

RE AUST Club Newsletter No 17 - NOVEMBER 2006



Web Site <http://autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/Royal-Enfield-Club-Australia/>
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Hi! Everyone

This issue we have an interesting article by Bruce Walker. Bruce is seeking assistance with identification of his uncle's motor cycle. Can you help him?

And Garry Eyles gives us his 'warts and all' story of one man's Royal Enfield Bullet.

Jeff Cole has contributed some RE maintenance troubleshooting questions and answers.

Just a reminder about the **2007 AGM AT TAREE** – if you have any questions about the AGM, please contact Bill Rice on (02) 6553 2772 or email on williamjrice@hotmail.com.

Once again, as this is **your** newsletter, please let me have any articles and photos of your rides and let me know if there is something special you would like to read in it. All contributions gladly received.

Newsletter articles can be sent to me at shippingoffice@bigpond.com or 74 Macquarie Street, Merewether, NSW 2291.

REgards, Margaret

**** DIWALI on NEWELL MUSTER:**

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3 until SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5 - Come along and have a great time riding in rural NSW with fellow members of RECOA INC.

All members would be aware that the Club holds two major events in the year, the Diwali Day get together and the AGM. This year the Diwali Day event is being held in west Wyalong from Friday 3 November to Sunday 5 November, and has been given the title "Diwali on Newell Muster". Headquarters for the event will be the West Wyalong Caravan Park, 02 6972 3133. Book your accommodation now. Members are expected to arrive at the park Friday night for registration. On Saturday a ride covering the major points of interest is planned and will commence at 9.30 and will return to the park at 4pm so that we can organise a meal and get together for the evening. There will be a short ride on Sunday morning again starting at 9.30 and for those travelling home on the Sunday, the ride will pass through west Wyalong at 1200. Riders staying on will continue and will return to the park about 4pm as on Saturday. The Taree group will be leaving Taree on Thursday 2 November, stopping over at Dunedoo that night and arriving in West Wyalong about 1pm Friday. For details on travelling times for the Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney groups contact Anthony.

*(** Looking forward to some photos and articles – Margaret)*

From the Bruce Walker Archives

The photo shows my Uncle Ernest Hill (DOB circa 1908), on the left, and two unidentified friends. The photo was taken before 1930.



The centre bike is clearly a side valve Ariel. It would be approximately from about 1926 to 1929 vintage. The bike on the right is a flat tank side valve Norton. The forward mounted magneto suggests a 1926 model.

My Uncle's bike on the left is of unknown make. The girder forks passing through the front mudguard suggests a BSA as there was a round tank BSA in the early 1920s with this configuration. BSA had dropped their round tank models well before 1930. It also has the OHV 'sloper' engine which was introduced from around 1926 by BSA. The muffler is identical to that in an illustration of a 1928 497cc OHV BSA 'sloper' with the exception of the girder forks passing through the mudguard. Perhaps this was an optional feature or was on the earliest 'slopers' but dropped from later models. All bikes have hand gear changes.

Can anyone offer any further details for identification?

'WARTS AND ALL' – THE STORY OF ONE MAN'S ROYAL ENFIELD BULLET By GARRY EYLES

A seed is planted!

I saw the original advert for the Bullet way back in the late eighties or early nineties. It was in 'Just Bikes' or maybe it was 'Australian Motorcycle Trader'? Anyway, it promised a brand new 500cc motorcycle for less than three grand. What was this curiously antiquated looking bike and how could it be so impossibly cheap? I dismissed it almost immediately as just another unreliable and poorly made product from somewhere in the third world.

A hook is baited!

In 2005, while on a family holiday on the NSW South Coast, I caught a glimpse of a magnificent black and chrome motorcycle standing majestically on the footpath outside a bike shop in Wollongong. It was only a brief glimpse but I knew exactly what it was – A brand new Royal Enfield Bullet. Perhaps the memory of the early adverts lingered on in the subconscious because I recognised it instantly. We only passed that shop again once, on the way home, and sadly, and probably because it was a Sunday the Enfield was not on show.

The hook is set!

