

TASMANIAN MOTORCYCLE CLUB

# SPOKE

Newsletter of the Tasmanian Motorcycle Club. August 2021.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

**AS** the end of August draws near, we can take heart that we've just about done it ..... survived winter - and the Covid lockdowns that accompanied it along the eastern seaboard.

**I KNOW** I wasn't the only member who missed out on a road trip to the north island and whose ageing body was forced to face Tassie's bracing weather, but all that can be forgotten as the days gradually lengthen, the weather gets warmer and the stiff joints loosen up.

**HOPEFULLY** many of you used the colder, race-free months to work on your bikes so they're ready now that the time has come to blow the cobwebs away at the coming combined Club and Tasmanian Championship round.

**SEE** you at Symmons Plains on Sunday, September 5 ... and at the September 4 Ride Day



**Cary McMahon**  
**Honorary President**

# INTRODUCING: Doug Watson

**How long have you been in the club?**

About three years.

**What was your first road bike?**

A Kawasaki 120 street scrambler.

**What was your first racing bike?**

My KTM RC390.

**What would you consider your career highlight?**

Finishing third in the under 500 Production class of the state championship last year..

**What would you still like to achieve?**

There's a lot of young fellows coming up, so I'm having a hard time there, but just to keep enjoying racing and getting that little bit faster.

**If money was no object, what bike would you like to race?**

I'd like to build myself a P6 historic bike based on an SV650.

**What's your job?**

Shipwright.



# LOOKING BACK: WITH KEN YOUNG

## Sidecar racing in Tasmania: Part 2

**PICKING** up the story of Sidecar Racing in Tasmania where we finished last time at the end of the 1960's when sidecar racing was very much on the decline in Tassie. Racing has its ups and downs and sidecar racing in Tasmania was at the bottom of a deep trough.

**SIDECAR** racing was a thing of beauty with the experience indescribable to anyone who has not tried it. Lying on your stomach with your face just over the length of your hand off the ground being pushed up against the sidecar wheel as you "glide" through the sweeper at well over 150 kmh. Then you look over to the front wheel and see that the rider is continually correcting (walking the bike) all the way through the sweeper, and the sound of that big four stroke screaming is a sight and sound that this scribe will never forget.

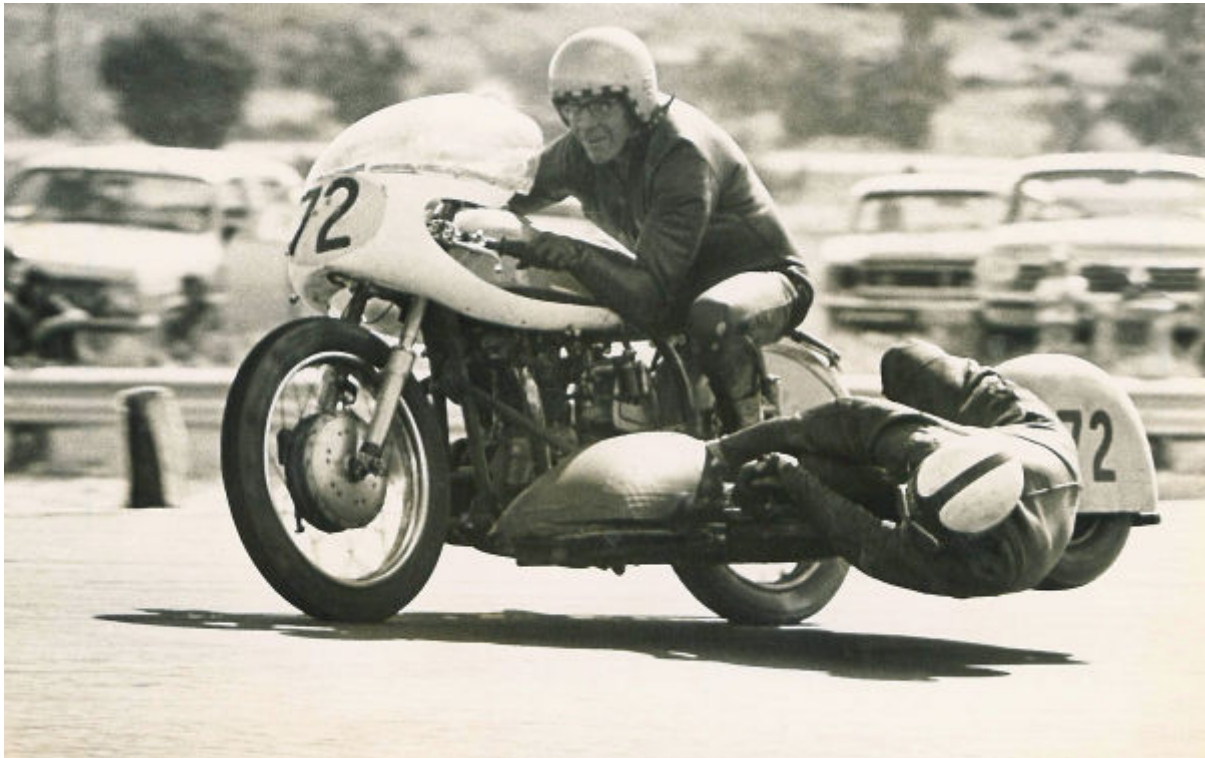
**TO** slow confusion, rule books and entry forms used the words Rider, Driver and Passenger to describe competitors in each class.

