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TWO WHEELS

JUNE, 1979

STEPTHROUGHS:
A Shootout
To Find What's
Sacrificed For
Economy

**THE '79 STYLE
DIRT IRONS**

- MONTESA 360
- YAMAHA IT400F
- HONDA'S
XL/XR500s

Plus:
ANA BRANCH:
**OUR WILDEST
SOCIAL
TRAIL RIDE**



two wheels

Volume 20, No. 4, JUNE 1979

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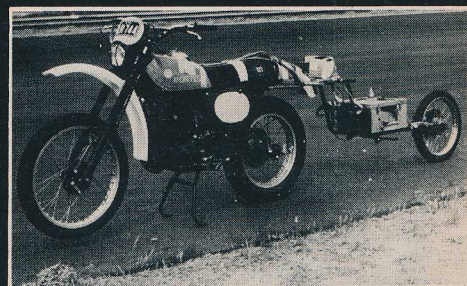
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Would you believe this Montesa is being tortured? See page 16.

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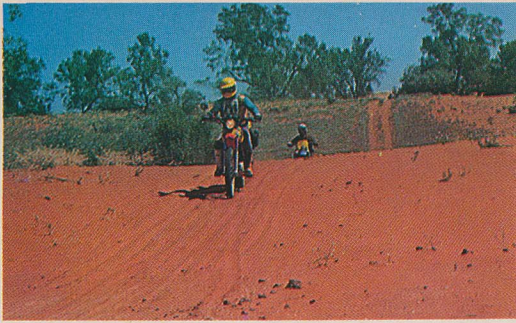
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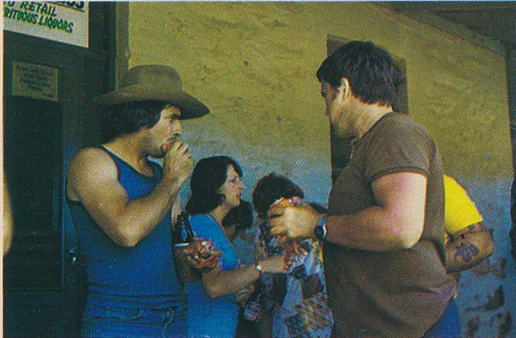
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Sand and rocks and mulga; what a combination. It is stunning in its beauty and you can banzai or paddle, depending on your mood and ability and bike — although banzaing with 11 litres on your back is not easy!

