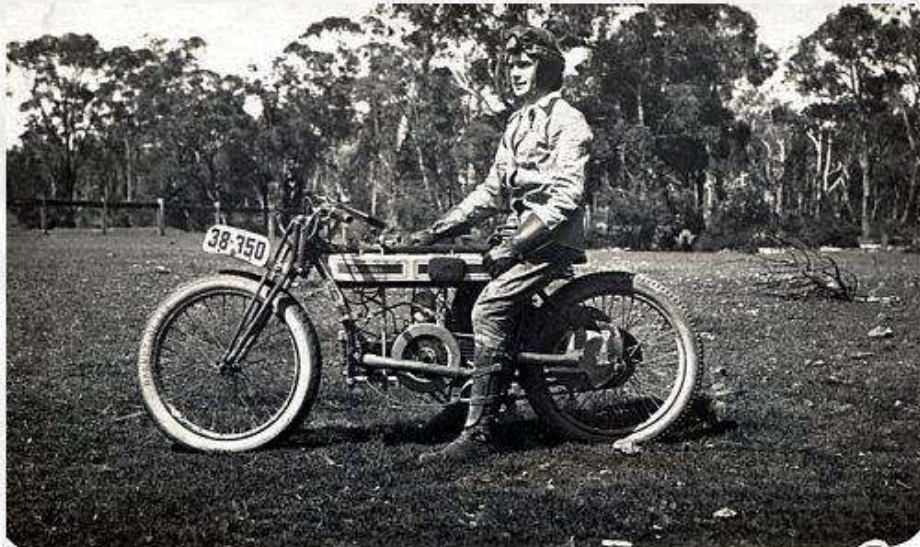


# **Bulletin of Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.**

(Established March 1977)

Affiliated with Royal Australian Historical Society and  
Museum and Galleries Hunter Chapter



Allan on his 3 1/2 HP Douglas he would have ridden at Maitland on December 15 1923.

## **Speedway!**

**Volume 30, Number 4**

**November 2023**

*The Aims of the Society are to  
Discover, Record, Preserve, Advise on and Teach the History of Maitland and the  
District*

## *Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.*

**Cover:** Photograph of Allan Roper was supplied by Jennifer Buffier.

**Telephone :** 0468 438 990

**Email :** maitlandhistorical@gmail.com

**Website :** <http://www.maitlandhistorical.org>

**Location:** 3 Cathedral Street Maitland (opposite Bishop's House)

**Lecture meetings** are held on the first Tuesday of each month from 5:30-7.00pm as a forum for lectures, talks and presentations.

**Committee meetings** are held on the third Tuesday of even months from 5:30-7.00pm.

**General meetings** are held on the third Tuesday of odd months from 5:30-7.00pm.  
Members are invited to attend all monthly meetings.

Meetings are held at the Society's rooms, 3 Cathedral Street Maitland.

Membership fees : \$25 (single) and \$35 (double / family)

**The rooms are open between 11 and 3 on Wednesdays and Saturdays.**

**Patron:** Dr AC Archer AM

### **Current Office Bearers :**

**President :** Kevin Short OAM    **Vice President :** Janece McDonald

**Treasurer :** Jennifer Buffier    **Secretary:** Steve Bone

**Bulletin Editor :** Lisa Thomas    **Consultant Editor :** Kevin Short OAM

**Bulletin contributions** are being sought. Please contact the Society via email  
[maitlandhistorical@gmail.com](mailto:maitlandhistorical@gmail.com)

©Copyright. This publication may be used for private study and research. Please contact the Maitland & District Historical Society Inc. regarding any other use.

While every care is taken in the compilation and editing of the information contained in this bulletin, Maitland and District Historical Society Inc. and its editors do not accept responsibility for the accuracy of this information

## *Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.*

**Editor's Notes:** For this Bulletin Jennifer Buffier has written an important article on the role played by Maitland in the development of the sport of speedway. Even people who know something about Maitland's contribution to speedway will learn something new from Jennifer's article. We begin this Bulletin, however, with two communications from Jenny Aitchison, the Maitland MP and the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads.

\*\*\*\*\*



27 October 2023

Maitland & District Historical Society Inc  
3 Cathedral Street  
Maitland NSW 2320

Dear Mr Short,

NSW Members of Parliament have the opportunity to acknowledge exceptional service to our local community in the form of Community Recognition Statements, which are tabled and then recorded in the Hansard of the Legislative Assembly of the NSW Parliament.

On October 11<sup>th</sup> I recognised the dedicated members of the Maitland & District Historical Society for their 45 years work in preserving and communicating the colonial history and culture of Maitland and its surrounding communities.

Please find attached a copy of my Community Recognition Statement. You can also find this Statement in the Hansard of NSW Parliament at [www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/hansard](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/hansard).

Thank you for your positive contribution to our local community.

If I can be of any assistance with State matters in the future, please contact my office on 4933 1617 or by email [maitland@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:maitland@parliament.nsw.gov.au).

Yours sincerely,

The Hon. Jenny Aitchison MP  
Member for Maitland  
Minister for Regional Transport & Roads  
EO Ref: BM

Office: 2/12 Elgin Street, Maitland NSW 2320 Phone: 02 4933 1617 Email: [maitland@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:maitland@parliament.nsw.gov.au)





**PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT**

**COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENT**

11 October 2023

**MAITLAND AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**— I would like to recognise the dedicated members of the *Maitland & District Historical Society* for their 45 years work in preserving and communicating the colonial history and culture of Maitland and its surrounding communities.

Their dedicated members volunteer their time and skills to both undertake research on topics requested by the public and fundraise for the maintenance of their collection and ongoing research projects.

The Society holds speaker nights once a month, conducts regular historical walks, and publishes a popular quarterly newsletter.

The newsletter contains a diverse array of articles that range from the impact of the 1955 flood on families, the history of the Cabbage Tree Hats, the conservation of The Maitland Jewish Cemetery, and the life of bee keeping, just to name a few.

This work is vital to enhance our understanding of our community's culture, values and of the development of Maitland.

I thank the historical society for their consistent and dedicated work to the community of Maitland.





