



# The Oz Vincent Review

*Edition #3, April 2014*

The Oz Vincent Review is a totally independent, non-profit, e-Zine about all things Vincent as well as the broader classic motorcycling scene. OVR is distributed free of charge to its readers. OVR may be contacted by email at [OzVinReview@gmail.com](mailto:OzVinReview@gmail.com)



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# What's It All About?

Welcome to the third edition of The Oz Vincent Review, an independent, not for profit, e-zine that provides a forum and voice for all folks with a particular interest in Vincent motorcycles as well as an interest in classic British bikes in general.

Any e-zine is only as good as its content thus I encourage all readers to submit items on any related subject for inclusion; this could be ride reports, humorous or otherwise incidents, technical information, details of your bike(s) or even reprints of historical material. Given the electronic format of OVR there is little restriction of the inclusion of photographs and such like. This edition includes a number of reader contributions; Don't be shy, you do not need to be a literary impresario – send me what you have and, only if needed, I will polish it for you.

OVR will always include an “Around The Traps” section listing upcoming events; so if you are planning any events, rides or such here is a place where, for no more than the effort of an email to the editor [OzVinReview@gmail.com](mailto:OzVinReview@gmail.com), you can have them promoted for free.

Likewise, if there is some information you want to get out promptly to the readership I will also be hosting a OVR NewsFlash service where single subject emails can be distributed to all readers, world wide. In this case all you need do is contact the editor (that's me) with details of the item you want broadcast and I will then create the OVR NewsFlash and distribute it.

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Melbourne, Australia.

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## Front Cover

This month the Front Cover features the Editors 1951 Comet. The picture was taken near the summit of Mount Hotham in Victoria, Australia during the recent Great Alpine Road/Bright run of which there are more details elsewhere in this edition.

# The Australian Market, 1951

*By P.E. Irving*

*First published in "Motor Cycling" March, 1951*



ON returning to my native Australia in 1951, after nearly 20 years in England it has been most interesting to observe at first hand the public reactions to contemporary English designs. Years ago, in spite of a good deal of competition experience, and a very considerable knowledge of the retail trade, I had come against practically none of the particular problems involved in the designing and manufacturing of motorcycles as opposed to keeping them running after someone else had built them. Whilst in England, however, being closely connected with three different and equally famous motorcycle factories it has been my privilege to meet and to talk with almost every notability in the commercial and racing world, besides having to cope with almost every conceivable problem that can—and does—crop up in design and manufacture.

All this has, naturally, given me a much wider outlook on Australian motor-cycling conditions and viewpoints and their relationship to the manufacturer. Motorcycles were, of course, comparatively simple 20 years ago. They lacked many of the refinements which are now taken for granted as essential items of specification—electric lighting, 'fully enclosed primary chains and valve gear and such-like aids to longevity and ease of riding. In fact, in many respects English machines were inferior, for the road conditions then existing, to the large American models which were much more ruggedly built and were generally more comfortable to ride, though for their size they were not nearly so fast.

I well remember the way many of us in Australia used to wonder why most factories took so long to carry out design modifications, which to us appeared to be necessary and not very difficult to introduce; we did not appreciate that it was due partly to the inability of designers on one side of the world to visualize the conditions of use which obtained on the other side and partly to the trouble

involved in making alterations to jigs and tools and manufacturing sequences. To-day, with rising costs, a general shortage of skilled toolmakers, more complex tooling and greater use of automatic single-purpose machine tools, production managers trying to work to an output schedule are more than ever loath to alter anything at all. But much better liaison now exists between the customer, the local distributor and the parent factory, so that ideas flow more freely from one to the other and frequent visits by higher executives from Australia to England and vice-versa result in a much more rapid ironing out of the troubles which crop up from time to time, particularly when a new model is introduced.

Viewing the Australian situation as a whole, English manufacturers are very favourably placed at the moment, because, the market is almost entirely in their hands, whereas prior to 1939, Continental as well as American machines were in good demand, and still would be if free trading conditions were to return; the dollar shortage has virtually eliminated American competition and German products, which were held in very high esteem, have not yet come back on to the market, though are shortly expected to do so. On the other hand, Czech motorcycles and, to a lesser extent, Italian scooters, are beginning to appear in numbers. A year or two ago this would not have mattered at all, for the demand from a nation which had been entirely deprived of new motorcycles for several years was such that it could not be satisfied for some time. Now, though it may not be possible to get any particular model straight off the floor, most makes can be obtained ex stock or with only a slight delay, and the customers are exercising rather more discrimination than before and are far less inclined to buy anything available rather than the model they fancy.