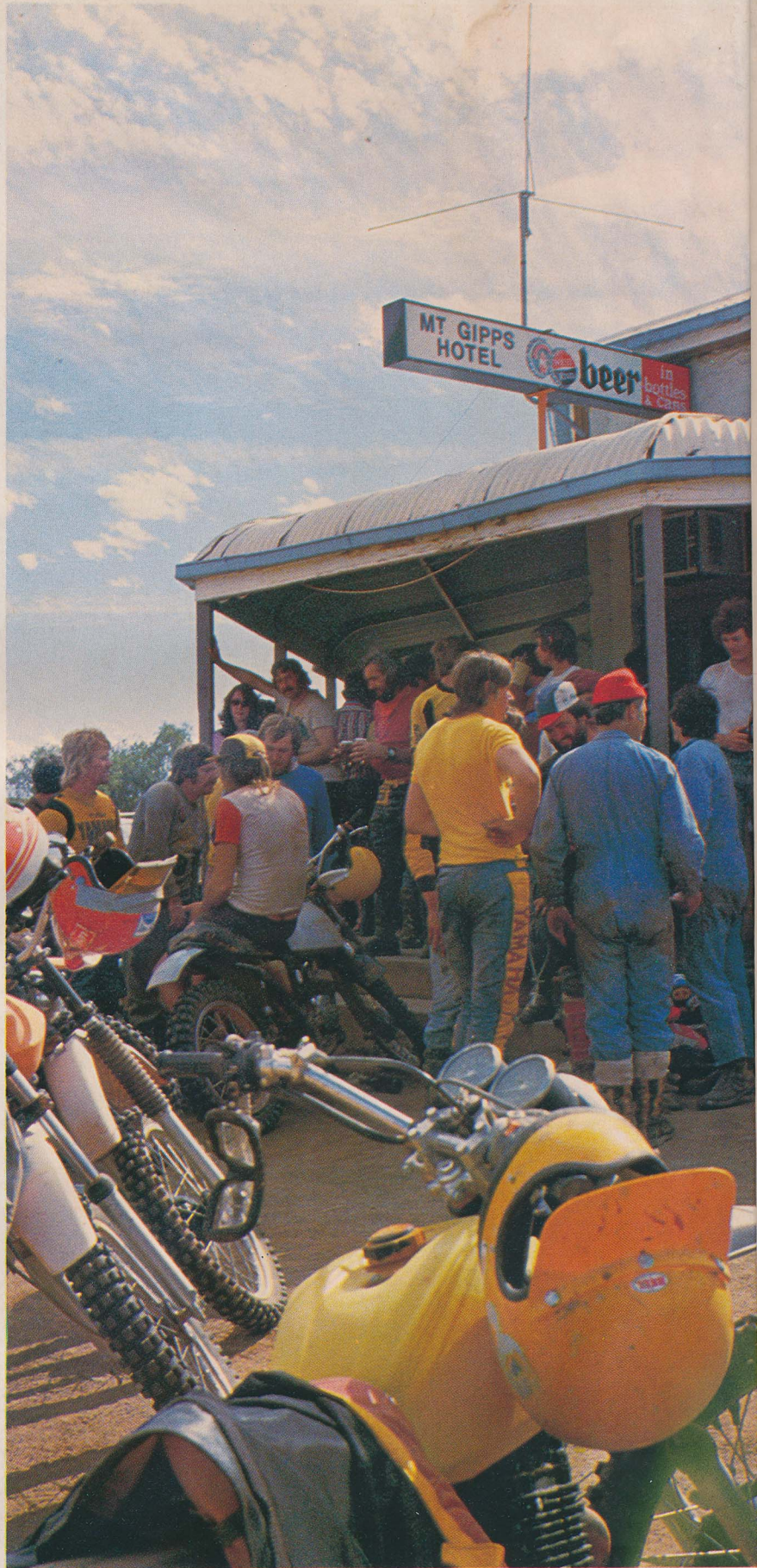


At \$3.60 a tiddler the man passing through made good money from the under-size crays. But who cared when Red, the MX freak, got half a tray from the back of the van while the guy was selling some?



Apart from two flat tyres, a front end that's shot and no spark it's running fine. We're kidding. The first flat for Peter Carter was my chance to see how the horseshoe-shaped tubes work. First you have to cut the old tube to get it out of the swing arm, then hassle to get the special double-ended one in, then the tyre back on, all the time keeping the bike on the stand and not falling over in the sand. Then pump the tyre up and wait a minute to find you have pinched it, or the end has blown out, or the initial puncture was not a pinch but a sharp stick or thorn and it's still in there. I think the U-tube idea is useless. I gave Peter one of my tubes.

Right: Sunday drinking and Sunday socialising at the Mount Gipps Hotel. End of ride included barbecue, band and expensive crayfish, as well as the proverbial drowning of the dust. A great ending to a great ride!



On arrival they called him "Captain Flashbulb"; later, after a brush with a quadruped, he became simply a man called "Horse". South Of The Border contributor KEL WEARNE rode a long way into the badlands for the most challenging informal club event in Australia, the AnaBranch trail ride out from Broken Hill. Motorcycling the city boys never thought existed!

Captain Flashbulb Rides The Trail from Silver City

SOUTH OF THE "Silver City" of Broken Hill, in the midst of the desolate sand, gibber and scrub country, lies the Ana Branch — much smaller than the Darling and running into and out of Travellers Lake and Popio lake. Each year it's the destination of the final organised club run for the Silver City Motorcycle Club, and a week prior to the presentation dinner.

You get to the Ana Branch from the Old Royal Hotel in Oxide Street. Well, about half the starters fuel up through the afternoon, evening and night before the 7 a.m. beginning at the "club hotel". The rage can go all night (as we found out) and the hardy (in an isolated land of hardies) can start the two-day trail ride direct from the Old Royal.

Officially, the start is just out of town near the airport. The club has maintained direct access to properties through the harsh region surrounding "The Hill" despite the careless actions of the many non-club riders. It is hard work but the miners and the residents are used to that; hard work, hard drinking and hard riding. They play Life hard. And the men-folk obviously enjoy it immensely.

All sizes, all comers

The Ana Branch trail ride is the finale for the year. A gala occasion which caters for newcomers, youths, females, the vets of the club.

It's open to anyone and indeed riders come from Adelaide, Port Pirie and places on the dry South Australian side; and from Mel-

bourne, Shepparton, other places around northern Victoria. It's a social ride with the club providing its own trucks and trailers to cart the camp gear, the marquee, gas fires and very important ice boxes (one as big as a car trailer). They are thinking of making the big trailer into a full refrigerated unit.

Bikes must carry petrol though as the run to the halfway refuelling stop at Coombah Roadhouse is through fuel-sucking sand for more than 160 km! Then another 160 to make the campsite. All in 42 degrees summer sun!

