australia; about 10 years ago most of us did not believe there were any Solexes in Australia, but bits and pieces of the story are now coming to light, not to mention over 70 Solexes that belong to our club members. One wonders what other treasures and information are yet to be found!



MODEL OF THE MONTH: 1400

This month we look at the very rare but important 1400 model of 1958. 307,500 of the 1400 model were built between September 1958 and October 1959. Motor No's started at 1394501 and finished at 1702028.

The 1400 continued the tubular frame that started on the 660 model and carried through the 1010, 1700 and 2200 models. It was significant in two areas - it was the first model to have 550 wheels (19 inch) with 23 inch tyres. This size was then incorporated on all subsequent Solexes with the exception of the 5000/Pli models. The other difference was that it was the last model produced without a clutch.

By 1957 competitors such Mobylette were producing cyclomotors with compound or centrifugal clutches. As a marketing tool, this opened up a completely new market of people who had found these types of bikes difficult to ride as the motor had to be stopped every time the bike was stopped and then restarted. With a clutch, the bike could be stopped whilst the motor continued to idle.

To spot the difference between a 1400 and 1700, the 1400 motor is narrower as it does not have a clutch housing. There is no air scoop on top of the rotor cover as cooling air does not have to be directed over the cylinder whilst motor is idling. The tank and rotor cover have two parallel lines across the faces and the footpad does not have a model no. as in the 1700 model.

Until 12 months ago no 1400s were known to exist in Australia, but the example below was imported from New Zealand by Geoff. It was the only known example in NZ. In addition, Ted has recently brought in a 1400 from France. It is now being refurbished and should join Geoff's example on a run in the near future.

1400s are great to ride and quite sprightly, not having the extra drag and weight of a clutch.



Geoff's 1958 "1400" Motor No. 1416818

Photos from May Run.



Start of run under the cracked wheel.



Cruising down the river on a Sunday afternoon (good title for a song).

taken by Helen and Marc.



Solex park outside Boathouse Café.



Preparation for return journey.

NEXT RUN

FROSTBITE BAYSIDE RUN.

Our next run will take place on June 14, and will be a bayside trail run around the bay to the Black Rock area. We will be starting at 830am to avoid traffic. Keep this date clear; it should be another great run. Notices will be emailed a week prior.

Our July event will be a swap day and a technical day combined. Further details will be in the June newsletter.

OTHER NEWS

Although Solexes are becoming harder to find there are a couple for sale at present; Frank has a 1700 available which goes well and only requires a bit of tidying up. Ern also has good 1700 and a beautifully restored Pli-Solex for sale.

If you would like further details leave your name and phone No. on our secure web mail address solexox@gmail.com and we will put them in touch with you.

Well that's all folks, see you all on the June Frostbite Run, cheers Geoff.