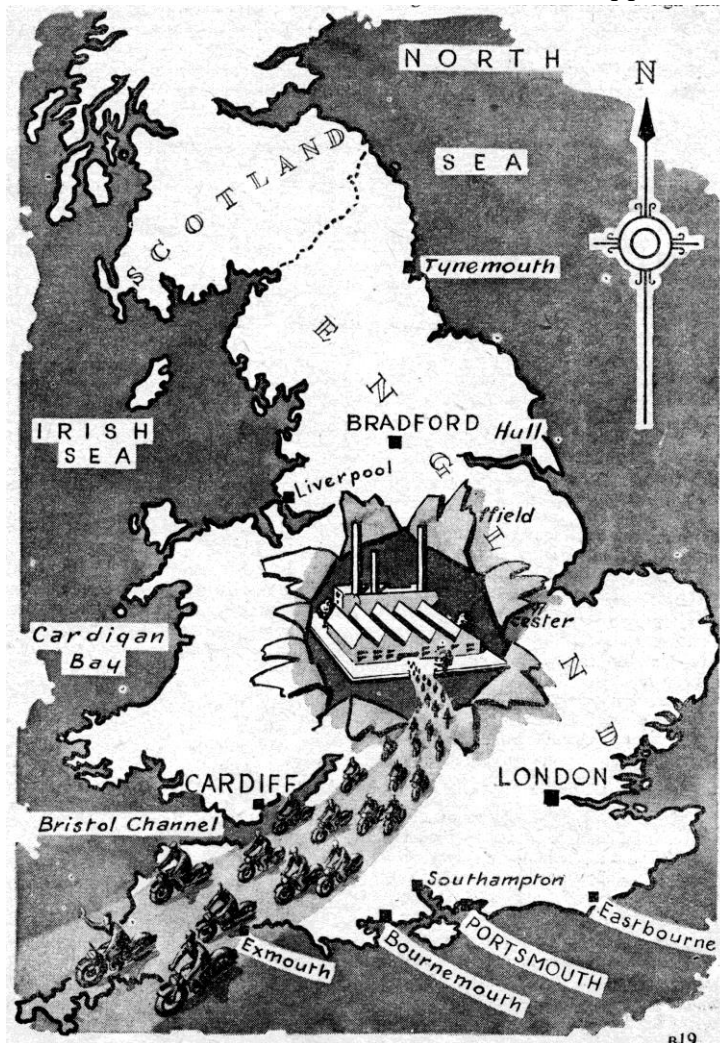
Another factor which wields a considerable influence on sales is the heavy influx of cars, again mainly from England, for despite the large demand for two-wheelers, Australia has become mainly a car-minded country. The shortage of cars was, for a while, even greater than that of motorcycles, and delivery on some makes is still very far from catching up on the demand, so motorcycle sales still reap a little benefit; but as car deliveries increase, as they will do, short of a major war breaking out, the potential sales of motorcycles will decline, competition will necessarily become keener and the factory which markets models most suitable for Australian conditions will then naturally get the lion's share. That observation, whilst somewhat elementary, has often been overlooked by sales managers and technicians! Not that those available to-day are unsuitable; with almost every conceivable engine capacity from 50 c.c. up to 1,000 c.c., two-strokes, four-strokes, singles, twins and one four-cylinder job from which to choose, there is, in very truth, a model to suit every purpose, but the price factor has also to be considered. Although this is a country with wages at a high level, living expenses are heavy and, amongst many other things, motorcycle prices are also high, ranging from around £100-£125 for a 125 c.c. two-stroke to £435 for a **Vincent "Black Shadow."** In many instances people can only afford to buy models which, though good in their way, are subsequently subjected to treatment for which they were not designed and which may, of course, lead to trouble for which the machine may unfairly be blamed.