## **Speedway Began Internationally at Maitland Showground on 15 December 1923**

By Jennifer Buffier



Maitland Speedway circa 1925 Source: Brian Darby's Vintage Speedway website

Many motor-cycle speedway writers question whether Speedway began in Maitland on Friday 15 December 1923. Yet many credit Maitland with this badge of honour. The writers who negate it will quote many races that occurred on various types of tracks such as board, grass or dirt track, in various places both in Australia and overseas. It is acknowledged that there were motorcycle races well before Maitland's Speedway began. They started directly after the motorcycles were coming out of the factories. Many will quote the "Night Racing Carnival" held at Sydney Cricket ground on 1 January 1901 where four competitors raced motor tricycles. Sydney followed with other races on 11 November 1902 and 6 January 1903. In Newcastle from as early as 1905 at various venues they held up to nine or ten races a year. Yet, the main Australian motorcycle body - Motorcycling

Australia credits, in their 2018 handbook on page 7, that motorcycle speedway started at Maitland Showground.....

*“In 1928, the Auto Cycle Council of Australia (ACCA) was formed to represent the interests of motorcycle clubs and State associations at a National level. The ACCA would eventually become Motorcycling Australia, the representative body for motorcycle racing in Australia.*

*But organised motorcycle sport was established many years before the ACCA. Speedway racing was the first form of motorcycle competition to be organised as a professional sport. John Hoskins has been credited with presenting Speedway to the world, when he conducted the first meetings at the West Maitland Showgrounds (NSW) in 1923. His efforts laid the foundation for future Australian successes in World Championships.”*

In early 2023, at the Grand Prix in Finland, Maitland was again credited with starting Speedway. In this collage is a copy of the 15 December 1923 Maitland Showground programme.



<https://www.fimspeedway.com/100-years-of-speedway>

Speedway Grand Prix, Finland Website. Maitland's program featured.

In Maitland when our Speedway started, we had more regularity to our races. We held ours on a regular basis - nearly every week. Maitland only postponed for wet weather or not scheduling because of Public Holidays. In Maitland the prize money was significant enough for a rider to live off his winnings.

Maitland's race on the 15 December 1923 did not follow today's rules. They raced on the trotting track that had mostly grassed over through low use. The lads used their street bikes, they didn't have specialist racing bikes. They had no protective gear. This was developed by the riders in these early years. There were few rules and safety regulations. The sport was in its infancy during these developing years. Maitland was the first to offer sufficient prize money to the riders instead of trophies enabling a good rider to live off his earnings and change his hobby into a profession at the one venue.



Johnnie Hoskins (1892 – 1987)

Maitland's speedway story really starts with the man Johnnie Hoskins, a New Zealander, who accidentally found his way to Maitland. Johnnie had many jobs before coming to Maitland at the age of 30. But this job was to change his life.

Quoting Johnnie's book *"Three times I had gone to Sydney with money and high hopes. Three times Sydney was a heart break."*

*"Ah well it's back to the bush again," I reflected. I walked bag in hand leisurely to the busy central railway station, determined to take the first train out of Sydney.*

*I plonked down the whole of my money before an astonished clerk and said nonchalantly, "Gimme a ticket." as far as this lot will take me."*

*"Strike me pink don't you know where you wanta go?" he said with a very surprised and questioning voice.*

*"I don't know and I don't care so long as I get the hell out of Sydney."*

*"What's wrong with Sydney. She's a bonzor City. But here you are. This will take you to West Maitland and here's two bob change."*

A "Sliding Doors" moment in Johnnie's life and in the story of Speedway.

When Johnnie arrived in Maitland he looked to spend his last few bob on a horse-drawn cab instructing him to take him to a hotel that was not too expensive. While in the cab there was a shout from the pavement. Two old friends from Darwin hailed him down. They jumped into the cab. Johnnie told them his story. The friends fixed up Johnnie's cab and arranged a hotel. All three went to the hotel's bar and there they met up with Tim Healy of the "Newcastle Sun" and Tom Ryan of the "Herald". A plot was developed by these two regarding the current Secretary of the Hunter River Agricultural and Horticultural Society and Johnnie got caught up in it. The current Secretary quit on the spot and then Johnnie got his job. The show committee needed an organizer, a secretary, a press agent all in one, and Johnnie fitted the bill.

Johnnie was appointed Secretary of West Maitland Agricultural Society in 1922. Membership of the organisation had dwindled to about 300 members. Johnnie's job was to revive it.

He tried all manner of attractions such as boxing shows, rodeos and cycling, but nothing seemed to appeal to the public to bring back the numbers. The Maitland Council was connected to electric power in 1922. Businesses and the rich were the first to be connected. Poles and wires had to be installed for all the connections. The showground became connected to "the electric" in February 1922. From this point Johnnie was quick to promote this new utility. Many would have to wait some time for the power to make its way into their homes. As it was a novelty to the many, Johnnie utilised this in his promotions of the showground activities. He advertised all the events as being under electric light.

But still the membership to the Agricultural Society failed to grow in any significant way.

He bought a motor bike himself and he proposed motor-cycle sports at the showground. The idea was turned down flat by the Committee. But he persevered.



As a last chance, he risked his job by getting seven of the lads and their bikes to meet for a spin one Sunday morning. On this Sabbath all was calm and peaceful. Church bells were calling the faithful to worship, when suddenly the serenity of the scene was shattered as these twenty motorcycles roared down the main street of Maitland. They headed to the sacred Show Ground trotting track. They did not know the hullabaloo they were causing. The noise brought Committee men out of their beds "intent on scalping or hanging, or at least prosecuting, the whole lot of them". Soon a crowd assembled and the Committee looked on in amazement at the scene. Seeing the crowd that had assembled, the Committee realised that there was money in this and finally gave Johnnie his opportunity.

This is the only time Johnnie raced with the lads on his pre-First World War belt-driven Triumph. A rider named Bill Crampton came past Johnnie so fast and dangerously close on a Norton scaring him. Johnnie vowed to never again race with them.

On Saturday 17 November 1923 an Electric Light Carnival at Maitland show ground trialled an exhibition of motor cyclists from Newcastle.