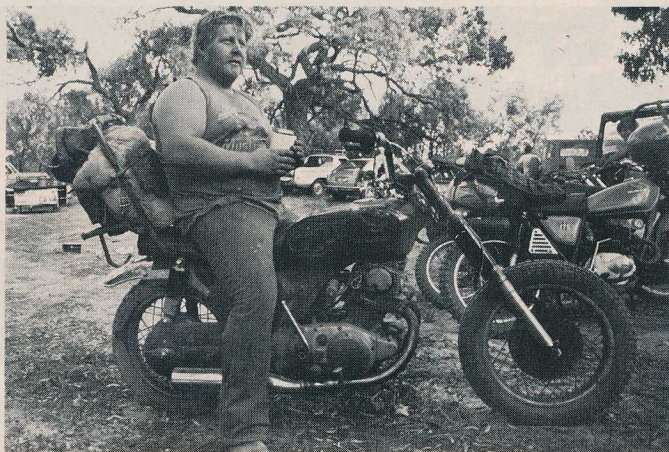
You can put yourself in one of three groups which leave a little apart; the fast, the slow or the tourist class and, if you

wish, can carry on down the highway from the halfway mark and follow the supply truck and cars into the site. A number find that the easiest way to finish the ride.

Each group has two leaders. The Rule Of The Gate is simple. First pair there stop and wait until all riders have passed through then close it and chase the line. Simple and effective.

The vast plains are isolated and empty. You follow patches of dust on the horizon. It has a wilting dryness. The sun and the reflections thin your eyes into slits and dust whorls can make you think other riders are off in another direction.

It has enormous heat. A vast stillness, as



Ever wondered what happened to the old 305 Honda Hawks? Not the new ones dummy — the ones made in the late sixties. Here rides living proof of just how well made they were. This one did the trip up from Kerang in Victoria — mostly on the dirt roads. A keen, dedicated Honda owner whom no-one rubbished!











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though waiting. Waiting for what? It's waited the longest of any land mass above the sea.

Riding the Ana Branch, especially out there alone, lets you appreciate the timelessness of the pattern. The gentle wind saved the '79 ride, it moved dust off the track continuously. But there was little real racing apart from small groups among the 150 bikes.

It is an immaculate, clean morning first up, the air as fine and clear as ever, the heat still two hours away. The tracks lead into the sand; narrow correy gravel, deep sand waves, red loam sand, grass sections, overgrown parts in weeds and thorns; across the flats with stunted, withered trees and bushes. It is a land of constant and continuous changing patterns. It makes being a rider worthwhile.



A laugh before the pain set in. Shepparton rider was first casualty at end of airport, in sharp kink. One ankle. Trouble was he rode for the first section (160 km) before falling again and wondering why he couldn't use his leg. Deanne (XL175) shares a joke with the wounded before heading on.



Heavy action (like the trip down for support crews) showed by Saturday afternoon. This Shepparton follower was down and out. Note size of eskies in the back of the F100 4x4. Don't know what sort of turn-out it was with the flower power — they didn't seem limp wristed!

Most people hit the water at the camp site, the gear is unloaded and everything set up and the important "bar" is opened for the duration (the duration someone is standing).

It takes a long time for the complete assembly to finish at the site. The 38 riders from South Australia, not including the rugged Port Pirie guys who came all the way to Broken Hill to start the ride, come in later and will leave first in the morning on their trip down the powerlines back home.

The life of the party

The riders gather and talk. Loud. Boisterous. Friendly, honest banter and chatter; tales and rubbishing. It is a boisterous town, dominated by the Mines. Men leave but most return — it is a life force which draws them.

The games can be playful to harsh —



Albie Bearman does wear a helmet when riding. At an age when most grandfathers are watering the garden he's out there in the heat and sand which can wear anyone down — going for it on his TS400. He is one of the five 1952 foundation members of the club and, along with Gidgee Stephens, still riding. I used his garage for storage of bikes during the stay.

bruising is common. Some of the Ana Branch runs have included singers and musicians for the night. And each of the rides (Ana Branch goes back seven years) helps to make further tales around the hotel and club bars for the future.

The legends, the diehards, the stalwarts; all make the Ana Branch. But this time one of the organisers who had spent six months mapping and marking the trails (different ways each year) through the vastness of the tracks in the area missed out. A week before the ride Trevor Hyde broke some vertebrae coming off his XT500 Yamaha. The T-shirt wording, "It takes courage to ride an XT500", was seen a lot that week. Yeah.

The ride returns home by a different route, finishing off at the Mount Gipps Hotel 20 km from town. It's open, that's why. There to a raging country and western



The story of the scrub country was flats — try the tyres low, try them high, try them in-between; nothing stops the fierce mulga wood chips or the sharp rocks from doin' you a dirty turn. The PE was fixed okay but the 390 Husky auto of Colin Jay took longer. Owned and ridden by the trials rider, the rear axle had sheared and needed welding before continuing. This shot was the halfway stop at Coombah.