Apart from the price question, most dealers and distributors now handle as wide a range as they can, rather than concentrate on a limited number of models and are, therefore, able to offer the customer a good selection from which he can be assisted to choose the one best suited to his needs. In general order of popularity, the "500" comes an easy first with no outstanding preference for the "twin" as opposed to the "single"; it offers probably the optimum combination of performance, reasonable price, economy of running and ease of maintenance, and is capable of covering long distances, with a passenger if need be, without fatigue. The once popular "350" has lost ground considerably to the extent that while the "500" sells itself, the "350" has to be sold, and frequently the purchaser of one trades it in after a while, as part payment for a larger machine. On the other hand, the tiny "125s" which were considered little more than toys not so long ago, are enjoying a terrific boom (in 1951), and quite rightly so, for their light weight and general ease of handling allied to quite a respectable turn of speed make them almost ideal for city traffic work and even for longer daily journeys. Australia's capital cities are all located near the sea or on rivers and through "following the water" have spread over wide areas. Thus many people regularly travel twenty miles or more each day to work, and at the week-ends they make off into the mountains lying perhaps thirty or forty miles inland, or to the less crowded beaches at about the same distance. For these jaunts the modern 125 has all the power that is



necessary and can be purchased for less than a fifth the price of the cheapest new car.

Road-race, trial and scramble successes have a very large influence on sales, and the extraordinary performances put up by a few specially prepared B.S.A. "Bantams" have given this machine a popularity which it deserves on its merits anyway. But its many rivals, mostly Villiers engined, are also in demand, though the 197 c.c. unit of the latter make is rapidly gaining a foot-hold in public esteem because it has a better performance for only a few pounds extra both in cost and weight. It is in this lightweight field and also in the 250 cc class which is very poorly represented by English makes, that Continental competition is being felt most keenly; the state-owned Czech machines are undoubtedly serious rivals and it must be admitted that their appearance and general finish is very attractive, while



the total enclosure of most engine components, including the carburettor gives an appearance of simplicity which appeals to many. Their electric system is more robust and has been found to give less trouble than the English rectified A.C.-D.C. system which has not been entirely satisfactory. Consequently, the general impression is that, whilst basically sound in design most English lightweights could be "cleaned-up" with great advantage and could also be silenced more effectively.

These remarks do not apply to the LE Velocette, which though acknowledged to be an admirable design that will keep going without attention for much longer than the conventional small two-strokes, has not so far been a serious rival to them partly because of the relatively high price. In the matter of riding comfort, the LE is superior to any similar-sized machine and even to many larger models.

Australian roads are mainly of two sorts; there are thousands of miles of good quality bitumen-sealed highways on which even a rigid frame can be ridden at speed without too much discomfort, but there are

even "more thousands of miles of metalled or earth roads which are mostly corrugated or potholed by the volume of fast and heavy traffic they carry, and on these the only form of suspension which gives any real degree of comfort is a swinging-fork type with four or five inches total movement and preferably with hydraulic damping.

Many models are now fitted with air cleaners of respectable size; this is a very wise provision for, owing to the lack of rain for many months in the year, even bitumen roads are gritty, whilst the metal roads are so dusty that other traffic can make riding distinctly unpleasant unless there is a strong side-wind blowing. Under such conditions, cylinder bores and valve guides are bound to suffer in the absence of efficient air cleaners and it would be no exaggeration to say that the latter are a "must" on every road-going model. Another Australian condition, the impact of which is difficult to visualize without first-hand experience, is the total inability of riders here to obtain petrol anywhere, in city or country, at night or even after midday on Saturday and Sunday. The week-end tourist is therefore limited in his mileage or route by the capacity of the tank and the petrol consumption of his machine, so that large tanks could with advantage be fitted as standard or be supplied as an optional extra. Some 500 c.c. machines with 3- or 4-gallon tanks are fairly well placed; in fact many have a better range than some

125 c.c. models.

Sidecars are in evidence to some extent, though not so much as they might be. The heavy Customs duty enforced on bodies makes the price so prohibitive that it simply does not pay to import, so the demand is filled by locally made products such as the Dusting and Tillbrook, which, though very different from each other in design and method of manufacture, are both excellent articles and give very good service. The method of attachment to some of the spring-framed models is, however, not always as good as it might be. Also, frequently insufficient attention is paid to obtaining the correct front and rear spring strength or the appropriate fork trail on the machine itself, with the result that the outfit handles badly.