Quoting Johnnie *"And so, a tryout was held. Ordinary touring machines – some of them with lamps on - were brought to the track. The riders merely rolled up their sleeves, spat on their hands, and sallied forth with their ordinary dungaree outfits – there were no leather suits or crash helmets in those days."*

Hoskins decided then, that dirt track racing should form one of the features of his next show. Johnnie's idea was not new. There had been motorcycle racing in some form from the day bikes first left the factory, but racing on small cinder tracks was indeed a novelty, and under the new electric lighting installed at the show ground, it was pioneering for Maitland.

The race was a charity event to raise money for the local orphanages. Proceeds went to the Morpeth Boys' Home and Campbell's Hill Orphanage. No officials, attendants or fees of any kind were paid. The event was held under electric light as power had been connected to the showground in February of the same year. Motorcycle events were the

star of the program that night, but they shared the spotlight with other events.

In the following advertisement you can see the various events advertised for the 15 December 1923, but the advertisement following the programme for the 22 December has only motor cycling and cycling events. Johnnie or the show committee must have been confident that the bike racing would take off because at the bottom of the second advertisement they are advertising the next carnival for January 5<sup>th</sup>, allowing for a break for the Christmas/ New Year holiday period.

**HELP**  
ORPHANAGES AND AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION.

**Sensational Motor Cycle and Cycle Racing**  
(ENTRIES CLOSE TO-DAY)  
**MAITLAND SHOW GROUND, NEXT SATURDAY NIGHT, 15th DEC.**

— ALSO —

TROTTING—Pace, Style and Conformation. Horses no better record than 3 minutes, 2.46, and better than 2.40, three laps. 3/- each race.  
ENTRIES CLOSE NEXT WEDNESDAY.  
ARITHMETIC RACE ON HORSE, Lady to add sum, 30/-.  
WRESTLING ON HORSEBACK, 30/-.  
GOAT AND CART RACE, £1, second 5/- from prize.  
LAST APPEARANCE OF TOM HANLEY'S FAMOUS BUCKING HORSES,  
BULLOCKS and DONKEYS, ridden by Australia's Greatest Horsemen,  
Hanley, Weir, and McPhie. THE WONDER PONY TIBBY WILL  
BE THERE FOR THE BOYS.

ADMISSION 1/6, CHILDREN 6d; GRANDSTAND 1/-, CHILDREN 6d.  
9323 Members presenting 1924 Badges Free. JOHN S. JORKINS, Secretary.

**Sensational Cycling and Motor Cycle Racing.**  
**MAITLAND SHOWGROUND, BACK SATURDAY NIGHT, DEC. 22.**

IMPORTED AMERICAN CHAMPIONS.

SEE JEAN JAEGER (U.S.A.),  
YOUNG FRENCH CHAMPION, COMPETING AGAINST AUSTRALIA'S BEST  
SEE "JUMBO" WELLS (N.Z.),  
CHAMPION OF N.Z. AND AUSTRALIA.  
SEE JERRY HALPIN (N.S.W.),  
AUSTRALIA'S LAST OLYMPIC GAMES REPRESENTATIVE.

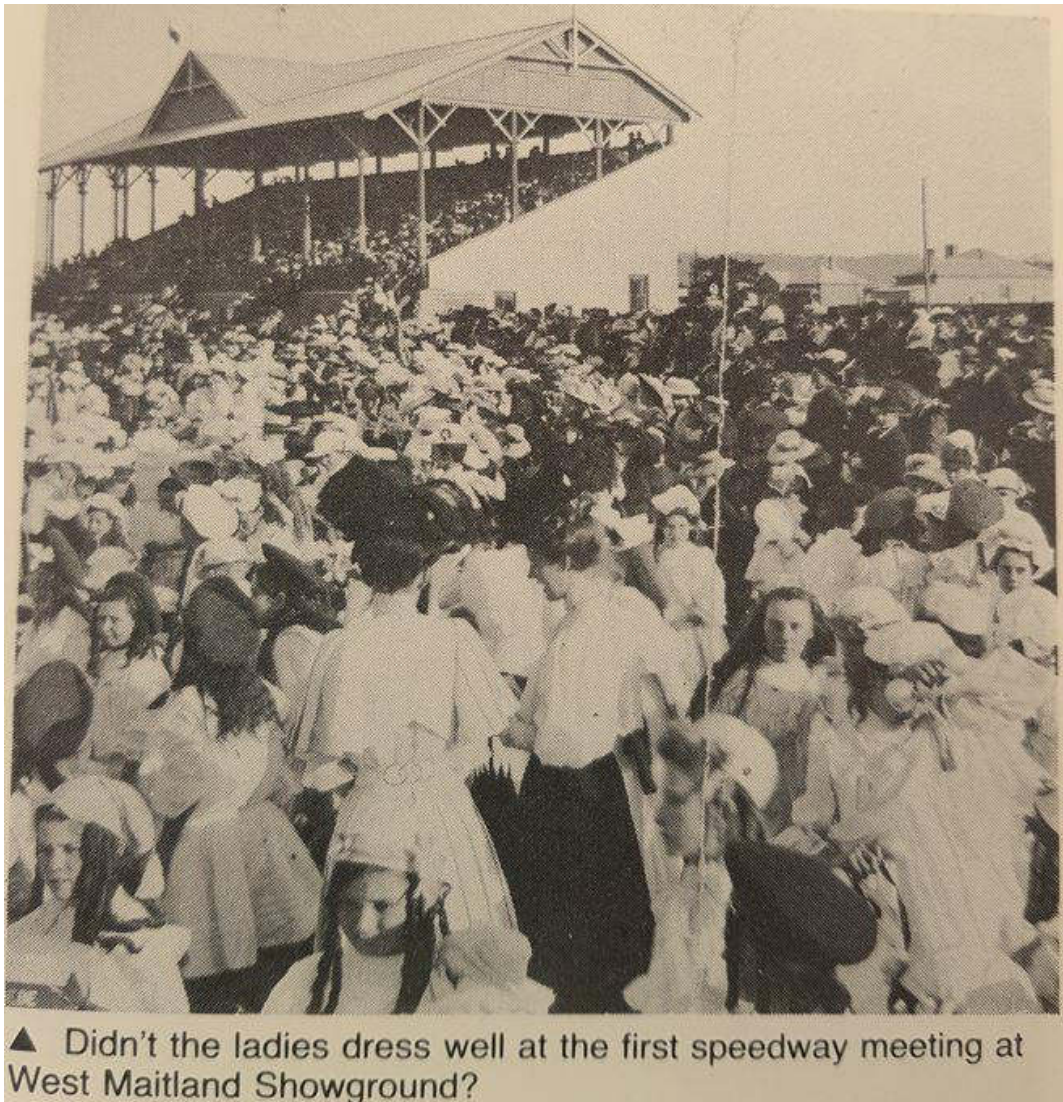
**BIG AMATEUR AND PROF. CYCLE RACES. THRILLING MOTOR CYCLE  
RACES. INTERESTING NOVELTY EVENTS. OVER 30 EVENTS.**  
CAMPBELL & DU PROOQ (Sydney), Promoters.  
W. DART, Manager.

