

CHILDHOOD OF CYCLING
1894
WHEN BICYCLES RULED THE ROAD
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The State Cycling Championships at the old trotting ground was an event of premier importance in the social calendar.

As a fashion parade its crowds vied with those of the Perth Cup.

A top hatted Governor of the State held the starting gun and a judge of the Supreme Court picked the winners.

The Young, Beautiful and dignified thronged the enclosure and most of the young bloods of Perth clad in the colours of their choice, pedalled the swifter for their admiring gaze.

The Champion over all distances was Mr Cecil Dent who had dethroned Mr R.O.Law for the title.

Later, both men became pioneers of Motoring. The former piloting the first car seen in Perth streets. Actually it was not the first to arrive, but history chronicles it as the first of these old contraptions.

Bicycles were the King of the road. Horses were their only rivals and the champions of the day were pointed out with "Look there is so and so," and were given the hero worship that is today expended on famous cricketers.

In an interview in 1934 Mr. Cecil Dent reminisced on old times and said, The popularity of cycling began about 1889, then the Royal Show was held at Guildford and the cycle race was always held pride of popularity.

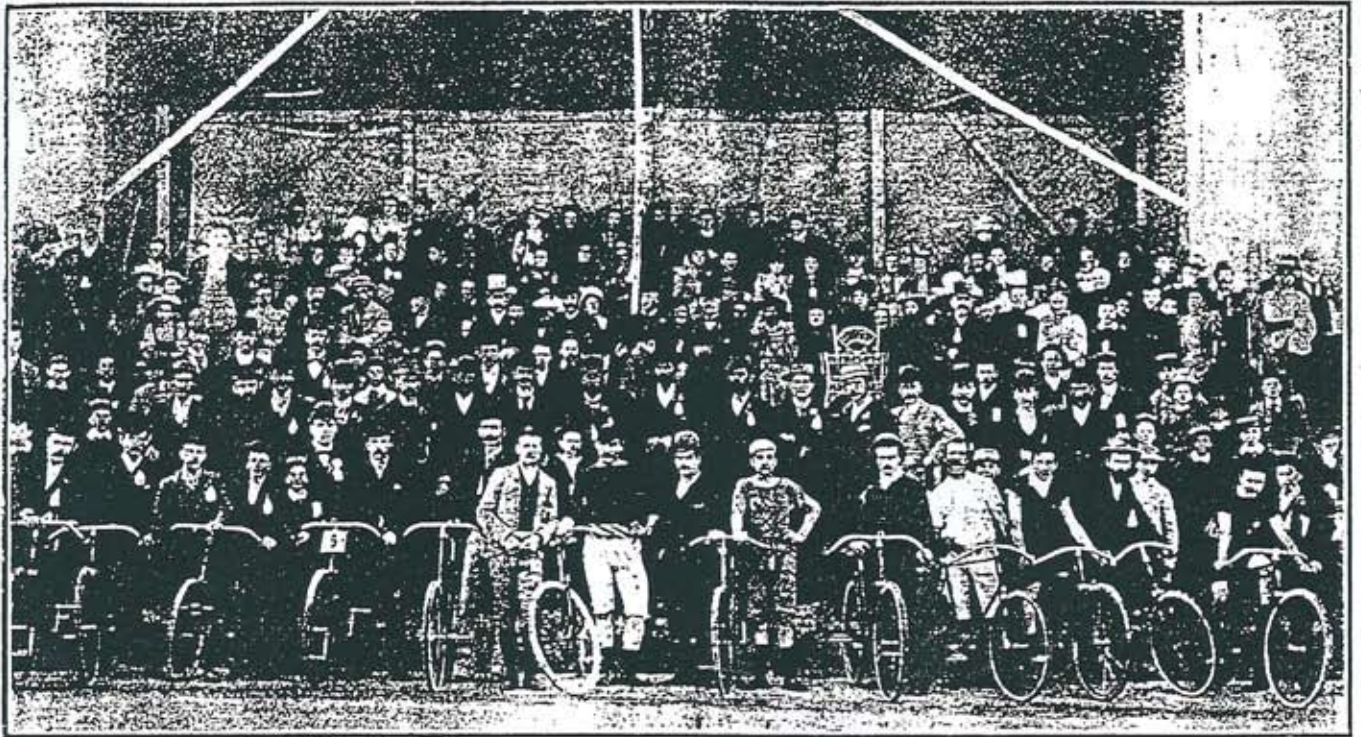
The old racing machines much the same in actual design as those in use today. They weighed about 28 lbs. And cost their weight in coinage. In those days we thought 68 was a very high gear. Pneumatic tyres were dimly heard of.