Speed competitions and, to a lesser degree, trials of the English type as opposed to long-distance events, are enjoying terrific popularity, particularly in Victoria, although the only State with a permanent road circuit is New South Wales, which has a real gem of a course at Bathurst, two hundred and fifty miles inland from Sydney. The other States manage to obtain permits for road circuits occasionally, but mainly depend on airstrips for real racing, though there are a number of scramble circuits on private ground in each State. The system of classifying riders into grades, and the introduction of Clubman's events in which about the only stipulations are the limitation of fuel to pump-petrol and the exclusion of T.T. replica-type machines, whereas alcohol is permitted in all other events, allows plenty of scope for even the novice and the not-so-expert rider, and fields of fifty or more are commonplace in Clubman races. All sorts of mounts are used and some surprising speeds are wrung out of models which were never intended by the makers to be raced.

*This broad main street of Yass, a typical wool-country town of 3,200 inhabitants, is part of the Hume Highway, main trunk road from Melbourne to Sydney.*



Generally speaking, the supply and distribution of spares is good in the capital cities, but is not so good in the country towns where the total number of motorcycles in the surrounding districts does not warrant the carrying of heavy stocks in view of their high landed costs under to-day's trading conditions. Allowing for 25 per cent rate of exchange, a 20 per cent import duty, 8 per cent sales tax and a lot of other incidentals like carriage and handling charges, the prices of some spares particularly for those makes which are not sold in large quantities, are rather formidable, which tends to foster the local manufacture of pattern parts. Some firms are well equipped for this work and in fact have been forced into it through inability to obtain any spares at all for pre-war models and, being aware of the special problems involved, they do a very good job, But some local replacements are by no means up to the standard they should be, but are difficult to resist because of their more favourable prices. Nevertheless, the growth of air transport all over the Commonwealth has greatly assisted the spares position, because a part in stock, in say, Adelaide, can be delivered to an address in Brisbane (about 1,500 miles away as the crow flies) in less than a couple of days at a cost of about a shilling a pound. Not many years ago the time taken by rail for the same journey, including several delays occasioned by transshipment from one railway gauge to another at two places en route, would be a week or more and the cost would be about the same. In extreme cases, parts can be flown straight out from England. As an example of what can be done in this direction, if everything runs according to schedule, it has been known for only seven days to elapse between cabling for the part and its receipt here! Even parts ordered by air and sent by ship are now taking only seven or eight weeks to get here, which is a great

improvement on conditions a year or so ago, though some components, notably sprockets and chains, are still short.

Taken by and large, the general attitude of the “Aussie “ toward present day English motorcycles is that they are excellent when used for the purposes for which they were designed, and one hears more than a few criticisms of the marketing and servicing methods, although some distributors and dealers are held in higher esteem than others.

Many of the foremost racing men, either on the active list or those who have retired from the arena, have established retail businesses and with their specialized knowledge do a great deal towards keeping their customers’ mounts in fettle; it is not uncommon for machines to be sent several hundred miles, to men like Hinton or Bain, for tuning and preparation for racing.

Nevertheless, the continued influx of Europeans with their natural predilection for purchasing goods from their native countries will lead towards a greater demand for Continental models when they become available and English factories will need to be fully alive to that situation if they are to hold their present commanding lead in this country.

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**Wanted:** Your ideas about format or content of OVR. What about submitting your constructive suggestions or better still your contributions in the form of Ride Reports, Original Stories, Your Technical Experiences and such like to the OVR editor ? You do not need to be a literary wizard as the editor will, only if essential, tidy things up for you.

Likewise, if you are thinking of arranging any rides or events, again drop a line with details to the editor who can then publicise them through OVR newsflashes and/or entry in the “Around The Traps” section of OVR.

Contact the editor by email [OzVinReview@gmail.com](mailto:OzVinReview@gmail.com).

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## Historic Heaven

*A readers contribution by Guy Allen, Australia*

It’s an all too rare treat to get away for a few days on classic bikes, says Guy Allen, who brings us the tale of the recent Great Alpine Road, Omeo ride.

Young Martyn from the Oz Vincent Review could never be accused of lacking organisational instincts. In fact, if you were planning a little get-together like a D-day re-enactment, or a rehearsal for the Second Coming, you could do worse than sling him the planning.

Prior to the ride, the world’s most comprehensive info pack arrived by email, then was presented to the riders at the start of the ride in analogue form.

The basic idea was to meet up after the annual Vincent Owner Club rally in Marysville on the Sunday night, stay the night, and head off for a three-day jaunt through the countryside. Or at least that was the plan – one which Chris Horner’s freshly-minted Vincati disagreed with.