**NEXT CARNIVAL, JANUARY 5.** 7067

Source: Trove, The Maitland Daily Mercury 8 December 1923, page 2

The 15 December 1923 Programme was large, running late into the night. Johnnie had attracted every well-known name in the State of New South Wales. The riders had heard Maitland was to pay real money instead of trophies. They also charged no entry fee.

The Kurri Kurri Band was in attendance. It was the last appearance of Tom Hanley's buckjumpers. Billy cart races and wrestling on horseback also featured. Then came the sporting events; the 100-yard race, the high jump and the pole vaulting. This was followed by two trotting events all before the bikes hit the same track.



Source: Speedway Walkabout by Johnnie Hoskins

Then the moment many were waiting for – 4 heats of motorcycle racing.



The starter, big Jim Cameron, rammed a charge of powder and a wad of paper into his huge muzzle-loading starting gun. It was a two-mile handicap of six riders, all tensed up and impatient to start.



It is retold that Jim Cameron made the following announcement before firing the starting gun. "Ladies and gentleman, this is the beginning of Speedway, motor bike racing under lights."

"BANG" went the gun, and they were off. When they got to the first bend, they were nearly all off. The inside footrests dug into the green turf and over went the riders. The crowds gasped. But the riders remounted and carried on.

In this inaugural race the track was grassed over, and the riders were not allowed to take their foot or feet from the footrest. The footrests on most models were two feet by four inch boards, like miniature car running boards of the period. This was a rule that was later to change.



J. C. CAMERON  
PRICE 3d. 438 HIGH STREET,  
WEST MAITLAND.  
**PROGRAMME,**  
AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION & ORPHANAGES.

**ELECTRIC LIGHT SPORTS**  
Maitland Show Ground,  
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15th, 1923.

THE KURRI KURRI TOWN BAND IN ATTENDANCE.  
Last Appearance of Tom Hanley's Famous  
Buckjumpers.

BULLY CART RACE. 15/2. 1st 5/- 2nd.

UPON THE NEEDLE RACE. 15/2. 1st 10/- 2nd.

WRESTLING ON HORSEBACK. 15/2. 1st 10/- 2nd.

<b>100 YARDS RACE.</b>	
W. Sullivan.	H. Gibson.
A. Robertson.	H. Wilkinson.
M. Finney.	A. Wood.
K. Thomas.	K. Sutherland.
H. Toohay.	A. Cunningham.
J. Taylor.	A. Hossman.
E. Jensen.	W. Wells.
C. Hill.	K. McMahon.
H. Parker.	

1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... Time .....

**HIGH JUMP.**

E. Jensen.	K. Thomas.
H. Parker.	C. Hughes.
W. Sullivan.	K. McMahon.
J. O'Hearn.	H. Gibson.

1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... Time .....

**POLE VAULT.**

W. Sullivan.	H. Parker.
M. Finney.	H. Gibson.
E. Jensen.	W. Wells.
A. Robertson.	H. Wilkinson.

1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... Time .....

**TROTTING, Pace, Style and Conformation; Horses with no better record than 3 Minutes.**

R. Stacey's "Hoon Me"  
S. Slade's "Shorick Holmes"  
G. Ferraro's "Jassey Main."  
T. Duncan's "Miss Corbine."

1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... Time .....

**TROTTING, Pace, Style and Conformation; Horses no better record than 3:40.**

Geo. Lawler's "First Marble"  
Ben Edge's "Rast Maitland"  
S. Slade's "Silent Lad."  
Jack Hanlon's "Homeleigh Girl"

1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... Time .....

**MOTOR CYCLE RACE, 2 Miles.**

**FIRST HEAT.**

1. C. Datson (7/9 H.D.)	Scratch.
59. W. Crampton (3 1/2 Norton)	10 sec.
2. H. Phillips (7/9 H.D.)	15 sec.
13. H. Russell (8 Indian)	20 sec.
14. W. Cogan (3 1/2 Douglas)	25 sec.
25. S. Pinfold (2 1/2 Douglas)	45 sec.

1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... Time .....

**SECOND HEAT.**

2. P. Webb (7/9 H.D.)	Scratch.
4. A. Schaeffer (8 J.A.P.)	15 sec.
9. G. Hughes (7/9 H.D.)	18 sec.
14. W. Brown (8 Indian)	20 sec.
15. P. Wells (7/9 H.D.)	25 sec.

1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... Time .....

**THIRD HEAT.**

69. L. Peterson (6 Douglas)	5 sec.
2. P. Harwood (7/9 Indian)	15 sec.
19. W. Bell (7/9 E.X.)	20 sec.
16. M. Spohr (7/9 H.D.)	22 sec.
4. L. Upfold (3 1/4 Norton)	30 sec.

1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... Time .....

**FOURTH HEAT.**

50. W. Thomas (10 H.D.)	5 sec.
5. J. Phillips (10 H.D.)	15 sec.
13. H. Slade (7/9 H.D.)	20 sec.
47. A. Roper (3 1/4 Douglas)	25 sec.
20. W. Hammond (2 1/4 Douglas)	30 sec.

