

Coastal Motor Cycle Club WA (Inc 1919)

The Coastal Motor Cycle Club was formed after a meeting of 'Fremantle & Districts Motor Cyclists' in Fremantle at the Commercial Hotel held on the 3rd of November 1919. The reason for the meeting was to form a club absolutely separate from Western Australian Motor Cycle Club. We believe that the then newly constituted club, Coastal, is now the oldest motorcycle club operating in Australia today, probably in the world. At the seventy fifth anniversary of the club, held at the Golden Nugget Room at Gloucester Park Raceway in 1994, speakers from the earliest era recounted the club's activities.

Members created records never to be repeated, like the first motorcycle to do the trip from Fremantle to Mandurah and there were no roads in the 1920's, some sleepers in the sand through Spearwood and then little else. A front axle was broken on the way down but other than that there was little else to report on the trip. One wonders how they managed the remainder of the return journey and how they overcame the problem of the broken front axle bolt. Probably called into Kim Britton's motor cycle shop for a spare at Rockingham; hang on, Rockingham wasn't even there! And then a family of seven, mum, dad and all five kids dressed in their Sunday best off to a Club run mounted in/on a sidecar. The 'chair' and other road necessities were removed on arrival, dad donned his leathers and probably raced the streets, circuit, airstrip, scramble, hill climb, trials or point to point and then, in reverse procedure, gathered up mum and the kids and got the family home for Sunday dinner.

Many State and National champions have emerged from Coastal and one could bore the reader with the many achievements that are noted in Club records, but a club is not only about champions. Many a spirited youth learnt life's skills at Coastal, mate-ships that would last generations and marriages amongst club member's families were common. During the mid 1900's Geoff Duke, a British world champion road racer was sponsored by Coastal to race against the State's best road racers. This he did at a local air strip and only one local rider managed to stay on the same lap as Geoff at the finish of each race he contested. From this huge gamble Coastal raised enough money to purchase land freehold at Mt Helena for our own scramble/moto-x track. In the Club's early days Coastal ran events by a ballot at Club meetings, a show of hands indicated the type of competition and the racing venue. From the sixties the club operated mainly as a scramble/moto-x club and still does. It is easy to forget that the club catered for all motor cycling interests and can still do so. In the seventies a 'working bee' would then turn up on the previous day and set to with shovels, picks and axes and usually a Land Rover dragging a length of railway line to fashion a track for the following days racing. Locations for club events included today's canals at Mandurah, Sutton's Paddocks, Hilton Park, Lake Clifton, Mt Helena and Ten Mile Well at Spearwood.

These Club days had a strong family commitment and it was common for Coastal to have their 'camp' hosting some 50 or more members the night before an event. On some club runs (not an open event) over 170 Club riders of all ages and sex would contest various events. One wonders if these numbers will ever be repeated.

Late last century Coastal moved from its 'squat' at Mayor Road, Spearwood which the Club used as its headquarters for some 15 years to our current location at Henderson. The Mayor Road circuit holds special memories for most of today's life members. The Club purchased machinery and installed a 24hp diesel driven bore to reticulate 2.2km of track; the 3" water pipe was re-used at our present location. We had a variety of tractors and several members regularly donated the use of modern loaders. Soil was imported from a variety of locations to improve the Spearwood red sand. The circuit was always well prepared to suit even the novice rider. By lunch time the track got very rough and claimed even the best! We had a soils engineer visit the track to assess the soil and advise us how to consolidate the surface. When he found out that the circuit had been graded immediately prior to the previous days racing he hopped back in his vehicle shaking his head in disbelief and left without further comment!

Racing at Coastal is still just as hard. An American rider, writing for ADB, after contesting the first Western Classic at the new track wrote about Coastal "It is a sand circuit, but the sand is different to anything that I've ridden, it sort of swallows you." Jason Marshall, a local rider of that time, beat the American and Australia's best on that day.

Our relocation to Henderson and the development of the existing circuit and clubrooms was all done off our own bat. The property at Mt Helena was sold and Coastal Park was developed without going into debt. The only work to be subcontracted was the club-room's concrete slab; the rest was completed at cost or by volunteer labour by club members. A lot of materials and services were donated for the exchange of Kimberly currency, the odd carton or two.

Many riders comment that our facilities today are by far the best in Australia. Not too many riders praise the track; good luck is not enough to win in hot company. Winning requires a top performance and the spectators will always see an honest winner at Coastal Park.

Probably the biggest problem facing any sport today is the changing attitudes as to the commitment and effort by members that are required to keep a club like Coastal alive. Increasing insurance and administrative costs plus risks of litigation are challenges that the Club has met in the past and is meeting at present. One can rest at ease that today's members have done an excellent job in moving the Club forward to meet tomorrow's challenges.

Gerry Patman
Life Member
Coastal Motor Cycle Club