Country and western sound matched the heat and the empty land around. A neat pub and a neat way to finish off a social trail ride.

band, steak sandwiches and under-size crays sold at an oversize price; the families, friends, girls and guys, of those who did not make the ride, stretch along the verandah and join in the wash-the-dust-down-cool-off scene. It's still hot.

The club is a mixture of veterans and youngsters, the ride has the lot. From the run-of-the-mill trail bikes — mostly four-strokes, things like Suzuki TS400s, through

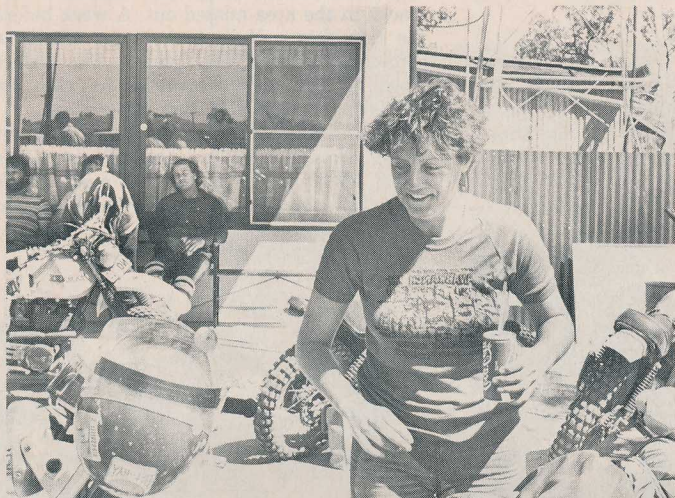
TT and XT500 Yamahas, SP370s, XL250s — a few enduro bikes like PEs and ITs and some bitsas.

Names like Phil Crump, just back from England, Si Nunan who rode the first Hattah Desert rally on his CB750 Honda, turned up at the camp. There was "Gravel" the president, the wily "Tiger" who is a hard man to beat in club events and the treasurer, "Gidgee" the one-eyed veteran of them

all who revitalised the club back in '69, and who with "Albie" formed the club in 1952.

You meet "The Colonel" (the club's truck) and "Brutus" (one of the stronger of men in a town full of strong men). Yeah, if life's got you down and you don't know what to do, take a trip to the Hill, see Don Bearman and start out on a memorable trail ride. There is about one a month including the two-day.

But Ana Branch is The One. *



Ladies of the Ana Branch. Big Pam is one of the tough riders. A schoolteacher at the Hill, she does the rides on her 250 Suzuki including a ride up the border fence to Birdsville races earlier in the year. She would not swap for quids and loves the place.



Partnering Pam around the bush on a TS250 is another teacher Maria. She also did the Birdsville trip with club members. The surprise was that she just set fastest time in the unofficial special test!

MONTESA ENDURO 360 H6



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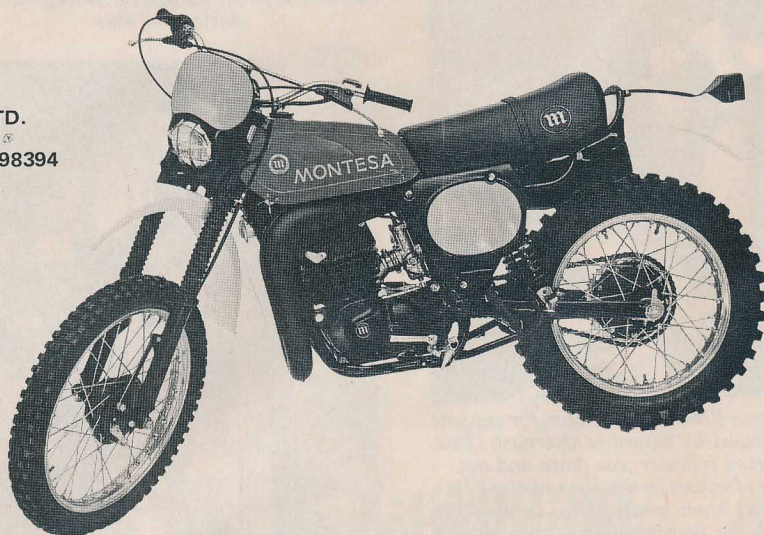
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Another blast from the past and all the way from SA in thumper form. It's almost the "Alpine Rally" equivalent for the dirt riders is the Ana Branch.

Dear Mum, having a fine time in the fresh air, learning to ride and will be in great shape for the Hattah Desert rally this year. PS: No-one worries about me not washing my gear, it all smells the same out here, where sweat is sweet and beer keeps your tongue wet!



Rock it. Roll it. Rider.

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