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BATHURST
What Really
Happened?
What Of The
Future?

XV
750

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COMPARO**
Yamaha IT175
Suzuki PE175

YAMAHA



DAYTONA SPEED WEEK
1981

We Test The Gilera cbA Moped
Off To The Centre Rally!

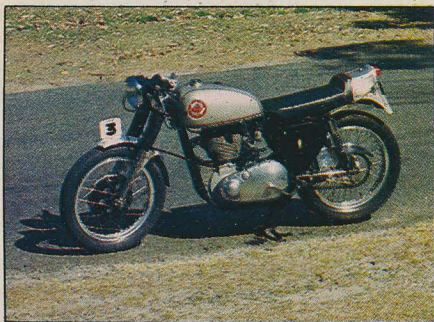
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and Police Paranoia on Panorama

Following the Easter weekend this year, most of the general media confidently reported that 'bikie gangs' were responsible for the 'wild and bloody riots' at Mt Panorama. This confidence is astounding, since once again, none of their reporters were there. JULIA CULLEN, with the help of our political writer, PHIL DICKIE, reports that the scene was very different from what your friendly TV, radio or newspaper would have you believe.

Motor racing tracks are spooky places. If you've ever stood and looked and listened at a deserted circuit you'll know.

But none in Australia is like Bathurst. Nowhere else do spectators camp around the race-track for three and a half days. Nowhere else is a pilgrimage. There are those of us who look forward to Bathurst all year. This year, however, some of us were glad to be packed and heading down that dusty access road, wondering if we'd bother returning next year.

By 11 am on Easter Monday the only people left on the Mountain were a few stragglers (late risers), the unfortunates who had to appear in Court next morning, the last of the Victorian and NSW Motorcycle Riders Association volunteers packing their vans, the Council garbage trucks and the sight-seers/souvenir hunters out from town. The latter are incredible. There are the

mums with kids collecting empty cans for pocket money; then there're the serious hunters of bounty — full bottles and tinnies, unopened cans of food, not-too-battered Eskies and discarded clothing. Then you've got your pure tourists. The last are the worst. "Well the bikies have made more/less rubbish than last year, Henry . . ."

As we fired up the Suzuki and Kawasaki, an ABC crew cruised round. They eventually found Damien Codognotto and other organising members of

Damien Codognotto, MRA (Victoria) President.



The lair, in peaceful times.



the MRA. They wanted to know what had happened Saturday night . . .

The Bathurst Easter carnival had yet another blot in its copybook. Thankfully this year there had been no racing fatalities. But the Mountain bore its own shame, worse than last year's.

Although there were a few arrests for in-camp brawling on Friday night, it was basically (for the Mountain) a very peaceful night. Walking alone around the Mountain at 1 a.m., all was serene, except of course for the constant music of more bikes arriving (the interstaters) and bikes going just . . . anywhere, somewhere, visiting friends, visiting the dunnies, checking things out. Saturday's weather was a carbon copy of Friday, for the start of the racing. Sunny, calm and unbelievably dusty. Already you could tell how long people had been on the Mountain by the amount of dust their clothes, tents, bikes or cars wore.

Saturday afternoon passed in the usual way, with some people watching

“I've taken my number off so that I won't lose it

the racing, some watching the doughnuts and slides, and some just lazing round their camps. The MRA organisers geared up for their rock concert that night, held beside the site of their marquees — right away to the far end of buggery, where they'd been shoved at the request of the Bathurst police. Pity, that. Although the concert was unfortunately held up because the drummer's flight from Sydney was delayed — Bathurst Airport was closed for the Air Ambulance — everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves, bopping on peacefully to some damn fine music from Little Wing. One newspaper reported that trouble erupted at the police compound because the concert was held up. I doubt it. The two locations are half a kilometre apart.

Saturday night fever

Strife started earlier than the police apparently expected. Doughnut contests and piggy-back fights turned sour and the contestants thought some rock and can throwing was in order. Then some bright spark had the idea of chucking them at the police compound. Stuff was lobbed inside the compound fence, onto police vehicles and the building which houses both police and first aid facilities. (I wonder how many people actually realise the

first aid station is located there?) A huge semi-circle of spectators with a minority of 'missile throwers' formed. The cops called for reinforcements from town.