1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... Time .....

Programme from Jim Cameron Collection

In the first heat was Charlie Datson, William (Bill) Crampton, H Phillips, B Russell, W Cogan and S Pinfold. Heat 1 was over two miles. The placings were 1<sup>st</sup> Bill Crampton on a 3 1/2 HP Norton by 10 seconds, 2<sup>nd</sup> Charlie Datson on a Harley 7/9 HP by 45 seconds, and 3<sup>rd</sup> S Pinfold on a 2 3/4 HP Douglas.

Heat 2 was P Webb (7/9 H D), A Schaeffer (8 J.A.P.), G Hughes (7/9 H D), W Brown (8 Indian) and P Wells (7/9 H D).

Heat 3 was L Peterson (6 Douglas), F Harwood (7/9 Indian), W Bell (7/9 E.X.), M Spohr (7/9 H D) and L Upfold (3 1/4 Norton).

The 4<sup>th</sup> heat was W Thomas (10 H.D.), J Phillips (10 H.D.), H Slade (7/9 H.D.), Allan Roper (3 1/4 Douglas) and W Hammond (2 1/4 Douglas).

## *Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.*

*"At the end of the meeting riders wheeled their mounts, if they were still wheelable, to the shelter of the cattle pens and horse boxes, too exhausted to care.*

*There were no casualties. We had no Doctor there anyway. We had no insurance, we paid no Officials, attendants, rent, or fees of any kind.*

*We never even had a safety fence, apart from a top rail and a couple of strands of plain wire underneath.*

*We paid no travelling expenses to riders. If they asked for anything so unreasonable their names were scratched off the list.*

*This was a Promotor's Paradise .... We made money. We tried again next week and every week through the summer."* Johnnie Hoskins, Speedway Walkabout



Winner of the first Heat, Bill Crampton



DECEMBER 17, 1923.

**ELECTRIC LIGHT SPORTS****SUCCESSFUL GATHERING.****MOTOR CYCLE RACING.**

The weather conditions on Saturday were such as to make outdoor amusement in the evening the most desirable. The day was an oppressive one, the thermometer reaching its highest mark of the season, and people were glad to get out at night. Consequently it was not surprising to find a large attendance at the electric light sports on the Show Ground. These were promoted by the Hunter River Agricultural and Horticultural Association and the proceeds are to be equally divided amongst that body, the Morpeth Boys' Home, and the Campbell's Hill Orphanage.

The programme was an excellent one, the only fault being that it was too long. There was some delay in starting, and it was after 11.30 before the sports concluded. This was due chiefly to the length of the programme. The events were carried through without delay. The Kurri Kurri Band under Bandmaster R. Cox provided music during the evening.

For the first time motor cycle racing was introduced into the programme and the innovation proved most successful. In an exhibition ride at the last sports several riders gave the track a good test and they then expressed themselves satisfied with it. They also stated that it was better than several other tracks that have been used for this kind of sport on a number of occasions. The manner in which Saturday night's events passed off showed that the Show Ground is safe for motor cycle racing and the times registered were excellent. There were two handicaps and these, with the heats and finals, provided eleven races. The entry was a good one. The sport was interesting and certainly thrilling, this being evidenced from the fact that most of the spectators remained till the finish, despite the lateness of the hour. The riders handled their machines skilfully. There was every indication of the sport becoming most popular, and will be looked forward to by many in future programmes. The events were controlled by officials of the Hamilton Motor Cycle Club and they discharged their duties capably. Owing to the hot and dry weather experienced of late, the track was watered and this kept the dust down a good deal.

The cycling and athletic events also provided keen and interesting sport. The athletes performed well under the electric light. The finishes in the bicycle handicaps were most exciting, all being very close and reflecting credit on the handicapper. The Maitland District Bi-

cycle Club had charge of the cycling and the Maitland Amateur Athletic Club of the athletic events. Officials of the Hunter River Agricultural and Horticultural Association controlled the horse events. The Government restrictions on trotting has had the effect of considerably reducing the fields.

The cycling stewards held inquiries into two falls that occurred. T. Guest was censured for crossing in connection with the fall of B. Neale in the final of the three-quarters of a mile handicap. C. Norris fell after the finish of the nine laps race, but the stewards, after enquiry, decided not to take any action. There were two minor mishaps in the motor races. L. Upfold injured his ankle in the third heat of the two miles race and in the third heat of the four miles race C. Datson fell while taking one of the turns at a high rate of speed but escaped injury.

The events resulted as follows:—  
**BILLY CART RACE.**—C. Mosman's Sweet Ann, 1; H. Carey's Bill, 2.

**THREADING THE NEEDLE RACE.**—G. Hain, 1; R. Comerford, 2.

**100 YARDS HANDICAP** (Maitland Amateur Athletic Club).—First heat: W. Sullivan, 8yds, 1; E. Jensen, 6yds, 2; A. Wood, 1yd., 3. Won by two yards. Second heat: A. Robertson, 3½yds, 1; H. Gibson, 9yds, 2; H. Parker, 3yds, 3. Won by half a yard. Final: W. Sullivan, 1; E. Jensen, 2; H. Gibson, 3. Won by a yard.

**HIGH JUMP.**—C. Hughes (al. 5ft. 5in., 1; H. Parker (al. 5in.), 5ft. 7in., 2.

**Pole Vault.**—C. Hughes (al. 1ft. 4in.), 10ft. 4in., 1; M. Finney (al. 1ft. 4in.), 9ft. 10in., 2.

**TROTTING** (Judged on pace, style and conformation, for horses with no better record than 3 minutes).—S. Shinde's Sherlock Holmes, 1; G. Perrau's Fancy Main, 2; T. Duncan's Miss Corbine also started.

**TROT** (for horses with better record than 2min. 40secs).—George Lawler's First Marble, 1; Jack Haulan's Homeleigh Girl, 2. B. Edge's East Maitland also started.