Defying all attempts to rectify a clutch drama on Sunday afternoon, the bike clearly wasn't going to make it, so the ever-bullient Chris rode home that same night, to join us next day with his Rapide. He and Phil Pilgrim were using this as a shakedown run for their Vincati's, in preparation for next year's international VOC run in Europe.

Somehow managing to resist the obvious temptation our little pack presented, the weather gods smiled on us. Just as well, as the route through Black Spur, Healesville, Yarra Junction, Noojee and Powelltown is an absolute delight (particularly the Powelltown section) in the dry, but can be a horror in the wet. The tar snakes through some fairly deep forest and, as with much of the trip, you're torn between cranking open the throttle to enjoy the corners, or easing back and enjoying the scenery. In any case you need to be on the alert for timber trucks, which sometimes display a fairly liberal interpretation of the road rules.



#### The Oz Vincent Review

### Great Alpine Road (Omeo), March 31 – April 2, 2014

**Preamble: Day 0 @ Marysville Sunday March 30:** Dinner at the Black Spur Hotel – fantastic meals, extensive (and reasonable \$) Wine List and if required 4½ star accommodations.

**Route: Day 1: Monday March 31**

We will depart from Narbethong (about 12km from Marysville) at 10:30am on Monday March 31. Those departing from Marysville should leave there at 10 am in order to meet up at 10:20 for a 10:30 start, at the Narbethong turn off to Marysville. Then travelling the Black Spur to Healesville where we will stop for a Fuel fill up - and then on to Yarra Junction then on to Powelltown through Noojee with a stop at Willow Grove for lunch (note there is NO FUEL at Willow Grove). After lunch it is on to Tyers via Rawson for fuel, then Heyfield to Maffra, where we will stop at the Gippsland Vehicle Collection at approx. 2:15 for a 45 minute break and coffee. After Maffra it's on to Strafford then Bengworden and finally Bairnsdale. In all around 340km. In Bairnsdale we will stay at the Comfort Inn, Mitchell on Main, phone 03-5152-5012.

Camp Marysville to Bairnsdale, travelling time = 4 ½ hours

We should be arriving in Yarra Junction at 11:10 am. Allowance for lunch and fuel stops = 1 hour

Allowance for visit to Maffra Museum = ¾ hour (we should arrive there around 2:15 pm)

Total 6 ½ hours, Thus depart from Marysville at 10:00 (meet at Narbethong/Marysville turn off at 10:20 for 10:30 departure) should have us in Bairnsdale by 4:00 pm

**Route Day 2: Tuesday April 1**

Departing at 10:00 am we will have a fabulous ride from Bairnsdale to Omeo along the Great Alpine Way, arriving around 11:45 am, where after a fuel and lunch stop we will then continue along the Great Alpine Way to Bright where we will enjoy a sumptuous classic country pub dinner at the Star Hotel and overnight in Bright at the Riverbank Park Motel, telephone 03 57551255.

Bairnsdale to Bright, travelling time = expected to be 3 ½ hours

Allowance for lunch and fuel in Omeo = 1 hour

Total 4 ½ hours, thus depart from Bairnsdale 10 am should have us in Bright by 2:30 pm

Leaves ample time to explore Bright or for a great ride up Mount Buffalo (2 ½ hour round trip)

**Route Day 3: Wednesday April 2**

Today we travel from Bright, departing at 8:30 am, through Myrtleford where there is a great bakery for breakfast, Milawa, Oxley and on to Moyhu then Whitfield. From there we pass through Tolmie then Mansfield where we can refuel. We then head off through Yarck and travel on to Alexandra and Taggerty then into Marysville for lunch and then back to Melbourne. In all around 380 km.

Bright to Marysville, Travelling time = 3 1/2 hours

Allowance for Breakfast in Myrtleford = 30 minutes

Allowance for Coffee and fuel in Mansfield = 30 minutes

Sub-Total 4 ½ hours, thus leaving Bright at 8:30 am should have us at Marysville by 1:00 pm

1 hour for lunch etc. in Marysville

Marysville to Melbourne, travelling time = 1 hour, 20 minutes, should have us in Melbourne around 3:20 pm

*Page 2, of the 12 Page Ride Information pack*

Our lunch stop in Willow Grove saw Graeme do his best impersonation of *The Man Who Came to Dinner* – he dropped in for a cup of tea on his way home to Sale from the Vincent National and stayed for the rest of the ride! He was a welcome addition to a gang that turned out to be a good mix of characters.



