

Riverstone Bicycle Club

This article was written by Rosemary Phillis and Mavis Lane, with information supplied by Fred Wiggins.

Bicycles first became popular in Riverstone in the mid 1890s as a form of transport and as a sport. The *Windsor and Richmond Gazette* of 9 May 1896 reported that cycling carnivals had been popular for the last 12-18 months and that people were now speculating on rare bikes.

James Aird a local storekeeper ran ads in the *Gazette* in 1897 for *The Daisy* which was described as a Roadster-'Strong, Light & Durable. Highly polished and finished.'

Long distances were travelled by bike riders. In 1899 Arch Jarrett was reported to have ridden his bike 390 miles from Warren to Riverstone over some very rough country.

Many of the workers at the local meatworks rode bikes to work and the *Gazette* of 5 May 1900 reported that *George Lane the maintenance man. rides his bike to work and carries his picks and shovels, water bag etc. on his shoulder.*

By 1901 sufficient interest in cycling led to the formation of the Riverstone Bicycle Club as reported in the *Gazette* of 4 May 1901:-

On Saturday evening last between 20 and 30 gentlemen met at the Men's Club rooms to form a bicycle club. Mr J.H. Cragg was elected to the chair. It was decided to form a club, to be called the Riverstone Bicycle Club, entrance 2/6, subscriptions 1/- per month. Thirty names were enrolled, and the following officers elected: President: Mr. B. Hall; Vice Presidents: Messrs. JP. Quinn. WJ East, J.H Cragg; Captain: G. Lane: Sub Captain: R.S. Hodgson; Bugler; A. Parkhill; Committee: Messrs. H. Radford, B, Wheeler, H. Cragg, G. Bere, W. Moss, B. Woods. J Towers. The officers are to be elected every 6 months.

The club held its first run within a week of being formed:-

... The members had the opening run on Wednesday night when the following cyclists journeyed to Windsor: G. Lane, R. Cruickshank, T.A. Jarrett, Geo. Bere, Bert Wheeler, H. Cragg, B. Woods, JH. Cragg, and R.S. Hodgson. They will have another run this Saturday afternoon to Richmond, and next Saturday a club race from Riverstone round the Windsor Park, and back home, will take place. Two trophies are offered for this race.

Within two weeks membership of the club had increased to 40 cyclists and in July 1901 the club received permission from Mr R. Richards to lay a bicycle track with a half mile circumference in the Meatwork's paddock, next to the Railway line.

By 1903 the bicycle club lay dormant after a squabble over affiliation with the N.S.W. League of Wheelmen, though Riverstone cyclists continued to take part in other bicycle club meetings.

Sam Lane was the son of George Lane the first Captain of the Riverstone Bicycle Club and he was also a keen cyclist. Sam was involved in the reformation of the Riverstone Bicycle Club in the early 1940s. The Club's activities included Sunday afternoon races on a track situated in the Meatwork's Paddocks (this ground was also used as a Show Ground, Football Ground etc and had a pavilion erected funded by local residents).

During the war, the Meat Company required this land and the pavilion was shifted over to its present position in the Riverstone Park, this operation taking place on a week-end using voluntary labour; the truck being supplied by the late Dick Stacey.

In addition to track races, there would be road races. Fred Wiggins recalls these running from Garfield Road to Windsor Road thence somehow across to Blacktown Road and again into Garfield Road. Day tours were also held, cycling for a tour to Cronulla and other spots.

Names of some of the riders: Fred Wiggins; Lindsey & Gordon Alderton; Eric Graham; Charlie Smith, Toby & Ernie Marlin; Norm Brown; Bill Dalton; Alderton twins (cousins of Lindsay & Gordon); Frank(?) Coles; Wallace Hayes. There were also some girls involved (possibly Betty Alderton would be one). Further names come to mind: Allan Sutton; Les Scanlon; Home Davis; Jack Evans; Stan Russell; Alan Wallace.

Chrome Melidium was one of the new light weight metals and great was the rivalry between the boys as to the weight of their "Racers" (Racing Bikes). A light bike meant greater speed; 3 speed gears were also something to be envied.

The Club was disbanded in the mid 40s due to the call up of so many young men for war duty.