**IN 1970**, Terry Brooks built a "platform" for his 650 Norton and convinced friend Scott Tweedie to climb aboard to demonstrate to a big car and bike audience what sidecar racing was about - as seen in this shot from the Symmons pit row as he returns from the demo. Made more difficult, was that Terry along with Geoff Stagg were the bike track commentators so Terry would have had to call, usually 2 bike races on the program between the car races and while the track was still under the control of the bike officials he would have had to rush down from the tower to slip in to ride mode to do the demonstration. Can you imagine leaving a track commentator on his own in the tower?





**TAKING** up the challenge were Steve Sheldrick and mate Dave Powell with a platform bolted to a Triumph solo that slowed up development from others for a short time.



**THAT** was because on this old "dunger" Steve cleaned up the class for some time making others think it was a waste of time developing new bikes. This was typical of how the chairs performed in this 1971 Examiner pic.

**THE** following year, at the first round of the Australian Road Race Championships, Brooks / Tweedie were to make good use of the new sand trap on the old Pit Corner when a clip on their handlebar broke.

**SCOTT** is making a hasty retreat but was not scared off as he was to go on to be, in my humble opinion, equal best sidecar passenger the state has produced. The other? Has to be Dave Lambert! We will get to "Lamsie" latter. Scott spent many years as Keith Bingham's passenger before he thought he was to retire but each year when team Bayliss came for the first round Stan would only bring the team if Scott would be his passenger for the weekend.



**AS** seen here in 1973 on the back Straight on Stan's 1000 Honda. A sidecar was not slow around Symmons Plains by comparison when you look at the touring car program for 1973. In order of lap record times, for a few, from the fastest lap of John McCormack (Elfin MR5 F 5000) 52.6sec, Sports Sedan Peter Brock (XU1 Torana) 59.8 sec, Bike Outright Ken Blake (TZ 700 Yamaha) 61.2 sec, fastest Tasmanian (Bike) Barry Lack (TZ 350 Yamaha) 63.9 sec, Production Car Alan Moffat (GTHO Falcon) 65.4 sec, Senior Sidecar Stan Bayliss / Scott Tweedie (1000 Honda) 68.6 sec, Unlimited Production Mal Campbell (K 750 Honda) 70.1 sec and Junior Production Barry Lack (RD 350 Yamaha) 72.2 sec.



**THE** Bayliss team had been so dominant that Stan would win the Unlimited races (black number on yellow) and Steve would win the Junior races (black number on white). After winning the Symmons round of the ARRC and then presentation Steve and Graham McGregor are sent on a victory lap.