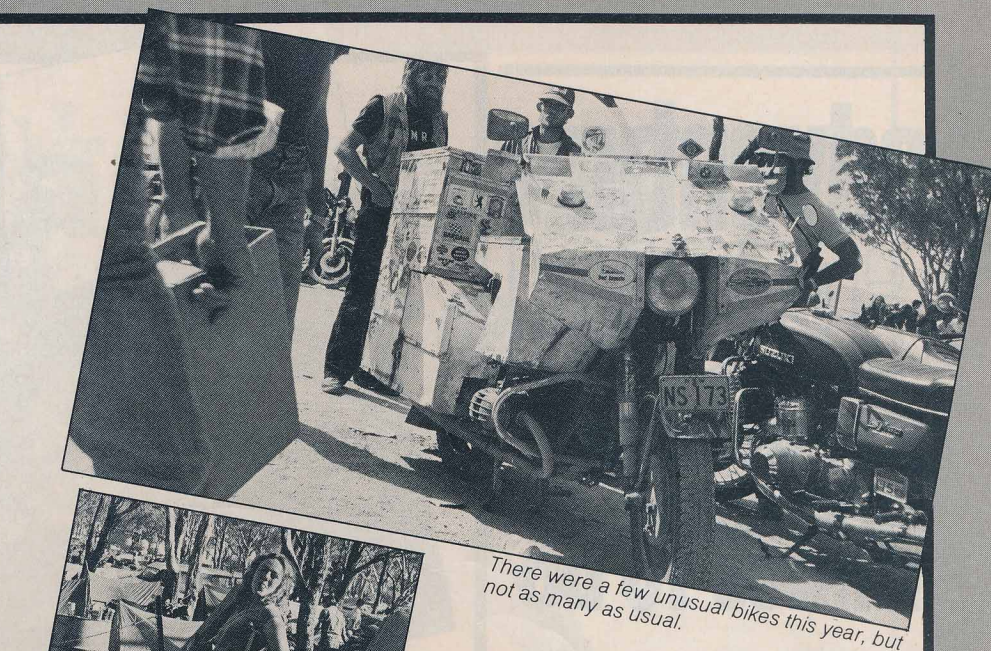
Amongst all this there were some very brave people. Anton and Chris, and a few other members of the MRA, were passing through the area and saw that things were turning very nasty. They walked into the area between the crowd and the compound and started talking to the assembly (without the aid of a loud-hailer), trying to persuade them to cool off and disperse. Although there were a minority of combatants in that crowd, it takes a lot of guts to stand in the middle of the battlefield with solid objects being hurled around. They did it.

But after police reinforcements arrived from town and the compound gates opened for the first of the police baton charges into the crowd, that was the end of the mediators. With their backs still towards the compound, they were arrested . . .

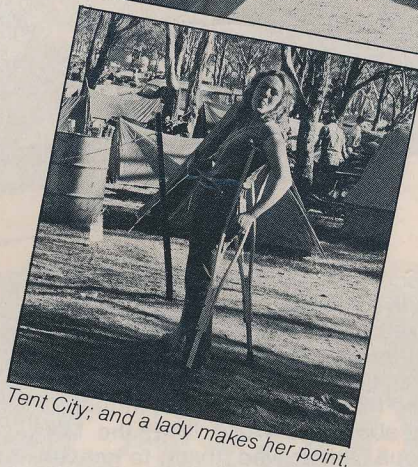
**... and if you believe
that then you believe in
Santa Claus.** ”

We walked to the compound area from the concert site after the volunteers manning the MRA Rescue Unit put through a radio call. Approaching the compound area from behind, we were met by a scurry of blue uniforms, as police hurtled towards us, clearing that area (presumably so they couldn't be 'attacked from the rear'). After protesting we were "Press! Press!" (Julia held her identity card firmly between her teeth a good deal of that night) we were gently 'removed', but allowed to stand at the front of the compound. Significantly, at no time were there any other members of the press in evidence, with one lone exception — a Sydney television cameraman (apparently an enthusiast) who had volunteered to come to Bathurst at his own expense. After seeing the reports in the general media, you begin to see the drift . . . The reporters are in town, in their motel rooms and club bars, and file their reports from *their interpretation* of the police press releases and possibly some hearsay *if* they visit the Mountain the next day.

Some radio news reports, of course, are compiled purely from the press services and newspapers. Then you've got triple distortion . . . A TWO WHEELS staffer telephoned one usually sympathetic Sydney radio station from



There were a few unusual bikes this year, but not as many as usual.



Tent City; and a lady makes her point.

home on Monday afternoon, to protest at the misrepresentations being made. The assurance was given that the news bulletin would be changed immediately. It was repeated as originally heard 'on-the-hour-every-hour' for the next 24 hours. Eye-witnesses, even when they're also journalists, don't count.