The afternoon's entertainment included a run down the hills through Heyfield and on to Maffra, for a gecko at the Gippsland Vehicle Collection. The place was about to celebrate its tenth anniversary and offers an eclectic mix of machinery. It's well worth the diversion. Our route continued on to Bairnsdale, via Stratford and a few back roads. It's at the end of the day that Phil should adopt a clever disguise. His well-known skills as a mechanic means he is in high demand the moment people stop, so he's unlikely to see any rest for an hour or two. He can be his own worst enemy. There was an electrical issue on my T160 that wasn't bothering me, but was driving him crazy – so he had to fix it.



The were no long distance awards, but if there were, Murray and Cheryl Barr were clear winners, having towed their bikes down from northern Queensland. Cheryl's BSA B33, the smallest bike in the group, proved to be as tough as old boots. It also managed, with a sympathetic owner on board, to be never more than a few minutes behind despite having to chase much quicker machinery.



*At Mount Thredbo with Phil's Vincati featuring: L to R: Chris Horner, Graeme Glover, Murray Barr, Guy Allen, Martyn Goodwin and Phil Pilgrim. Missing from this photo is Cheryl Barr, David Hulstone and Ken Phelps*

Tuesday was of course the scenic highlight of the ride, up along the Great Alpine Road to Omeo, across Thredbo and on to the pretty hillside village of Bright. Here your biggest risk is getting so absorbed in looking at the scenery that you unintentionally become part of it! Someone in the group observed that being up in the mountains really does uplift your spirits and there's no question they were right. Our group was settled into the aptly-named Riverbank Motel for the night, which proved to be a great spot to hang out after dinner with the odd glass of wine, chatting and watching the Ovens River glide past.

Meanwhile whichever mechanical god Chris had upset was clearly in a vengeful mood, as the electrics on his Rapide looked like they may not make it. There was a tinge of sadness that the Wednesday was to be the last day of the ride – we were just getting good at it. Still, there was nothing to whinge about when you looked at the route map: breakfast in Myrtleford, then on to Milawa, Whitfield, Tolmie and Mansfield. From there the group went its separate ways.

*Myrtleford Breakfast, seated, L to R: Murray, Graeme, David, Ken and Martyn*



This is an area that deserves exploration if you have the time. The Brown Brothers winery in Milawa has an excellent restaurant, while the Whitfield pub is also a popular spot to don the feed bag. There's a little detour on the hill to Tolmie, a dirt track to Power's Lookout. It's named after a bushranger and, if the legends are true, you can see it was the perfect place to spot pursuing troopers.

All up it was a fantastic ride – one that will remain prominent in the memory banks. I've kept the route notes, too, as it's difficult to beat for a three or four-day jaunt.

Thanks, Martyn. Now, about that D-day re-enactment...

*Participants:*

- Martyn Goodwin – Vincent Comet
- Phil Pilgrim – Vincati
- Cheryl Barr – BSA B33
- Murray Barr – Vincent Rapide
- David Hulstone – Vincent Comet
- Ken Phelps – Norvin
- Chris Horner – Vincent Rapide
- Graeme Glover – Velocette Venom
- Guy Allen – Triumph T160

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## Event Calendar

*An overview of some upcoming rides and events that may be of interest.*

If you are planning any rides or are aware of events that readers may be interested in, you may invite others to participate via the “OVR NewsFlash” service and also the “Around The Traps” column in OVR. Just drop the editor a line at [OzVinReview@Gmail.com](mailto:OzVinReview@Gmail.com) .