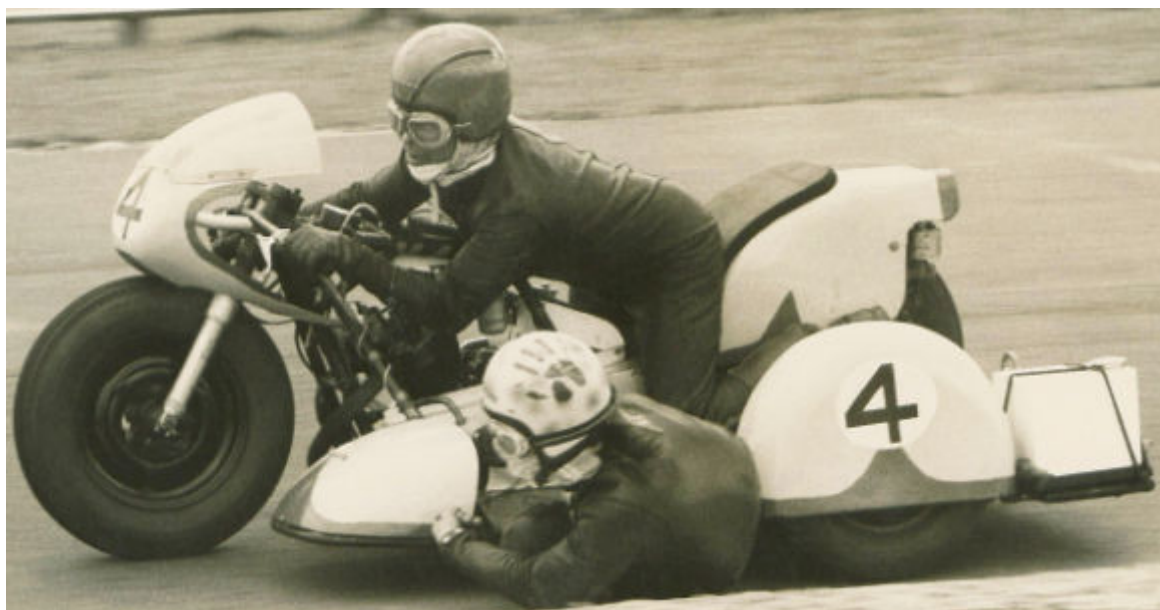


**SYMMONS** was different for the team, instead of comfortably winning the first round in a nose to tail finish they had to fight off the hard charging Price and Campbell team.





**NOW** back to that other pioneer who helped get sidecars back racing in Tasmania, Donny Miller



**THIS** is Donny's effort at building a chair - in 1972 you couldn't just go out and buy one. Here with co-builder and passenger Nigel Keefe. As mentioned in part 1, at that time sidecars were a little fragile and prone to throwing "liquid" lines off and upsetting solo riders. Well, that is the petrol tank behind the sidecar wheel with possibly the battery and fuel pump in the nose cone. You may also notice things like, an added passenger, a solid passenger platform, more body work and large car wheels for these poor little motor cycle engines (usually British) to drag round at very high revs and they often complained about their work load and become "sick" often "very sick"! Not content to just run a bearing or drop a valve, on numerous occasions they threw a con rod out through the engine cases. So much so that it became a common saying that a bike had "thrown a leg out of bed!".

Some adventurous teams like Garry Willis and Barry Lack, who started out with Terry Brooks' chair, before building their own "sitter" decided to improve the quality of bikes by buying a cast off from Victorian home builder Lindsay Urquhart and install a 650 Triumph motor. Urquhart was a winner on his bikes and it soon showed that he was a wizard at building sidecars and started building to order. In fact all Urquhart bikes had a signature "window" in the chair fairing which indicates most of the bikes in this part of this story are Urquhart's.



**FOR** the 1971 March Long weekend the club invited 5 or 6 mainland sidecar teams to compete with their spectacular "kneeler" sidecars. This was one of the first real "kneeler" creations from Urquhart and promised to be spectacular to watch. The problem was it was a very wet and cold race day with most of the sidecars using wide dry weather car race tyres (in those days a very small amount of tread pattern) it looked like being a no show, but the teams had committed to race so spent the time mostly in lurid speedway-type slides in front of the big crowd of spectators.