Indiscriminate arrests

Our long, cold vigil outside the compound fence was nerve-racking and somewhat frightening. Soon after the police reinforcements arrived, the real 'action' started. The compound gates opened and it was on for young and old. The first baton charge. Police (suddenly without numbers on their uniforms) came back from the throng of spectators dragging captives. Guys were held with their arms behind them and many who couldn't take the pace or were tripping were held by the hair. Once inside the compound, if no paddy-wagon was immediately available, those grabbed were thrown on the ground with their faces down in the dust and boots were liberally applied. When the time came to be transferred to town-bound paddy-wagons, people were lifted from the ground and thrown in the wagons in no uncertain fashion. Punches were thrown, batons wielded and police knees applied to groins. It

was a grotesque scene; a pattern which was followed for the next hour.

Most of the people grabbed from the crowd weren't protesting — what point would there be anyway? The police kept the sides and rear of the compound well patrolled, grabbing unfortunates with no excuse for being there, ad lib. A drunk came up, abusing the MRA to the faces of the police, who were only too willing to listen, and entertain him. Funnily enough, he was ignored. Amongst the crowd, drunks were obvious targets, being least inclined or able to turn and run in the face of a baton charge. Yet this bloke was tolerated!

At 10 o'clock, a police superior was *heard* to issue the command to the rank-and-file: "Right; go out there, pick out someone and grab them; bring 'em back here and beat 'em up". Batons at the ready, the boys followed orders. The batons had their uses. They brought back the numbers, throwing people onto the ground, using whatever methods took their fancy. There may have been 62 police report to First Aid, but there were also some pretty grotesque and unnecessary injuries inflicted by them.

By this stage, the police were allowing a few vehicles to pass through the area. Unsuspecting Mountain inhabitants who'd been visiting the town returned to a tense scene which had, an hour and a quarter earlier, been utterly quiet. At about this time, a reporter for a Sydney radio station drove up the Mountain in a station vehicle. On the pits-side of the compound, he was stopped by a rather arrogant cop. Press or no press, he was told he wasn't coming through. Yet other vehicles — both two- and four-wheeled — were passing through the battle-

adventure SPECIAL

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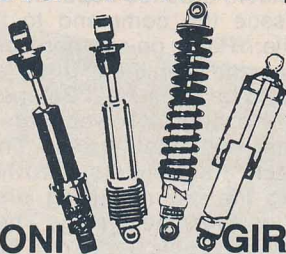
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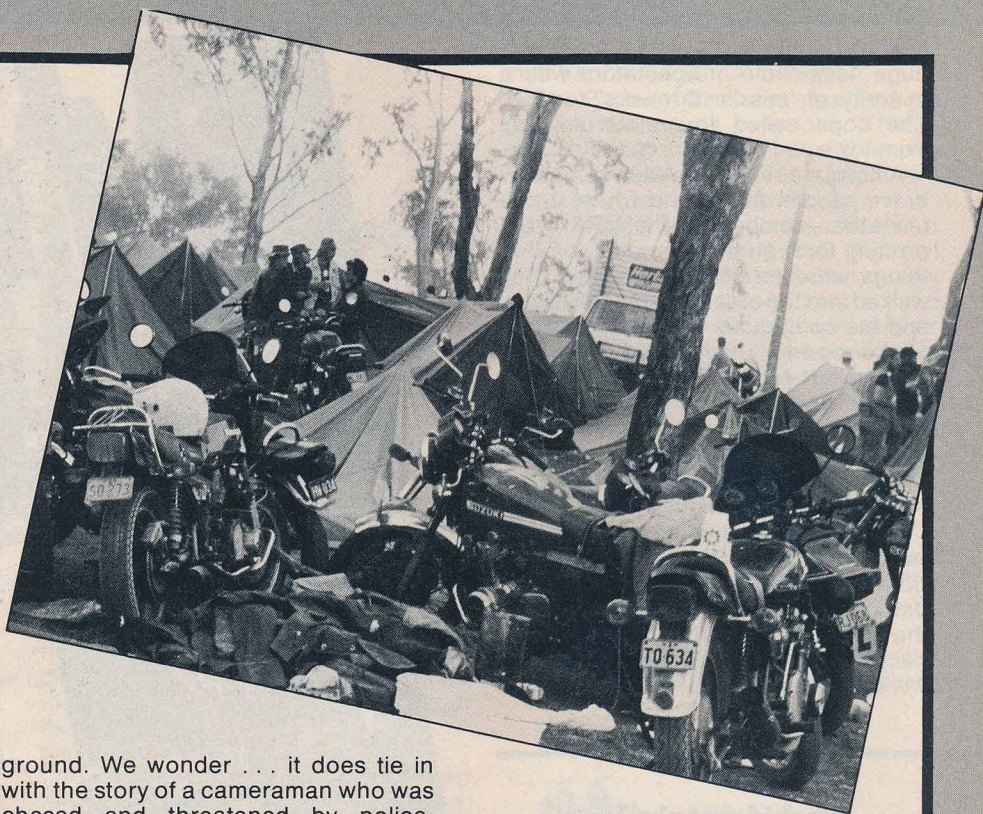
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ground. We wonder . . . it does tie in with the story of a cameraman who was chased and threatened by police. Sounds like something from an obscure, paranoid Middle Eastern state, doesn't it? This is Australia, though.