April 26 – 27 <i>Simply Spectacular</i>	BSA club, All British Rally, Newstead. Full details are provided elsewhere within this edition of OVR.
May 4	Seymour Swap Meet; Seymour Showgrounds, Tallarook Street Seymour VIC
May 5 <i>Great rally for Classic British Bikes</i>	Triumph Owners Club Link Rally: <i>Bayles Recreation Reserve (Melways 410 R7)</i> Koo Wee Rup, South Gippsland; 10am – 4pm
May 24 & 25 <i>Always fun</i>	Austin 7 Club presents Historic Winton Races, Winton Racetrack, Winton VIC
September 14	Goulburn Valley Motor Vehicle Drivers Club; Shepparton Swap Meet. Venue - Shepparton Show Grounds, Midland Highway
October 24 – 26 <i>Ripper weekend</i>	Philip Island; Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix
November 29  <i>To Good To Miss out on; around 800 miles over 4 days</i>	You are invited to a dinner for Vincent Riders on Saturday the 29th of November 2014 in the small fishing village of Robe, South Australia. Diners <b>MUST</b> travel to the dinner on a Vincent or a Vincent powered machine. Make your Robe dinner reservation now; contact Brian Hale by email; <a href="mailto:brianh1967@yahoo.com">brianh1967@yahoo.com</a>
December 7 <i>Gets better every year</i>	Bendigo Historic Motorcycle Club, Motorcycle specific Swap Meet @ Llanelly. Camp on site O/Nite on Dec 6 <sup>th</sup> . More info call Elaine 03 5475 1668
<b>Remember</b>	If you are planning any rides or are aware of events that readers may be interested in, you may invite others to participate via the “OVR NewsFlash” service and also the “Around The Traps” column in OVR. Just drop the editor a line at <a href="mailto:OzVinReview@Gmail.com">OzVinReview@Gmail.com</a> .



# From the Past

## ANGLO-AMERICAN AGREEMENT concerning the safety and comfort of



**T**HE *MOTOR CYCLE* " of London, England, and "CYCLE" of Los Angeles, U.S.A., have just published Road Tests on the Vincent Comet. The following brief extracts show clearly the enthusiasm aroused in these experienced Pressmen by this grand machine.

1. "CYCLE"—November 1950 issue, said:—

"This Test fulfilled a personal dream of long standing, just how does a Vincent 'single' compare with other makes? The realization of my dream was perfect—the Vincent had EVERYTHING. I am more enthusiastic about this particular motorcycle than any I have ever ridden. Perhaps someday, when I test a Vincent 'Black Shadow', I will transfer my enthusiasm to it but we'll wait and see . . . Three outstanding characteristics became noticeable as the Road Test progressed; the 500 c.c. single cylinder engine had NO VIBRATION except when over-revved in the gears, the new Vincent Girdraulic front forks made high speed cornering and bumpy 'rough stuff' just too simple, and the patented Vincent rear springing cushioned road shocks without any trace of sideways rear wheel movement. In addition, the machine has a feeling of solidness, the like of which I have never before experienced in motorcycling . . . Stopping power is beyond description, other than to say, 'It's perfect'. Even after five stops in rapid succession from 80 m.p.h., using the front brake ONLY, no 'brake fade' was noticeable . . . I am at a loss to adequately describe the feeling of security and safety I felt on the road, regardless of speed . . . Although it sounds like an illogical statement, I would like to say that 'If you plan on buying any make of single cylinder bike, even though the price is higher for a Vincent 'Comet', BUY THE VINCENT'."

2. "THE MOTOR CYCLE"—November 16th, 1950, said:—

" . . . the steering is superbly precise and light . . . front and rear suspension characteristics harmonize in an exemplary manner and result in steering and roadholding which is not only a sheer delight, especially at high speeds, but which also makes the maximum mechanical contribution to safety. At all times there is a pleasing rigidity about the handling which gives a precision that means so much when the machine is cornering . . . High gearing gives a soothing, easy sensation to high-speed riding. At 60 m.p.h. . . the machine is free from vibration, the engine has the feeling of running at no more than a fast tick-over, and the throttle twistgrip is only about a quarter open . . . It seemed impossible to overdrive the engine, which under all conditions of usage during the test remained

noticeably cool. As a corollary, the engine maintains its tune for very long periods and, it might confidently be supposed, would give long service before replacements would be necessary. As mentioned earlier, the machine is singularly free from engine vibration; there is a remote feel about the power unit, which seems to be working lazily and easily . . . the front wheel brakes were strikingly efficient—light to operate and powerful, and progressive in action. Rear-wheel brakes were most effective . . . the pleasure of using the silky deceleration of the front brakes is enhanced by a fork which does not deflect markedly under braking."