**THE** spectators loved it, the riders had fun, but the passengers not so much. The slide was fun, but when it snapped back the passengers had to grab the ducking and diving next hand grip fast before they were flicked off.

**IT** worked as Local identity Duncan Ramsay along with Steve Sheldrick placed an order with Urquhart for one of these chairs and started with the Triumph motor before they saved enough to put a 650 Yamaha engine in and then it was no stopping the little bike that could. Passenger Terry Powell was to concentrate more on his solo racing and Ross Allison was tempted to become passenger in 1972.



**HOME-GROWN** specials were, in some cases, still competitive and many were well built and well-presented like this 1972 shot of Brian Woods and Geoff Martin on their 750 Triumph leading Steve Sheldrick and Ross Allison on the 650 Yamaha Urquhart. I remind you that there were no "rumble strips" on the inside of the corners back then but half a car tyre set in concrete that by now were "slightly softer" than original as they were starting to break up from being hit so many times by the cars. Still made a considerable bruise on the hip or arm of a sidecar passenger and made US very grumpy with our riders.

**LOOK** back to the previous shot with Ross hanging lower than the chair as the wheel is in the air. Yes the tyres on the inside of most corners and the concrete gutter at the hairpin took some joy away from passengers in left-hand corners.



A lot of it was made up by the fact that from this point to the exit onto the now grid markings was the opposite. The track edge became the grass verge and often the grass was long.



**MOST** riders could "float" the chair wheel, so often had their part of the bike on the inside edge with the sidecar wheel floating over the dirt on the inside and the passenger's face in the long grass infield. A weird and exhilarating feeling for so long and it was so fast around this section. Many of you get your knee in the grass, but your face?

**THE** home-grown specials still had a place especially like this effort for John Price and Garry Campbell with a 650 Honda motor. You can clearly see the right knee cup, the beautifully plumbed and crombed exhaust system, red grab rail over the rear wheel, the added radiator in the nose cone behind the number and the super large car front wheel on the "leading link" front suspension consisted of 2 rear K series Honda rear struts. The bike was actually owned by their mentor Nigel Innes, but John did all the work on it.





**WHEN** Price and Campbell started racing this in 1972, they became a very fierce rival to the all-conquering Bayliss team when Stan and Steve came for the ARRC rounds. Stan the father and Steve the son didn't ride one bike as a team, Stan had on the mainland Jeff Randell as the passenger Scott in Tassie and Steve had Graham McGregor who went on to race internationally in a solo career. Also they had a Junior and Senior Honda powered bike each.



**THE** Price / Campbell bike looked good, sounded great, went like a jet and often swapped paint with the Bayliss teams. Not literally but actually with some very intense racing.

**THE** tyres upset US passengers (as this was the first time I tried sidecar racing when I volunteered to do the Monday of the Long weekend with John McGuinness from Victoria on his 750 Triumph). On the Saturday he had run off at the end of the back straight (where I was flagging) and run over his passenger's ankle so he could not get his boot back on because of the swelling. He needed to learn the track for the following weekend's ARRC meeting. It was a pivotal meeting for a number of reasons.



**ANOTHER** "rent-a-local" passenger was Barry Lack running with front runner, Victorian, Dennis Skinner and had at times been running in 3<sup>rd</sup> place before they faded a bit.

**TO** this point teams believed that to pull such a heavy load a bike needed to pull like a tractor, but Skinner was among the first to try a different tack. He put a two stroke Kawasaki H2 750 triple in his chair and it worked.



**BEFORE** taking to the chair on Monday I had managed to take this "prize winning" shot of Bob Levy and Mal Byrne on their Honda. It was prize winning because it scored me photographer passes to Sydney's Amaroo Park when I moved to Sydney a few years later. The fact that it appeared on the back cover of the Castrol 6-Hour program in the Eldorado Helmet ad without my consent may have helped.



**SOON** after Ross Allison became the passenger with Steve Sheldrick, Steve's work roster clashed with race meetings at Symmons so it was decided to try Ross as the rider with Barry Lack as passenger. After a few good race meetings, including this one at Baskerville, the move struck a snag when Barry was asked to ride Ian Tilley's new TZ350 Yamaha. That required a full commitment to the solo career.