At the earliest opportunity I bought the latest issue of 'Just Bikes' to see if the advert from long ago was being re-run. It was, and there in all its glory was the Royal Enfield Bullet 500. I contacted Enfield Australia and in due course the requested literature arrived. As I unfolded the brochure I entered a motorcycling world that ceased to exist some time back in the 50's. The back page displayed something that I never thought I would be seen again - black and pinstriped and beautifully proportioned with a single seat and little chrome rack. It had chrome mudguards and those neat rubber kneepads on the chrome sided petrol tank. It was an authentic 50's motorcycle! Not a copy of one - this was the genuine article. And I had to have one.

Come in spinner!

A trip to Sydney several weeks later gave me the opportunity to see the beast 'in the flesh' at Motociclo, a bike shop on the Prince's Highway at St. Peters that specialises in British and European (and now Indian) motorcycles. There in the window of the shop was the 500 Deluxe that was to eventually become my bike. John who owns the business in partnership with his wife Nicole is also the mechanic and salesperson. He showed me around the shop and spent a good half hour telling me all about the Royal Enfield and what the prospective owner should expect. He explained that a Royal Enfield owner should anticipate some hands on involvement with the mechanics of the machine. He also explained that because of performance constraints imposed by the 'originality' of the design, Enfield ownership was not for everyone and that I should think carefully before committing myself. John impressed me immensely. He was straight forward and honest. I decided I trusted him and listened carefully as he gave me an insight into the world of the Royal Enfield Bullet. Actually, I had already made up my mind. That 500 Deluxe in the window was going to be mine!

Several weeks passed and I once again headed to Sydney for work. In the back of my utility, firmly bolted to the floor, and running the length of the tray were two 4 x 2 lengths of timber spaced exactly an RE tyre width apart. The financial formalities complete, John helped me load my new bike into the back of the ute and tie it down for the trip back home to Wagga.

The Fun Begins

Unloaded in the carport I stood and admired the beautiful piece of machinery I had just acquired. Dad's toy, as wifey calls it. A quick check of the oil level, on with the fuel tap, piston at TDC as John at Motociclo had shown me and a hefty swing on the kick start lever to bring the beast to life. I allowed her to warm up before gingerly (it's been ten years since my last two wheeler) heading for the nearest servo, as a peek into the fuel cap had revealed a near empty tank.

Oh the disappointment!

Walking back towards the bike after paying for the fuel I noticed something dripping down the side of the exhaust. Petrol! The tank was leaking petrol from under the rubber knee pad. I loosened the two screws holding the knee pad and stuffed rag up underneath to stem the flow sufficient to get me home. Once home a thorough inspection revealed a crack in the tank, about half way up and neatly hidden by the rubber. A quick call to John at Motociclo resulted in a request for the tank to be sent back to RE Australia in Victoria. In due course a replacement tank arrived and after a frustrating two weeks of ownership with a bike I could look at but not ride I finally hit the road.

Woe is me!

Running in an RE exactly as the handbook advises is, in my opinion, an extremely good idea. Not only does it ensure that the moving parts bed down properly, it also allows the inevitable problems that arise to be recognised and addressed before they become major disasters. The first ride ended with oil pumping vigorously from the spigot on the rear of the timing case where the small rubber pipe that goes to the breather can joins on. A cable (zip) tie soon fixed that – but this was not to be the last brush with the breather. A true abomination if there ever was one. At about the 800 km mark and halfway into a 130 km ride I noticed oil pouring out of the right hand side tool box and dripping over the muffler. The air filter was completely soaked. Even worse – the oil level was below the bottom of the dipstick. I topped up the engine oil and blew out the breather hose and duckbill. This happened once more several weeks later. I eventually removed the breather pipes and canister and replaced it all with a single breather pipe from the top of the oil tank fitted to a duckbill and running along the swing arm towards the back of the bike. The timing case spigot is now blocked with a screw. What concerns me with the original setup is that if I hadn't stopped to check the bike over half way through that ride it may very well have run out of oil and destroyed the engine.

The quest for perfection!