Cushioned tyres, practically solid rubber, were the vogue. Big things they were, almost the size of modern motor cycle tyres.

For one meeting in the very early nineties, Hutcheson and Hubert Hooley a son of Dalgety's manager imported Pneumatic Tyres, then a brand new invention from England and carried all before them. They left men standing who could normally give them 150 Yds. in a Mile.

The surprise was complete, but curiously enough, we kept to our old solid tyres for a considerable time before investing in the new type. The probable reason was they cost a small fortune.

1895



CYCLING 25 YEARS AGO.

January 26, 1895.

The above picture is an interesting reminder of the days when the world was young, or at any rate twenty-five years younger than it is in this year of grace, 1920. The meeting of which this race was the principal feature was conducted on the old Cricket Ground, now mainly sacred to trotters and pacers, on January 26, 1895. The following interesting particulars of the meeting have been supplied by Mr. A. E. Sampson, now of Adelaide, but then a leading light in the local wheeling world:—

"Among the events contested was the W.A. Wheel Race, two miles. C. Dent and I were on scratch and I won, with Dent in second place. I also won the one-mile championship, with C. Dent and W. C. Rose second and third respectively. The time was 2 min. 42 sec., the track being very heavy. There were seven starters, namely, W. C. Rose, C. Dent; B. Prosser, A. E. Sampson, H. Shelton, F. A. Thomas, and C. H. Carrick. The 1½-mile Ladies' Bracelet was won by a rider named Bailey. I was second and C. Dent third. Dent and I started off scratch each time. The meeting closed with an inter-club contest, Fremantle v. Perth, three riders from each club, Fremantle being represented by D. McArthur, H. Shelton and myself, and Perth by C. Dent, W. C. Rose, and, I think, Thomas or Carrick. I won from Dent and Shelton and McArthur came fifth and sixth, so Fremantle won on points."

Among those who appear in the photograph may be seen His Excellency Sir William Robertson, the late Sir Edward Stone, Rev. Mr. Hanlon, His Honour Judge James, Messrs. T. Carter, J. H. N. Law, H. T. Wilkinson, D. B. Orr, Judge James, G. Howarth, J. Call, J. H. Avery, H. McKirnan, Taylor Atkins, G. Francisco, H. Sadleir, A. E. Sampson, L. Duncan, H. Thompson, W. C. Rose, C. H. Carrick, W. Hooper, Frank Wilson, R. H. Barfett, A. E. Rowe (handicapper), E. C. Francisco, J. Ochiltree, and C. F. Everton (handicapper).

The photograph from which the above picture has been reproduced was kindly lent by Mr. Les. Allen, of the Flite Cycle and Motor Works, 834 Hay-street, Perth.

P.W.Armstrong

1865/1942

(By Jim Fitzpatrick)

Little has been written on the contributions to the West Australian Cycling scene by Percy W.Armstrong.

Percy was born in Victoria and came into prominence by completing the first cycling overland expedition with R.Craig, from Croydon, Queensland to Sydney, in 1893. The distance of 3200km was completed on Heavy cushioned Safety tyres.

So impressed were the Dunlop Company that they contracted Percy to use their Tyres and establish a record ride from Sydney to Melbourne .

He completed the 930km in 4days 3 3/4hours, averaging 222km/day.

It could be assumed that he, with many others, was attracted to West Australia by the Gold Rush, but he was found to be working as a teamster near Coolgardie.

A large demand for Bicycles was made by the Gold Miners who had long distances to cover and equipment to carry. They found the bicycle of valuable assistance. Coupled with the demand for the bicycle by others led Percy to open a Bicycle shop in Coolgardie He created a successful business by importing the English "New Rapid" Bicycle.