**THE** "Three Amigos" Ross Allison, Dave Lambert and Barry Lack, seen here in the VERY early days after Ross had broken a collar bone and allowed Barry to race his super-hot CB 350 Honda just before Ross sold it to Barry. Dave had been Ross' mechanic while he was racing solos and dabbled in a little production racing. It was the perfect fit.



**A FEW** changes were needed starting with changing from Steve's Number 7 to Ross' solo number 5, matching "Mustard" colour leathers, matching red helmets and a texta to write upside down under the front number "This Way Up"? After an early dive bomb over the hump went wrong and they flipped the chair with Dave rolling up the fence on the inside of the corner where pit crew signaled. This time it was Dave's wife there who could have reached down and helped him to his feet. They survived that -n ot the crash, the aftermath - and the little bike that could became the giant killing team that did.



**ONE** of the first outing was to the King of the Wier meeting at Hume Weir. This is Ross and Dave after spotting the Tassie contingent jumping up and down with excitement after watching them just win the Junior Sidecar final.





**THEIR** effort at Hume Wier need some context to understand how good it was. Their only previous appearance on the mainland was a few weeks before at Phillip Island so they were regarded as newcomers. In a time of allocated grid positions as opposed to qualifying times, they were allocated a rear of grid position. The bike did not like the very tight right hand corners as can be seen by this shot. During the lunch break Saturday, they had to rotate the worn sidecar tyre. By the end of the day the steel beads were showing on this side. Overnight the only tyre they could find that would fit was off a wheelbarrow and that was used for the races on Sunday.

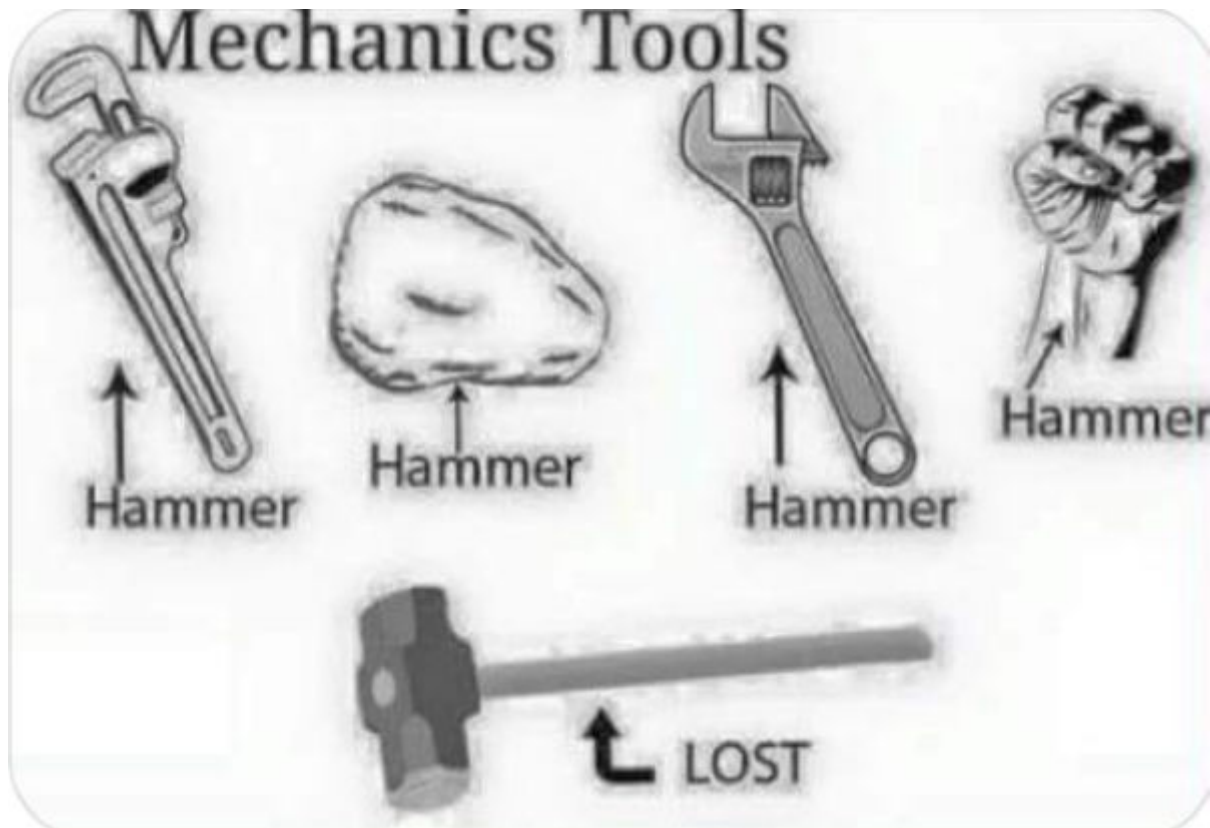
**NOT** only did they win the Junior race but they smashed the lap record.