At about the same time, the MRA Rescue Unit arrived, trying to get ventolin tablets to an asthmatic suffering a severe attack. The asthmatic had lost his 'puffer' when attacked by police — his shirt was torn off and he was beaten with batons. Even the Rescue Unit encountered problems, despite being clearly signwritten. The police bashed the Landcruiser's lights and bonnet with batons, demanding, "Who the ---- are you?" Were they ignorant of the sterling work put in by the Unit's members over the preceding two days?

Shortly after 10 pm, another baton charge was launched, with about 30 participants. And as usual, the spectators turned, backed away, the smart ones ran for cover or safer ground, but there were plenty of catches. We asked one senior constable: "Why these charges?"

The reply came: "To keep them back. We keep giggling at them. *It's the only way to break up a crowd. We're getting hit by bottles.*"

TW: "What will these people being indiscriminately arrested be charged with?"

Senior Constable: "I don't know."

Phew. Just think about that little lot for a moment. Arresting people indiscriminately, for reasons that even a police officer can't think of, is the only way to break up a crowd.

No Santa Claus

Throughout the proceedings we

were continually told, as a justification for being 'moved on' by the police (gently, although in one case physically) that "It's a *dangerous* situation." Funnily enough, right in the thick of things, we never felt in danger. Except of being arrested! Phil Dickie was hit in the stomach by an empty can. He didn't feel he had to rush off to First Aid, though!

One of the last questions our Senior Constable 'friend' answered before being summoned away by a superior (did he talk too much?), was why he wasn't wearing his police identification number. His reply has to go down in history — its originality cannot be questioned. "I've taken my number off so that I won't lose it . . . and if you believe that then you believe in Santa Claus."

By approximately 10:45, all was quiet. The last charge (for which the instructions were: "C'mon, go out there and grab some more blokes") had been made, thankfully, and the cops went out on a "talk to the bikies" mission. The remaining crowd filtered off and at 11 pm we left the scene. We checked back just after midnight and the police reported "all quiet", as they padlocked themselves in for the night in their stockade.

Meanwhile the cells in Bathurst Police Station were bulging. The two open-air cells — one approximately three and a half by three metres, with 20 odd inhabitants and the other four by three and a half metres holding 40 or more — were standing-room only. Some people reported being shuffled through a couple of other cells as well.

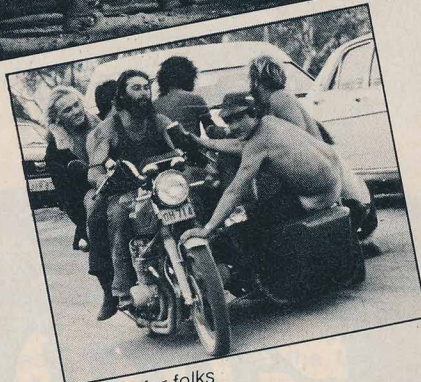


Most occupants were in the station for around three hours, although some had the misfortune to remain much longer. One young bloke who didn't return till around five am reported having been awoken three times in the cell

The Mountain has a truly distasteful record of police antagonism and indiscriminate arrests . . .

during the night and kicked by police officers. He was a pretty horrible, bloody sight in the morning, we're told.

Many allegations of police bashings were received in the days and weeks that followed. Sitting down, reading



Strokes for folks

through pages and pages of signed statements of complaint from people alleging false arrest, is quite an experience. Jeremy's statement is a good example. He doubled a friend from camp up to the toilets. The friend went into the toilets while Jeremy was still parking the bike. As he was pulling it onto the centrestand he looked around, wondering why people had started running. Then, zap! He was hit across the forehead with a police baton. The next thing he remembers is

waking up in a paddy-wagon, bleeding from the forehead and left hand.

Larry was walking towards Castrol Tower on Saturday night when a paddy-wagon pulled up next to him; two cops jumped out and began beating him up. They insisted that if he said he was 'pissed', they'd stop beating him. So he did. Larry spent five hours in the cells. It's doubtful he feels much better that he wasn't charged. That's right — no charges.