All went well until about 1500 km when the speedometer, which had been fine up to this point, suddenly decided it would oscillate by about 20 kph at any given speed. A reply from my e-mail to Graham at RE Australia indicated that it would be pointless replacing it as “they all do it”. John of Motociclo's words began to ring in my ears. Maybe I wasn't the right sort of person to own an Enfield. To someone who has spent half a lifetime on Japanese bikes it is almost impossible to believe that a wavering speedometer cannot be fixed – or that a recognised fault is not being addressed during the design or manufacturing stages. I put up with it for several weeks. I don't know why I found it so annoying, but I did! Finally, in sheer frustration I brought a replacement from a company called ‘Hitchcock's Motorcycles’ in England. It is a copy of a Smiths speedometer from the fifties and is calibrated in miles per hour, reasonably accurate and steady as a rock. I was happy again. At the 2500 km mark, just as I starting to enjoy the ‘Enfield experience’ again, the throttle cable broke and the right hand front fork started to leak oil. Replacements were obtained from Motociclo and I was back on the road in no time. The fork seals took about an hour to replace and the throttle cable about ten minutes. At least the Bullet is a simple design and easy to work on.

Contentment at Last!

Around about 5000 km the bike felt ‘run in’. It is now approaching 10,000 km and nothing else has broken or fallen off. I am nearly to the point of not carrying a big bag of spares everywhere I go. I am also really starting to enjoy the bike and look forward to a Monday off that can be spent riding. I regularly cover up to 400 km in a relaxed days ride. The Enfield feels comfortable cruising at an indicated 60 mph with a little in reserve for hills etc. This is what I had hoped for when I purchased the Bullet – a good spread of power and torque to spare. The motor pulls well at all speeds and hills and headwinds are handled effortlessly. And at 75 mpg this is a fairly inexpensive way to get around.

Words of wisdom!

So I offer this advice to anyone thinking of getting an Enfield. Make sure that you will be happy in the slow lane. There were no motorways when it was conceived and neither it nor you will ever be happy trying to keep up with the traffic. Ride it on the roads for which it was designed however, and it becomes a sprightly, easy handling machine. Also be aware that minor things will inevitably go wrong in the early days of ownership. It probably takes the full run in period for everything to be fully sorted. If you have ever owned a European bike this will probably not seem unreasonable. On the other hand if you have only ever known Japanese you will initially probably be a little disappointed. Just remember that you are buying a bike designed in the fifties made in what is essentially a third world country.

Have I got rocks in my head?

Knowing what I know now, would I do this again? Definitely! The Enfield is fun to ride, takes me anywhere I want to go comfortably, is cheap to own and run and now that it is sorted out, seems reliable and robust. Let's face it, a broken cable and a poorly designed engine breather system that was easily fixed and a cockeyed fork seal hardly constitute the end of the world. The speedometer was more of a nuisance than anything else and the crack in the tank probably happened while the bike was being shipped. Look past these minor annoyances and you have a sturdy, well made machine that will last as long as its owner wants it to. Parts are cheap and easy to get and most can be easily replaced by the owner. RE Australia provides good backup and support through its dealer network and seems to be in it for the long haul.

Now about servicing! A mate bought a second hand Kawasaki Vulcan 800cc recently. We were discussing maintenance intervals and he scoffed at the need to service the Enfield every 3000 km. Apparently the Vulcan requires servicing only every 10,000 km. He stopped scoffing however, when he found out that I could do all the maintenance myself for the cost of an eight dollar oil filter and a couple of litres of oil. He has just been quoted around \$1000 (yes a thousand) dollars for the upcoming 40,000 km service that includes a replacement Kevlar belt drive.

Making the Good Better!

Like most blokes I love to tinker (that's part of the reason I love the Enfield) so it wasn't too long before I started to think about getting just a little bit more performance out of the old girl. A K&N filter and short muffler together with a Boyer ignition were duly installed and after a bit of experimentation with the jetting things are looking good. I have no idea how much improvement these modifications have made to actual horsepower numbers but I can report that according to the 'seat of the pants' dynamometer things have hotted up quite a bit. She happily cruises at 60 mph with the throttle barely cracked and steep hills require just a little twist of the wrist to maintain forward momentum. She revs out much more freely and the exhaust has a nice snarly sound but surprisingly, top speed is pretty much the same as before at around 75 mph. Big long stroke singles were never designed for high speed work and a larger carburettor coupled with some port work and an increase in compression would probably be needed to improve on this. I don't think that is going to happen as I much prefer the power and torque bands exactly where they are in the low to middle speed range.