**BICYCLE RACE**, three-quarters of a mile.—First heat: G. Hamilton, 100yds, 1; A. McKellar, 80yds, 2; J. Walker, 70yds, 3. Won by a length, 1 wheel between second and third. Time, 1min. 29secs. Second heat: L. Moroney, 85yds, 1; A. Gilbert, 50yds, 2; L. Gibson, 25yds, 3. Won by ¼ length, the same between second and third. Time, 1min. 40secs. Third heat: T. Guest, 140yds, 1; J. James, 120yds, 2; B. Neale, 90yds, 3. Won by half a length, with five other riders within two yards of the winner. Time, 1min. 42½secs. Final: Gilbert, 1; Walker, 2; Hamilton, 3. Moroney, in a good position, fell in the last lap. The finish was close. Time, 1min. 55secs.

**LAP RACE**, nine laps.—A. Gibson,

1; C. Norris, 2; W. Penman, 3; P. Baus, 4. Lap prizes were won by C. Fullford, J. Walker, A. Gilbert (two), P. Baus (three), and C. Norris. Won by a foot, the same between second and third. Time, 9min. 37secs. The four placed riders are from Cammeroon.

**MOTOR CYCLE RACE**, 2 miles.—First heat: W. Crampton (¾ Norton), 10secs, 1; C. Datson (7/9 H.D.) scratch, 2; S. Pinfold (2½ Douglas), 45secs, 3. Five started. Won by 4 lengths. Time, 3min. 37secs. Second heat: P. Webb (7/9 H.D.), scr, 1; A. Schaefer (8 J.A.P.), 15secs, 2; F. Wells (7/9 H.D.), 25secs, 3. Only starters. Won by a quarter of a lap. Time, 3min. Third heat: W. Bell (7/9 H.D.), 20secs, 1; L. Peterson (6 Douglas), 5secs, 2. Four started. P. Harwood struck a post. Won by half a lap. Time, 3min. 17½secs. Fourth heat: W. Thomas (10 H.D.), 5secs, 1; J. Phillips (10 H.D.), 15secs, 2; W. Hammond (2½ Douglas), 30secs, 3. Only starters. Won by 130 yards. Time, 3min. 20secs. Fifth heat: D. Dunlop (¾ Douglas), 25secs, 1; T. Sharp (4/5 H.D.), 10secs, 2; T. Hammerston (8 Indian), 15secs, 3. Only starters. Won by 120 yards. Time, 3min. 28secs. Final: Bell, 1; Crampton, 2; Dunlop, 3. Time, 3min. 2½secs. Bell's machine has been in use 9 years and he is one of the oldest riders in the Newcastle district.

**MOTOR CYCLE RACE**, four miles.—First heat: T. Sharp (4/5 H.D.), 1; P. Webb (7/9 H.D.), 2; T. Hammerston (8 Indian), 3. Only starters. Won easily. Time, 6min. 37secs. Second heat: L. Peterson (6 Douglas), 1; F. Wells (7/9 H.D.), 2; A. Schaefer (8 J.A.P.), 3. Only starters. Won easily. Time, 6min. 44½secs. Third heat: W. Bell (7/9 H.D.), 1; D. Dunlop (¾ Douglas), 2. Five starters. Won by a lap. Time, 6min. 28secs. Fourth heat: S. Pinfold (2½ Douglas), 1; W. Crampton (¾ Norton), 2; W. Cogan (3½ Douglas), 3. Only starters. Pinfold won by more than a lap. Time, 6min. 25secs. Final: Pinfold, 1; Peterson, 2; Crampton, 3. Time, 6min. 21½secs. Pinfold's performance on the Douglas was a feature of the evening. He set a great pace and was never headed.

**FRACTURED SPINE.****DEATH FOLLOWED MOTOR ACCIDENT.**

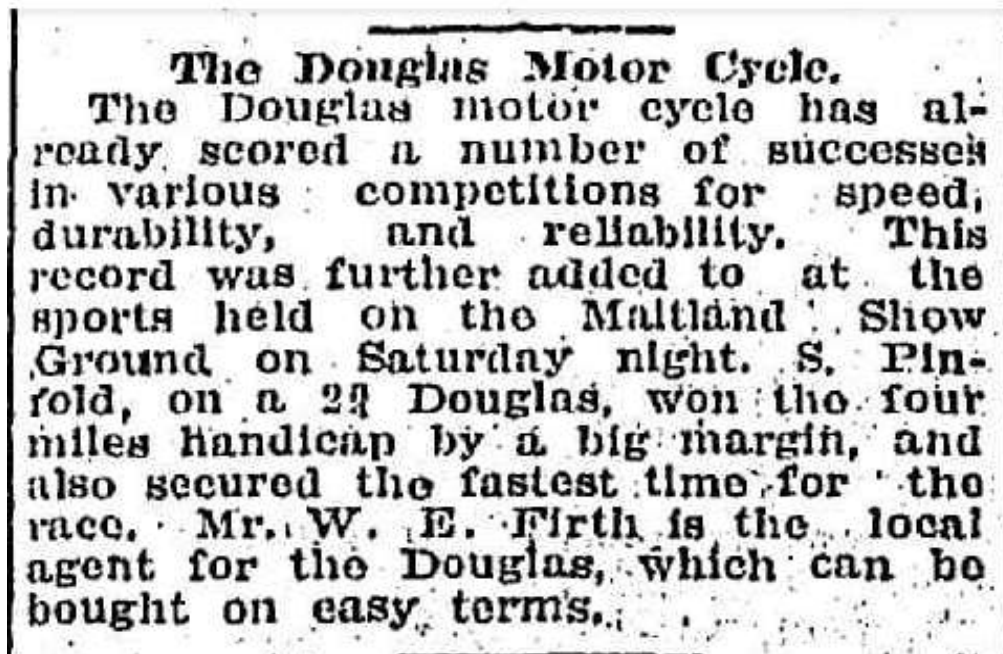
While Dr. D. O'Hara and his wife of Barcaldine (Q.) were motoring along the Aramac road a tyre came off one of the wheels. The car skidded and turned over on its side.

The doctor escaped, but his wife was pinned under the wind screen. The doctor managed to lift the car, and both were afterwards removed to the hospital. Mrs. O'Hara was found, however, to have a fractured spine, and she died a few hours later.