Peter was committing the terrible crime of ringing his girlfriend in Sydney, at about 10 pm Saturday. While he was still speaking to her from the phone booth near the police compound, a cop dragged him out. Peter spent four hours in the cells, after which he was told that he was charged with causing serious alarm and affront.

Another astonishing report was from a guy camped way up to nowhere from the compound who decided to 'nap' with his lady in his tent. Suddenly, the tent rips open and the guy gets dragged out by some plain-clothes types. Colin's only got on what he was born in and guess what? He's nabbed for indecent exposure. Somewhere along the line things get confused and it could be drunkenness — they can't decide. Laugh you may, but spending six hours in a cell and then having to walk back up the mountain at five am isn't really a ball-o'-fun. Nor is it justice . . .

And so, to court

After the dramas of the weekend, there was, of course, court on Tuesday morning. Things were different this year.

The normal procedure in years past is that most people front to court Tuesday morning and plead guilty, whether they were or not, so that they can get home without losing more work-days. It's pretty much a production-line of law. Fines are issued and it's let's-hit-the-road.

Not so this year. Courtesy of the

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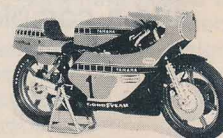
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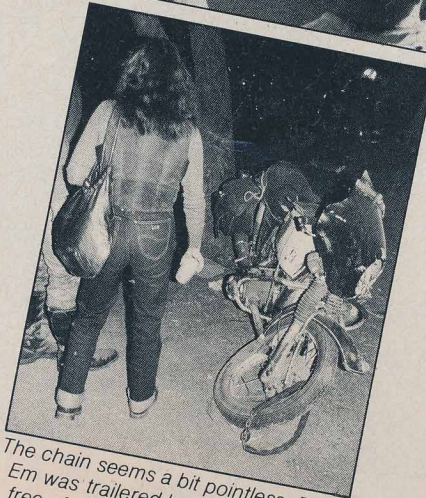
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MRA, the partners of a Sydney legal firm fronted at court, everything was held up while they were granted two and a half hours to interview everyone who was interested. Confusion reigned. The solicitors suggested to people that if they were innocent, why not fight? True words. Part of the whole motorcyclists/Bathurst problem lies in innocent people sitting back and eating dirt; it simply serves to perpetuate the whole bad scene.

“Surely if they could afford to go to Bathurst in the first place they could afford to come back and defend their innocence!”

As Lee Drake, one of the solicitors told me, “It was just incredible. There were all these people telling me the terrible things that had happened to them; how they’d been falsely arrested — how they’d been bashed by the police — and yet they’d insist on pleading guilty! They would say: ‘I can’t afford to come back here.’ Surely if they could afford to come to Bathurst in the first place, they could afford to come back to defend their innocence!”

It remains to be seen, at the time of writing, how many of those who decided to plead not guilty, will return. Bear in mind, that they are getting legal counsel and defence free. That’s right — gratis, courtesy of the MRA, who are footing the bill entirely. MRA representatives at the court instructed the solicitors *not* to ask people if they were members of the organisation. Their point is that they provide services for all motorcyclists, regardless of whether they are members. Consider that the solicitors represented 65 people, 42 of whom pleaded ‘not guilty’ (37 of those to the ubiquitous ‘serious alarm and affront



The chain seems a bit pointless. Bee Em was trailed back to Melbourne free of charge by MRA Rescue Unit.

charge’. That’s another appearance in court for those 42, and then the services of a barrister for the final hearing. One might stop here and ponder the nervous state of the various state MRA treasurers . . .

Police actions

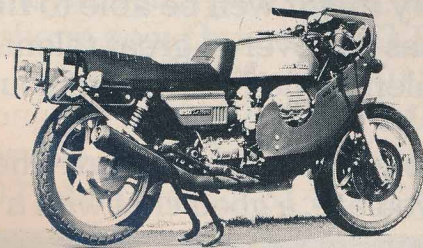
. . . in which we get down to asking

The police weren't too scared to come out on Sunday to book the sled-driver.

those old questions: why? Why did the action start? Why were there so many arrests? Why were there so many false arrests?

We all know that certain dumb people provoked the police. Whether they were actually bikers, we don’t know. There is a theory afoot that it *may* be hoons from some of the towns around Bathurst who get tanked up and roll on up The Mountain for some Saturday night action. It’s certainly not ‘bikie gangs’, as the general media delight in reporting. There was no evidence of the missile-throwing being done by any organised group at all. Neither Court nor police records will ever tell, because if any of the actual trouble-makers were arrested, then it had to be mostly as a matter of pure chance. ‘Heroes’ of that nature have a habit of hiding in the darkness of a large crowd and knowing when to run fast. That’s half the ‘challenge’.