The Telegraph line from Perth terminated at Southern Cross some 350km from Coolgardie creating problems to register mining claims.

This is where the bicycle came into its own, and as shown in this advert for services provided by the Coolgardie Cycle Express .

Through his shop, Percy employed many experienced long distance bicycle riders to deliver messages offering guaranteed delivery times, despite travelling through unmade tracks over distances exceeding 200km

Although freewheel drives were available these speedsters claimed that they were dangerous and a fixed wheel drive was essential for speed and braking control.

To meet the many district challenges in 1896 Percy organised the Rover Road Race, a gruelling 174km test from Beverley to Perth..

Thousands greeted the riders as they passed through Newcastle {Now renamed Toodyay). The event was recorded as the event of the century.

The most spectacular part saw the riders descend Red Hill through the gravel.. Some riders were seen to help control their downhill gravel speed by trailing a scrub bush behind them.

The race finished outside Government House but the main problem was that the Officials who started the race, boarded the train for Perth to judge the finish but did not get there till 2Hours after the race finished.

Due to the great interest, another Beverley to Perth was organised and called the Armstrong Race.

About this time, great concern was raised and a call was made for a Union to control

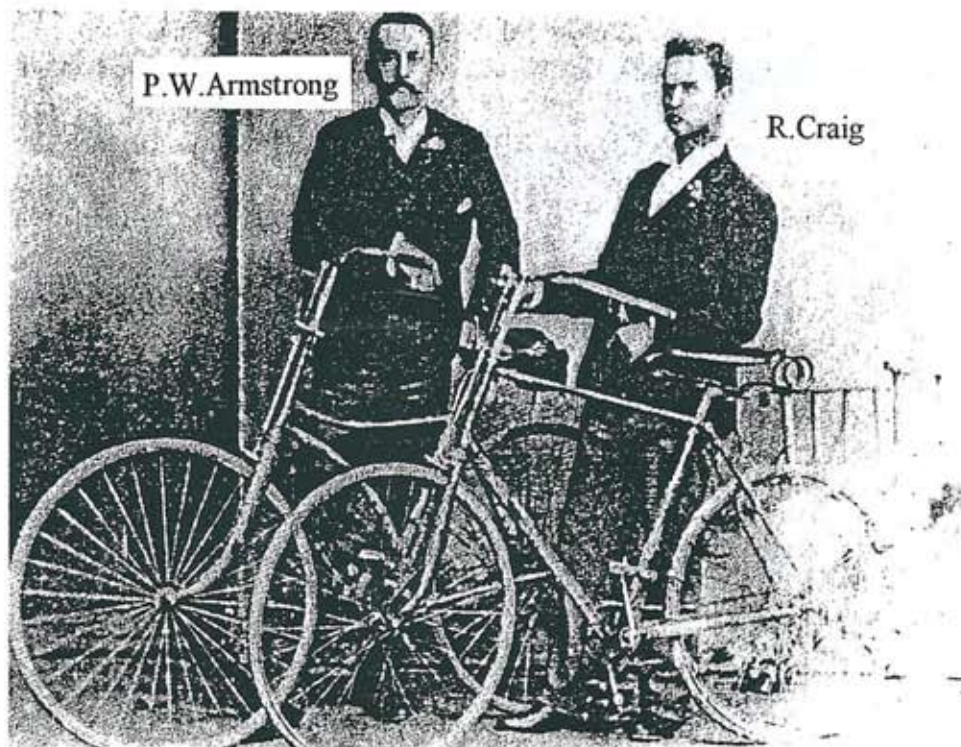
the developing speed madness. This resulted in the formation of the "League of Wheelmen" in 1897.

The League of Wheelmen took over the event and presented it annually and it became a Classic Professional Race.


About 1900, after making a great success in the Bicycle trade with six Branches and 30 Agents in all districts and manufacturing the Armstrong Bikes in Perth, Percy moved into the motor trade.

However he did not achieve the success he had achieved with the Bicycle but his interest in the racing continued, which saw him on the executive of Amateur Cycling in 1927.