The Mercury reported in the following week that the night was a big success although there were complaints of it running too late into the night. The bikes never had to share the programme again with other events eliminating this late night problem.

The Monday following the inaugural race the Maitland Daily Mercury also contained the following article. The Douglas Cycle was quick to take advantage of the event.

Mercury (NSW : 1894 - 1939) / Mon 17 Dec 1923 / Page 4



Source: Trove, The Maitland Daily Mercury Monday 17 December 1923

The motor-cycle racing proved popular and continued almost weekly into April 1924, never having to share the program. They did not race in the Christmas period or in wet weather.

Johnnie only stayed in Maitland for two seasons before his entrepreneurial nature led him further afield. By means of these exhibitions of speed, Maitland Agricultural Society was once more on the map after Johnnie's three years as Secretary the membership had grown from 300 to 1300. Maitland changed Johnnie's life. He not only started his speedway



promotor career, he met his wife Audrey, they married at St Pauls Anglican Church. Two children soon followed.

Johnnie first moved to Newcastle and took over Newcastle Speedway. There he held a World Championship putting up £750, an unheard of amount in the Twenties. The World Championship was an enormous success attracting huge crowds. Later he went to Sydney taking his Speedway show to Sydney's Royal Showground. A very wet Sydney summer nearly sent Hoskins broke, so he took the show on the road to Perth, where one good season made him wealthy again. He and his riders decided to take the show to England, as the word had spread about this exciting sport. On 14 April 1928, Johnnie Hoskins, thirteen Australian riders and their motorcycles sailed from Perth on the passenger ship, *Oronsay*, to introduce Speedway solo motorcycle racing to England.

The first meetings in England were at the Crystal Palace at Easter. In Australia they had called it Speedway in England they called it "Dirt Track Racing". The first race in England was in the rain and the Australian riders did not do well. In Australia we had cancelled our events when it rained. The palace riders had delivered a severe blow to the Australian rider's pride. In England, if you didn't race in the rain then you didn't race.

Johnnie went on to manage Wembley Speedway and assisted in the formulation of the rules used by the Auto Cycle Union in England. He remained involved in the sport for the rest of his life. He died in England in April 1987 at Kent. He is buried at St Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Reculver, City of Canterbury. Kent, together with his wife Audrey.

### **The Developments in Speedway at Maitland.**

Maitland's Speedway began in 1923, before the formation of the Auto Cycle Council of Australia (ACCA), which was formed in 1928. This organisation became Motorcycling Australia (MA). This is the representative body for motorcycle racing in Australia today. Maitland's early involvement helped develop the rules of the sport. In the inaugural

race, on the 15 December 1923, the riders were not allowed to put their left foot on the ground - they rode with both feet on the footrests. This made it impossible for the riders to broadside their bikes around corners. This soon changed.

At Maitland, the riders quickly developed various forms of foot protection.



A home-made steel shoe

A home-made steel shoe was developed that fitted onto the sole of the left boot, looping over the top of the shoe. Some riders who worked at the BHP would use the worn-out coal shovels to fashion the protection on the left boot.



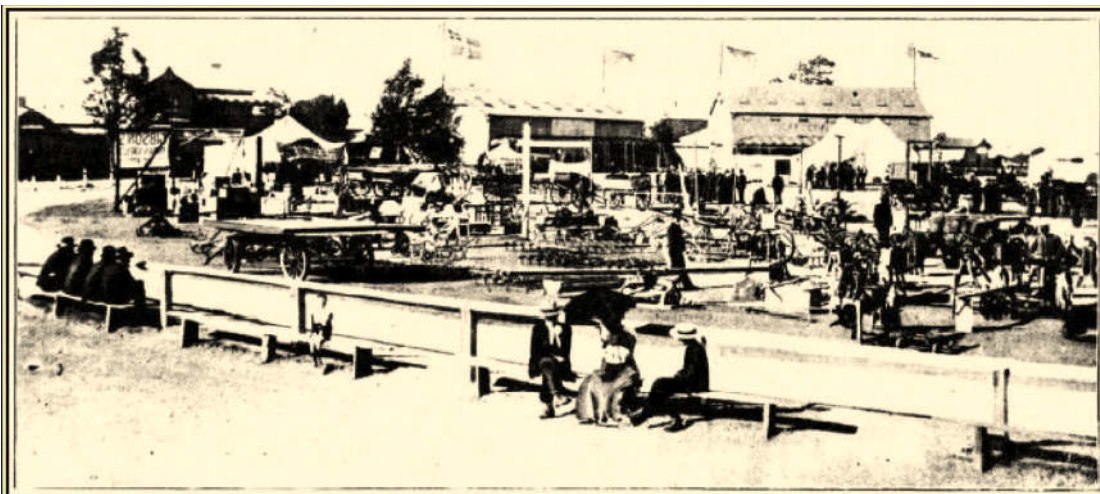
A coal shovel

Being a relatively new sport, it began with no protective helmets, gloves, or goggles, and the riders wore dungarees. This later changed to leather suits and various forms of crash helmets.



Leather helmet

In February 1925 the first serious accident occurred when a young rider, George Kirkwood, damaged his leg when he ran into a post. His leg was later amputated. In these initial races the perimeter fence provided a barrier only between the spectators and riders, it was not protective. It was a post with a top wooden rail, with two strands of wire underneath the top rail.



**Figure 41.** The Hunter River Agricultural Association Show, West Maitland, "General View of the Machinery Section". (Source: *The Sydney Mail*, 2 May 1906, p.1154)

This picture shows the original fence style at the first season races.

## *Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.*

As a result of George Kirkwood's and Jack McLean's accidents, the fence was changed to replace the wire strands with wooden rails, resulting in a fence with three horizontal boards.



A picture of the track during the 1935 Maitland Centenary Celebrations. Note the location of the spectators. The three-rail fence still offers little protection to the spectators. From Maitland & District Historical Society Inc Collection.

In later years the gaps between these three rails were filled in, to create a solid fence.



Ern Adlam (inside) on a Norton and Keith Ratten (outside) on a J.A.P. 8-80 at Maitland Speedway c.1952

From Maitland & District Historical Society Inc Collection.