However, the NSW Police Force has



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a totally unenviable record with motorcyclists year round, year-in, year-out. There is a great deal of antagonism between cops and motorcyclists, and a situation like Bathurst (with its compound) sees the pay-off. The fact that the NSW Police Force investigates any complaints against its members totally in-house doesn't help either. Any motorcyclist falsely charged, fined or mistreated, knows he has virtually no recourse. (Recent changes within the State Ombudsman's Department may see that situation altered.)

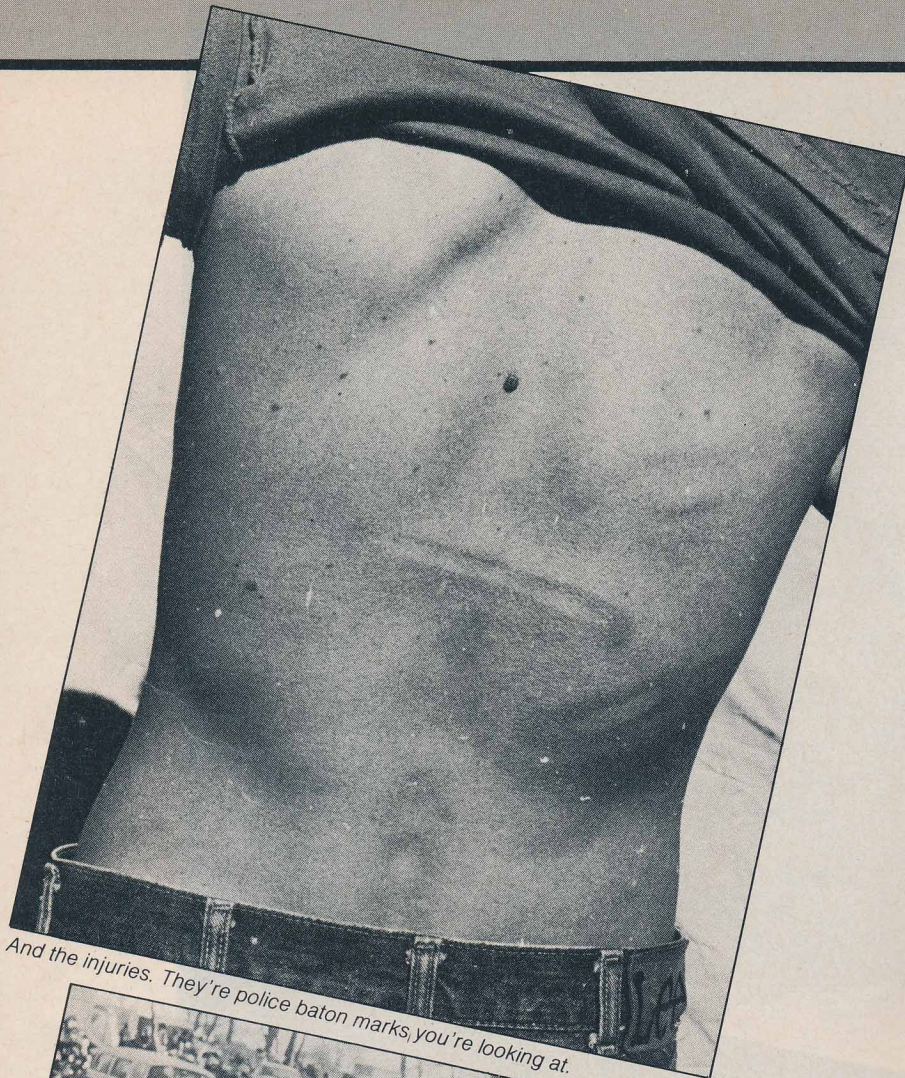
Given these facts, a more ill-informed and provocative move than putting a \$40,000 police Stockade slap-bang in the middle of the Mountain at Bathurst is difficult to imagine — but it does illustrate the NSW Police Department's mentality. Psychologists the police are *not*; you'd have to doubt that they employ any mind-men at all. The Mountain has a truly distasteful record of police antagonism and indiscriminate arrests 'to get the numbers', dating back to at least the beginning of the '70s.

So to do a better job, the police erect a Stockade at the very focal point of the camping area! At least half the Mountain population has to pass by that Stockade to get in or out of the area, or to attend the main amenities (read 'flush' toilets) blocks. It sits there as a threat; like a fenced-in black cloud.

That Compound has to go.