Some years later he unfortunately lost a leg in a road accident and died in 1942 at 77 years of age.



THE
Coolgardie Cycle Express Co.
HUNT STREET,
(Opposite Post Office)
SPECIAL CYCLE MESSAGES.

 HAVING engaged the services of the following Special Cyclists:—
F. P. HOPE, H. YEATES, F. W. WILSON, F. W. BROOKMAN, W. H. HAMBLIN,
J. H. C. BAMLETT, & C., we are prepared to convey messages to any part
of the Field, by day or night, at shortest notice.

Mining Notices put up on Claims, Wages Paid, Claims Pegged and taken up at
Warden's Office, and all Mining Business transacted.

*Regular Cycle Mail leaves this office for Hannans, (daily) Menzies, Niagara,
Yerilla, Pindinni, Mt. Margaret, Norseman, Dundas, &c.*

— — — — —
JAMES A. HEALY, AGENT.

N.B.—SPECIAL MESSAGES GUARANTEED.

WEST AUSTRALIAN ORGANISED CYCLE RACING.

To get an idea of racing conditions in the past it is interesting to take a look at the 1912 era.

At this time the Bicycle became mans best companion and to race was the ultimate challenge.

The Bicycle itself was a well developed safety machine but there were drawbacks on the racing scene associated with the different braking systems.

There is little doubt that the combination of free wheel and back pedaling braking gave less control than the fixed wheel.

As can be seen by race photos of this period on the next page all frames were made the same size and fitted with adjustable seat pins and forward adjustable handlebar extension

So much for the bikes, but what about the road conditions? The roads were well made hard gravel and reported as "As fast as a good sealed road" But depending on the weather conditions the roads could change to the conditions shown in the Albany Highway Championship photo on the next page.

Changing weather conditions proved a headache for race organisers, especially when there was overnight rain.

For the State Championship shown on the next page the event attracted 34 nominations but only 16 turned out for the race.

The riders left their starting position in Canterbury Terrace and entered Albany Highway to proceed to Cannington and return.

No wonder there were so many non starters when one had to ride in a bunch with the mud flying, riding fixed wheel with no brakes and road conditions so bad that at the finish when the favourite took a flyer around the sprinting bunch he lost ground in the mud.

Metropolitan races were held starting on Albany Highway Victoria Park.

The 10mile Course started at Canterbury Terrace and went to a point just past Cannington and return.

The 15mile course started at the Victoria Park Hotel and proceeded to Maddington and return.

The 18mile course started at the Victoria Park Hotel and went to Gosnells and return.

The 25mile course started at Mint St. Albany Highway and went to Kelmscott and return.

The 50mile course covered the 25mile course twice.

Another 25Mile course was located at Guildford Swan.

A 32mile Middle- Swan course covering 4 laps starting at the Council Club Hotel

THE W.A. RACING SCENE 1912



August 24 1912 West Australian Amateur Road Championship
Albany Highway E. Victoria Park

Programmed Riders

H.A.Kingsbury, C.J.White, F.Hawkes, F.Hunton, H.Hughes, J.O.Connor, W.Delahunty,
H.Cockman P.Palmer, R.Gray, A.Shaw, H.Hampson, W.Worsley, C.McKinlay, T.Hayes,
C.Peterson, W.Wilson, T.Gordon, H.P.Brown, R.O.Connell, T.Everett, R.Dunderdale,
H.Chapman, G.Walsh, V.Pullbrook, C.Gough, W.Kirk, M.J.Foster, C.G.Weaver,
A.Gunning, F.Moloney, W.Middleton, F.Lawrence, J.A.Coupland.

Bad road conditions deterred many starters



Albany Highway E.Victoria Park, Fixed wheel, No brakes, Muddy roads.
34 Nominations, 16 Starters, 10 Finishers.

AMATEUR CYCLING HISTORY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

With the presentation of the Safety Bike, at last a means of personal transport was available for Men, Women and Children.

Thousands of bikes were imported to meet the huge demand from all districts and towns and the travelling goldminers.