That's me on the left. The other bloke is my mate Swampy who rides an old Kawasaki 750 twin. We were on our way to Alexandra and covered over 1000km that long weekend

What's the Attraction?

I've owned dozens of bikes since I got my licence in 1967 (I'm no spring chicken). I've owned bikes that topped 200 kph and bikes that have trouble reaching the speed limit. My first motorcycle was a 1967 Honda 50cc step through. Like the Enfield, I bought this bike brand new and like the Enfield it

was used both as day-to-day transport and as a means of enjoying myself. Of all the bikes I have owned the Honda 50 and the Bullet stand out to me as the most memorable. Why? Dunno? I used to ride that little Honda everywhere. Just like the Bullet. Perhaps the reason the Bullet is so much fun is because I can more or less use its full capabilities. All of the big Japanese bikes I have ridden have had capabilities way above my ability to exploit them. The Enfield doesn't intimidate. It doesn't require the rider to pretend he or she is something they're not. It's just a good honest ride.

FROM JEFF COLE IN ALICE SPRINGS

Q. I've put heavy duty clutch springs in my 500, 4 speed and the clutch does not work as well as it did before...I used to be able to snick it into neutral whilst stopped at the lights. It's not slipping or creeping forward but it is just not as easy as before.

I've adjusted the clutch on the right hand side, greased the rod and ball, cleaned the plates. For those who have gone to the heavier springs, is this normal?

Mike, (Brisbane)

- My Bullet had 3 heavier and 3 normal springs. I could still snick it into neutral easily and the clutch didn't slip. I do find the clutch cable has to be on the tightish side for smooth changes and to select neutral, even with the Electra.

With the heavier springs you may find the cable is stretching. Perhaps a heavier cable might help. Your local shop might be able to make a cable for you - at least we can get it done in Alice Springs.

- I've had my heavy duty clutch springs for 2 years now and yes it does become noticeably more heavier....All I can say is you will get use to it, if you tinker with carbies, compression and other performance mods you will appreciate them.....
- I finally went for 3 standard and 3 heavy duty springs and that's done the trick. Nice smooth gear changes again.

Q. I need advice as to how to adjust the carby on my bike. The bike is running rich and will not idle. Any tips greatly appreciated.

- Where is it running rich; at moderate speed, high speed, idle? Is the choke on?

Running rich at moderate speed means the needle is too high. First lower the needle one notch by raising the clip one notch and see if this makes a difference. If not try another notch.

Running rich at moderate speed means the main jet is too large so you will need a smaller jet (unlikely).

Running rich at idle means you need to adjust the pilot screw. This is the little screw that goes in at an angle on the L/H side of the 500 carb. After warming up the engine ramp up the idle speed with the idle adjuster, slowly and gently screw the pilot screw in all the way and then slowly screw it out half a turn at a time until the idle reaches its maximum. Now adjust the idle speed. You can now turn the pilot screw in and out 1/4 turn and see if the idle

speed increases. You can also turn the pilot screw in about 1/8 turn after getting the maximum idle speed to slightly richer the mixture.

- The bike runs as if the choke is permanently on (when, in fact, the choke is off). The bike will not idle, even by increasing the adjustment of the idle screw. It runs rich at low, moderate and high revolutions.
- Have you checked the float level?
- Is the air cleaner okay?
- I would check the float valve is not full of crap and not shutting off.....if you leave it standing with the fuel tap on does it flood at all?
- If the carb was flooding it would be through the overflow hose so you might not notice it as it would flow onto the ground or onto the back of the engine.

To access the float and needle valve you need to remove the carb and turn it upside down. Remove the 4 screws holding the bowl on. The float is held in by a pin and the metal tab on the float stops the needle valve from falling out, so if you remove the float make sure you don't lose the valve as it can fall out. You should remove the needle valve and make sure the jet is clean and there is no wear on the pointed end of the valve.

The float level is measured from the flange where the bowl sits to the top of the round float. The distance should be 23-25 mm according to Kevin Mahony.

**DON'T FORGET DIWALI ON NEWELL MUSTER FROM FRI NOV 3RD 2006
AT WEST WYALONG - GET ON YER BIKE AND BE THERE!**

RECOA INC AGM FRI 16TH FEB TO SUN 19TH FEB 2007.