Why were there so many arrests, primarily of innocent victims, this year?

The police completely over-reacted, lost control within their ranks and at no time made the slightest show of trying to cool the situation and avert action.



And the injuries. They're police baton marks, you're looking at.



The bull-rings . . .

Not only that, they refused attempts by others to do so. Ray Jennings, NSW MRA spokesman, attempted twice to get permission to see the Inspector in charge at the Compound. His aim was to get a police loud-hailer and address the crowd. With his authoritative manner and status, he might have succeeded in quietening things. If he hadn't, what would have been lost?

Most readers will no doubt remember the media reports of trouble in the Victorian town of Mildura, on the same night. (It was *not* caused by crazed 'bikies', as some sources so conveniently reported.) However, all sources did agree on one thing: that the police had the Riot Act read. This, according to the MRA's legal advisers, is a rather 'quaint' Common Law deal. In essence, it is a warning that if you're a spectator to a dangerous scene, leave immediately, or stand the chance of being arrested as if you were a combatant. The NSW police at Bathurst arrested spectators, without benefit of the Riot Act. They *at no time* attempted to address the crowd, even to order it to disperse. It is our feeling that they wouldn't have got their 'serious alarm and affront' arrests if they had done so.

Are we saying that the police *wanted* action? Maybe. There were *some* very irresponsible, uptight and malicious uniformed people inside that Compound around 9:30 pm on Easter Saturday. (So much so, that one 'good' cop we heard of just *disappeared* to avoid the impending action!)

Allegations have been made that a good many of the reinforcements from town had been happily whiling away their time in town, drinking . . .

Bathurst '82?

And the future?

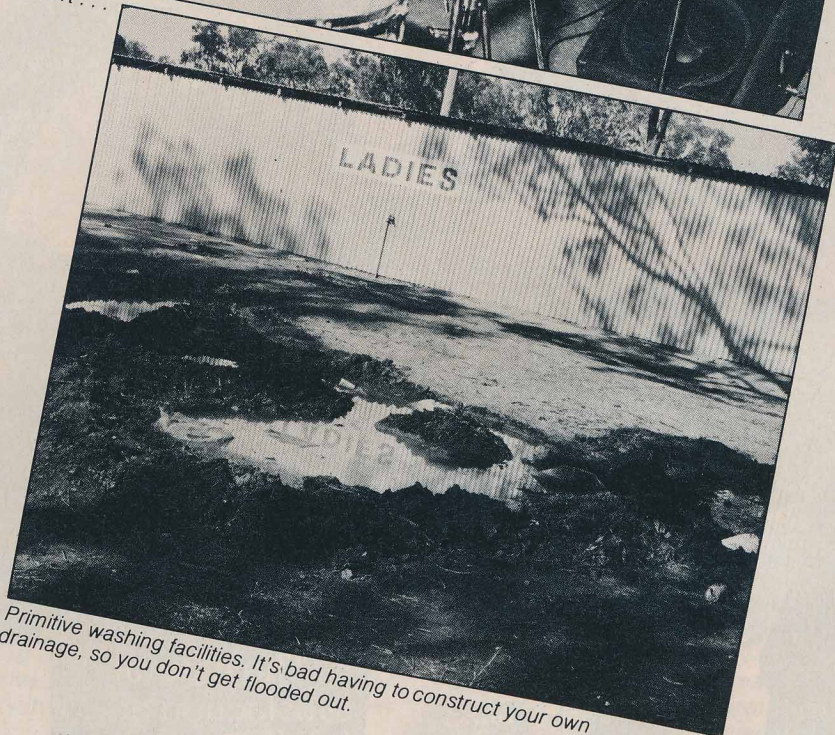
NSW Police Minister Crabtree says a trained Riot Squad. (They will *have* to find a riot, then — won't they?) Could we then expect tear-gas? A water-cannon, as some people have suggested? There are those who believe a properly trained Riot Squad would be better than the police; others tend to a Crowd Control Unit. The police have hinted at a vastly enlarged contingent for next year — the figure of 600 has even been tossed around!

Damien Codognotto (MRA Victoria Spokesman) has said: "If there is a Riot Squad next year and/or if that Compound is still there, there may well be *bodies*."

Another favourite suggestion has been roadblocks to screen out 'potential trouble makers'. That one has come from the police, the ACU, and was even put to an MRA meeting in Sydney by one of the Executive. The attending members howled it down. Bathurst's



The concert . . .



Primitive washing facilities. It's bad having to construct your own drainage, so you don't get flooded out.

been through that. It only breeds more antagonism towards the police.