**ALL** of the above happened in the first half of the 1970s where sidecar development came on so strong in little over 10 years. From bolt-on platforms to all out "kneelers", from British engines to almost total dominance by the Japanese and from Telescopic forks to leading link systems.

**FOR** the final part of this look back at sidecar racing, we will look at the second part of the decade and the big developments that were to come, before sidecars in Tassie again took a big nose dive in popularity.

**Ken Young**



Sound familiar?

# RACING IS BACK ...



## ... at Symmons Plains on September 5.

Entries close on August 27 at 11pm, with late entries available until 11pm on August 29. (\$50 late fee applies). Ridernet link is available from TMCC website.

(I was going to write a preview of the round for Spoke, but a little birdie told me that Ken Young had done one for AMCN, so who am I to duplicate? Buy the bloody paper! Ed)



# LONGFORD MOTORAMA PREVIEW

IT may seem a long way off to be promoting the March Long-weekend Motorama now. For the spectators, perhaps, but not for those with bikes who could be considering entering.



**THIS** year's event was a spectacular success with limited participation by bikes due in part to the short notice. Tony Oliver joined the car organisers late to push the fact that the TMCC started the event and took on the mammoth task of gathering bikes for the event. What he achieved was extremely well received by the car people who are now keen to see us increase our participation in the next event.



**THE** event was organised by a totally different group from the one using the flying mile event in the past and the respect and encouragement shown to the bikes was very good and needs to be fostered and reciprocated by us next year.

**THIS** year's event was a day on the green in the middle of Longford with cars and bikes of the era on display. Twice during the day, a selection of bikes and cars did "slow" parade around the streets of Longford. Spectators were bused to four corners of the old track where 3 experts and this scribe were located with extra displays to talk to them about aspects of the racing.

**THAT** is again going to happen BUT added this time, the day before the display at Longford, will be a day at Symmons Plains. This will be a chance to do slightly higher speed parade laps. Not at race speed but high enough to stretch the legs of these old bikes and cars. Not just race bikes but road bikes of the era. For the owners of these old bikes, a chance to exercise your beautiful old bike. For the spectators, a chance to see and hear a British single or twin with maybe a reverse cone megaphone singing as it used to be. How many of you have heard a Japanese two stroke shrill sound and then imagine listening to 25 to 30 of them on a ARRC race day?

**FOR** potential display and or ride day participants, contact Tony Oliver on 6395 4114 or 0418 578 893 to signify your interest in being involved with your solo or sidecar.

**SO** many missed out on the excitement and joy of this year's event so don't miss out next March. Get involved and NOW!

Ken Young





## HAVE YOUR SAY.

Members' letters, opinions and comments will be published in the next available newsletter. Email items to [tmccmag@gmail.com](mailto:tmccmag@gmail.com)

THIS is the forum for TMCC members to have their say. (If you have any items you think will be of interest to members, please email them to [tmccmag@gmail.com](mailto:tmccmag@gmail.com))

## COMING UP

The next committee meeting will be held at 7pm on Thursday, September 2, at the Gunner's Arms, Lawrence St, Launceston, from 7pm.

THE next Symmons Plains ride day will be on Saturday, September 4 and racing on Sunday, September 4.....



..... with the SRCT's next Baskerville ride day the following weekend, on Sunday, September 12.