With the thrill of mastering the art of riding the bike and discovering how fast they can travel soon developed cycling clubs and champion speed cyclists in all towns and districts.

Speed and safety created problems and a call was made for a Union control of racing cyclists, as a result the "West Australian League of Wheelmen" was founded in July 1897.

Most clubs joined the League but Fremantle club the strongest club with 70 members decided to go on their own and formed the "W.A. Cyclists Union" and the Perth Cyclists Club did not join the League either.

Nothing more was recorded of the W.A. Cyclists Union but a report was given that at the turn of the century there were three controlling bodies for cycling, "League of Wheelmen", "Fremantle Cycling Club" and "Perth Cycling Club"

In 1907 W. Gibbon registered the Perth club as the "Perth Amateur Cycling Club" to train their riders for the Olympics.

It was found that N.S.W. Amateur Cycling Union was the controlling body for Amateur cycling in Australia.

After an exchange of constitutions The Perth Amateur Cycling club was awarded the West Australian controlling body for Amateurs in West Australia.

There was no racing reported during the 1914/1918 world war but racing interest renewed in 1919 the "League of wheelmen",

"Perth Amateur Cycling Club" and

"Fremantle Amateur Cycling Club" drew up racing Calenders

Fremantle club was the strongest club and resented to being accountable to the amateur controlling body which in fact was just another club.

After a meeting between the Perth and Fremantle clubs in 1919 a controlling body was founded to control Amateur Cycling in West Australia and called

"West Australian Cycling Union".

and later renamed

"West Australian Amateur Cyclists Union"

Ken Ward
2000

WEST AUSTRALIAN CYCLING PROGRESS

The Amalgamation of the Professional "West Australian Bicycle Racing League" and the Amateur "West Australian Amateur Cyclists Union" took place Oct. 1982. As from 1st. January 1983 the West Australian Cycling Association would Govern Cycling in West Australia, the title later changed to,
WEST AUSTRALIAN CYCLING FEDERATION



A Very experienced Group of Officials and Cycling Champions were elected.

The elected executive being:-

Jim Mitchell	President	(Former W.A.A.C.U. President.)
Ken Benson	Vice President Pro Rep.	(Former W.A.B.R.L. President)
Russel Miller	Executive Officer.	(Former W.A.A.C.U. Secretary)
Clyde Hammond	Finance Officer	(Former W.A.A.C.U. President)
Mike Poyner	Amateur Rep.	(Former L.W.A.W. President & W.A.A.C.U Vice President)
Stan Fennell	North Zone Rep.	(Former A.C.C. Vice President & L.W.A.W. President)
Ken Norris	South Zone Rep.	(Former L.W.A.W. & W.A.A.C.U. Councillor)
Mark Keyser	East Zone Rep.	(Former L.W.A.W. & W.A.A.C.U. Councillor)

HISTORICAL RESEARCH TRIVIA

WEST AUSTRALIAN CYCLING

- 1874 H.J.Lawson built the first rear drive Safety Bike.
- 1880 W.A. Bicycle Club formed.
First Cycling journal presented (Folded within a few months)
Bicycle News (Lasted 18 Months)
Australian Cycling News (Folded 1889)
Perth Morning Herald (Lasted till 1895)
- 1885 The Starley Rover was presented and accepted as the very first successful Safety Bicycle.
- 1891 W.A.Cycling Club formed after the folding of the W.A.Bicycle Club
- 1893 Fremantle Cycling Club was in existence.
- 1895 Track racing on W.A.C.A.
- 1896 Pioneers of West Australian Cycling were,
S.Rowe, H.Sadler, R.O.Law.
Perth Cycling Club formed 22 May 1896
Bunbury Cycling Club formed 2 June 1896.
First Westral Wheelrace (Won by Jack Boylan)
- 1897 W.A.League of wheelmen formed. First Chairman R.O.Law,
Fremantle club with 70 members would not affiliate
but arranged their own Calendar of races.
Rover Road Race, Beverley to Perth (Won by Jack Beck)
- 1898 First League of Wheelmen A.G.M., 13 February (Membership 700)
Constitution of the League adopted 14 August 1898
President Frank Wilson Secretary A.E.Farmer.
Alex Jewel, League champion rider.
25 mile Championship July 23 & 50 mile August 13th.
Armstrong Road Race, Beverley to Perth (Won by J.Bigwood)
George D.Stotter World record for 10 miles, Fremantle to Perth
26 October 1898
- 1899 At the turn of the century there were three controlling bodies.
The League of Wheelmen, Fremantle Club, & Perth Club.
For the Metropolitan area road race courses were selected
mainly using the Albany Highway from Victoria Park to Armadale..
The 10 mile course started at the corner of Canterbury Terrace
& Albany Highway going out to Cannington & return.
The 15 mile course travelled from the Victoria Park Hotel to
Maddington & return.
The 18 mile course travelled from the Victoria Park Hotel to
Gosnells & return.
The 25 mile course travelled from Canterbury Terrace to
Kelmscott & return.
The 50 mile course went from Canterbury Terrace to
Kelmscott and return twice.
The Canning Highway was also used. Starting from the
Leopold Hotel Palmyra to Fremantle & to the Albany Highway
Other races were held at Midland for 10 mile & 32 mile races.
Starting at Midland & using the Middle Swan Circuit..