The initial race in December was held on a cinder trotting track that had grassed over. It was not until about half-way through the first season that the riders had worn the grass away. Big Jim Cameron recognised that this track was not suitable for bike racing. Before the first season started, he convinced the committee to allocate funds to install a new cinder track. This was installed between the first and second season in 1924. The track was also widened.

The first machines were road bikes, just what the rider happened to own at the time. Johnnie Hoskins describes the bikes – "They were ridden in off the street, lamps, mudguards and anything else removable was removed and off they went. The first lesson in development of a special machine came quickly. Early bikes had footboards. Racing around the left-hand turn, the left footboard dug in and tipped the rider off. Left footboards were torn off and thrown away forever." The Americans showed the Aussie how to "broadside" or do the "American Skid"

There was no insurance in the early days. To quote Johnnie Hoskins "There wasn't a company that would handle the proposition. The track was known locally as "Lunatics Paradise", and the pioneer boys were certainly a wild, dare-devil crew."

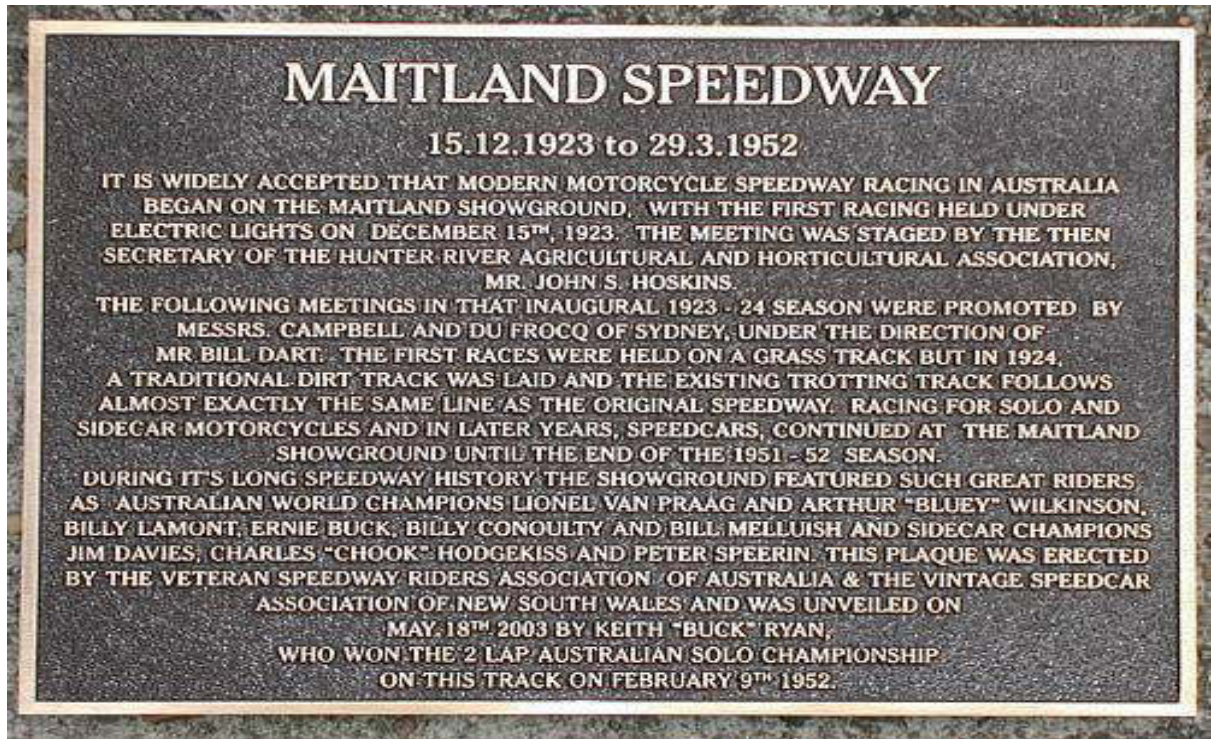
Instead of insurance the new Speedway would run benefit shows where part of the proceeds supported the injured riders. In the case of George Kirkwood, who had his leg amputated, the community also became involved and raised over £203 through euchre party and dances.

### **Conclusions**

Nigel Bird wrote "The carnivals staged at the ground played a pivotal role in the evolution of speedway in Australia. Riders had some continuity of racing at one track, something which had never occurred in Australia previously. In the period from 15 December 1923 to 26 April 1924, motorcycles raced on 15 occasions on the Maitland Showground."

Maitland, through Johnnie Hoskins efforts, was the first to have regular dirt track races on the same track, which offered riders prize money, allowing riders to become professional riders. Other races came before Maitland, but they never continued into regular race meetings. Johnnie was the

catalyst in the development of Motorcycle Speedway, taking it to the world stage.



## References

### Websites

1. <http://www.speedwayandroadracehistory.com/maitland-showground-speedway.html>
2. <https://www.motorcyclealliance.com.au/australian-motorcycle-tribes-a-brief-and-entirely-imprecise-history/>
3. <https://www.ma.org.au/about-ma-2/history/>
4. [https://www.historicspeedway.co.nz/Start%20of%20speedway%20\(world\).htm](https://www.historicspeedway.co.nz/Start%20of%20speedway%20(world).htm)
5. <http://www.newcastlespeedwayhistory.co.uk/Dirt%20Track%20Racing.htm>
6. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zf\\_D9G86e3k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zf_D9G86e3k)
7. <https://www.pressreader.com/australia-old-bike-australasia/20231109/282991109599733>
8. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnnie\\_Hoskins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnnie_Hoskins)
9. <https://www.mcnews.com.au/on-this-day-in-1923-motorcycle-speedway-was-born-right-here-in-australia/>
10. <http://www.defunctspeedway.co.uk/Origins%20of%20Motorcycle%20Racing.htm>
11. <http://www.vintagespeedway.com/Maitland.html>

### Books etc

2018 Manual of Motorcycle Sport  
Speedway Walkabout by Johnnie Hoskins  
Roarin' Round the Speedways by Johnnie S Hoskins  
The Maitland Daily Mercury on Trove, various dates