The Federation of Australian Motorcyclists in NSW put forward their formula for success. It consists of one point only: ban alcohol on the Mountain. So we have the roadblocks and full searches for grog outside the gates, on every trip into the camping area from town. It also leaves the way open for constant prowling and raiding of campsites by police. You can keep that one — the cops do enough of that already.

Unfortunately the flush toilets and

hot showers which the MRA is quite reasonably pushing for won't solve the problem. They would help the whole environment, though. *Entertainment* is a necessity, however. Fate — in the form of the remoteness of the concert and its delay — had it that this year the concert couldn't draw off the crowd from the police action. Still, if the crowd of a thousand or so hadn't been at the concert, they might have been swelling the crowd for the police. (There most certainly were not, as reported by some

people, only 50 people at the concert.) Next year, the possibilities for entertainment, given proper facilities, organisation, sponsorship and support from the various bodies, are endless.

But one burning question remains. In every confined crowd of 10-15,000 people, statistically there must be some stirrers. Motorcyclists are no different from any other group in that respect. What do you do about them? They're not 'bikie' gangs, or outlaws. The outlaw groups stopped going years back.

Set up a kiosk to distribute handfuls of tranquillisers? (Stop it - someone's bound to take you seriously - Ed.)

Perhaps the Mountain's biggest problem has been that nobody's cared. The media treat it as the sport - not the racing. The police have made matters worse over the years. The ACU has run the racing, totally ignoring the spectators - the source of the gate-money. Bathurst Council hasn't even looked at tackling the 'problem' which pours hundreds of thousands of dollars into the town's coffers over the Easter week, although Mayor Max Hanrahan is positive about improvements to the Mountain, and sympathetic to the only body really dedicated to cleaning up the situation - the MRA.

Whatever happens at Bathurst in '82 - assuming there is 'a Bathurst' - there is one major thing which has to happen in the interim, if Easter on the Mountain is to stay sane. And that is a clean-up after the NSW Police Department's actions this year. The Police Commissioner's inquiry will achieve nothing. Closed shops are never good to buy from.



Cash Register Thoughts

THE LEGAL ACTION for those people indiscriminately and unjustly arrested at Bathurst is costing the Motorcycle Riders Association vast sums. On top of that, and probably the major cost, will be the representation of all motorcyclists, whether involved or even at Bathurst '81, at the Police Inquiry.

The MRA will have expert legal representation at that Inquiry. Who knows how successful it will be; but MRA enquiries into the actions of the police at Bathurst won't be stopping there. It's going to be a busy (and expensive) year...

If you're interested in assisting this very worthy cause, send donations to the Bathurst Fighting Fund Account, MRA, P.O. Box 232, Spit Junction, NSW, 2088. It works like a Blood Bank. It may not have been you at Bathurst '81, but next week or next year it easily could be...



The wreckage (Monday)...

Bathurst - A few Modest Proposals

A LOT OF suggestions have been offered to the problems of the Easter bike races. Some seem sensible, some absurd - here is a limited, incomplete list of the ones we think might be worth trying.

1. Have security on The Mountain looked after by a private security firm. It may not be any too easy to find one that would tackle this, but it would remove one side of the fight.

2. Remove the Police Compound from The Mountain. Let's face it, the police should probably not have been involved in the first place. It's a poor party that needs the police to keep it in line.

3. Have co-ordination between bike action groups, the police, Bathurst Council and the ACU.

4. Improve general facilities. Let's see what happens when people can

see that someone cares about them - and not just about their admission money.

5. Give the MRA the go-ahead for entertainment.

6. Let's try and police things ourselves as much as possible. I know that's not always easy, but perhaps we're not trying as hard as we could be.

7. Let's try a little charity. This might be hard for the people outraged by police behaviour in one way or another over Easter, but let's remember, with W. S. Gilbert, that:

"When constabulary duty's to be done,

The policeman's lot is not a happy one!"

Motorcyclists are not pure as the driven snow. People were, after all, throwing things at the police, and we certainly don't condone that.

Repression breeds rebellion, as the police find out every year at Bathurst. So, as a last suggestion -

8. Have the police treat motorcyclists in this State as fully-qualified, paid-up members of the human race. If The Force casts a little tolerance of its own upon the waters, it may be surprised at the returns next year.

Above all, let's have no increase in repression. No riot squads, no body searches, no increased harassment. That way lies disaster.

- P.T.

In the June issue of TWO WHEELS we promised you a revised and updated Club Register. However, because of space restrictions and the importance of getting to the bottom of the Bathurst fiasco, we found it necessary to present an uncut version of what happened on the Mountain. Unfortunately this meant dropping the register for one more issue.