- 1909 Perth Cycling Club reformed by W. Gibbon as an Amateur club.
- 1911 H.A. Kingsley Amateur 25 mile Champion.
- 1912 H.A.Kingsley Amateur 25 mile Champion. F.Hunton Amateur 10 mile (32.mins)
C.J.White Champion 50 mile (2hr.21min.35.secs.)
- 1913 C.J.White Amateur 25 mile Champion.
- 1914 C.J.White Amateur 10 mile Champion
B.Dodd Amateur 50 mile Champion (2hr 16min.30secs.)
- 1919 Amateur Racing Association formed by the Perth & Fremantle Clubs. Later to be
renamed West Australian Amateur Cyclists Union.
Midland Junction & Districts Cycle Club founded 20 August 1919.
Affiliated with the League of Wheelmen.
- 1920 C.G.Weaver Timekeeper 1920 to 1936.
- 1922 Perth Amateur Cycling Club reported as the only Amateur Cycling Club in W.A.
H.K.Smith 25mile Australian Road Champion. W.Anderson State 10mile (27Min.)
- 1923 League 25mile Championship 29 September 1923.
- 1924 The new Amateur Cyclists Union took over the organising of the classic
Northam to Perth Road Race previously organised by Perth Amateur Cycling Club.
- 1932 State Champions: - N. Abbot 25 mile (1hr.5min.12secs.) L.Wilson 10 mile (25min.44secs.)
- 1933 N.Abbot Amateur Road Champion. E.J,Lobb 10mile(26mins.26secs.)
Report on 21/9/1933 The now defunct Perth Amateur Cycling Club.
- 1934 D.Stevenson 10Mile(27min.18secs.) & held every Amateur State Track Records.
H.Stock 25mile Professional Champion.
- 1936 Northam to Perth Tandem Record 2hr.38mins for 61 miles.
R,Felton 50mile Amateur Record (2hr.4min.39secs.)
- 1937 Jack Norris 10mile & 25mile Amateur Champion
- 1948 Cliff Digney 1948 10 mile amateur champion
N. Burdus Professional Track Champion of champions
N. Burdus 100 mile Professional Road Champion
- 1949 W.A.Professionals held the Australian Track Championships at Fremantle February.
N. Burdus wins Australian Professional 10 mile Track Championship at Fremantle.
- 1951 N.Burdus Professional Road Champion at 25mile,50mile & 125mile.
- 1952 N.Burdus Professional 50mile Road Champion
- 1964 Ernie Roberts established Australia's first Veteran cycling Club
(West Australian Veterans Cycling Association)
- 1966 Helmets compulsory for Professionals from 17/6/1966.
- 1978 Combined Long Dist. Road Championship 200km.
E Turner Professional Champion & A Bunter Amateur Champion.
- 1980 D. Williams in June called a meeting of Veterans & established the West Coast Veterans.
- 1982 Jack Norris killed 22/7/1982