*Just to show that the remarkable unanimity of opinion expressed above is indeed founded on firm and constant fact, may we quote briefly from yet a third expert opinion, to wit "MOTOR CYCLING'S Road Test report dated January 26th, 1950, which said:—*

" . . . the faster the machine was ridden, the better became the steering. The stability on indifferent and greasy road surfaces gave the rider full confidence and no excessive caution was needed to negotiate treacherous tramlines and wet wood blocks . . . The rear suspension ironed out road bumps in a most satisfactory fashion and both front and rear wheels adhered firmly to the road in all circumstances. Confirming the manufacturers' claim, the 'Girdraulic' forks held the front wheel steadily on any line chosen without a trace of waver and it would appear that the performance characteristics of the forks improve as the speed rises. Variations in road surface and even rain did not appear to affect the way in which the 'Comet' could be ridden. It could be heeled over with the sure knowledge that nothing untoward would happen and on several occasions weaved its way through a series of bends without, apparently, any assistance from the rider . . . At no engine speed was any vibration apparent, the revs. rising with a smoothness reminiscent of a dynamo . . . Test panel brake figures verge on the incredible, but give factual evidence of something almost beyond even journalistic capabilities of description. Alone, the front brake provided a figure that is very satisfactory for any machine using both stoppers together."

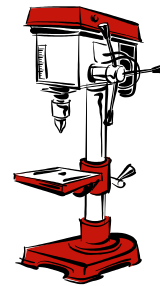
*All our models are equally outstanding for superb handling, stability and wonderful braking—the qualities that are absolutely essential for safety. Vincent motorcycles have a great lead in these respects thanks to their highly unconventional design—their frame construction, rear springing system, famous "Girdraulic" forks and four brakes differ widely from conventional practice and are quite unlike any other design on the market. They contribute much towards making the Vincent*

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# Workshop Wisdom



## 6 or 12 Volt? – That is the question.

Some very early vehicle electrical systems were only 4v but it wasn't long before most manufacturers standardised on 6v. This lasted quite a few years until the number of electrical components on a vehicle started to increase and the standard system went up to 12v. This is what most vehicles have today though heavy vehicles such as buses and lorries use 24v systems and even higher voltages have been considered by some manufacturers. There is no doubt that system efficiency improves as the voltage goes up – that's why the National Grid carries hundreds of thousands of volts though this is not likely to appear in our vehicles! Increasing the voltage is not the total answer as it then creates its own problems - switch contacts burning out is just one. So, the question is: should we convert to 12v?

The fact is, a standard '6v' dynamo is only 6v because the regulator is set up to work at 6v. The same dynamo is perfectly capable of generating higher voltages so fitting a 12v regulator will give a 12v system. This is a simple view and there are other factors to consider.

The voltage output of the dynamo is dependent, amongst other things, on its speed of rotation so it will need to be turning faster to charge a 12v battery than it would for a 6v battery. What this means in practice is that 30mph in top gear might be enough to generate 6v but you may need to be doing nearer 40mph to get 12v. This may be fine if riding out on the open roads but could become a problem if doing a lot of town riding.

On some machines it may be possible to get round this by altering the dynamo drive ratio so that the dynamo runs faster at a given road speed. How about actually converting the dynamo so that it now generates 12v at the same speed that used to give 6v? Dynamo theory tells us that, to convert from 6 to 12v, the number of turns in both the field coil and armature needs to be doubled. Unfortunately there just isn't enough room in most dynamos to be able to achieve this.

Yes, a thinner wire could be used but that creates another problem. The wire's current carrying capacity is directly proportional to its cross sectional area so halving the cross sectional area would also halve the current carrying capacity. Now, power in watts is equal to volts times amps. The standard 60 watt Lucas E3L dynamo is 60W because it was designed to produce 10 amps at 6 volts. If converted to 12v in the way just described, the thinner wire halves the current carrying capacity so we get 12 volts times 5 amps which works out to be the same 60 watts. Bearing in mind that the brightness of the lamps is measured in watts, you can see that there is no increase in power gained by converting to 12v in this way so the lights would be no brighter. That in itself is not a problem and certainly the lower amperage improves the efficiency of the wiring loom because there is less power loss in the loom with lower currents. Unfortunately, halving the cross sectional area of the wire still would not reduce the diameter enough to create enough room to double the number of turns. The wire would need to be reduced in diameter by a considerable amount which would reduce its current carrying capacity to an unacceptable level. In practice, this type of conversion could not be done – there simply is not enough room. Armatures and field coils 'converted to 12v' are a compromise on this theoretical ideal.

It is often the case that a poorly performing 6v system is the reason for choosing to change to 12v. When this is done, consider what the new system consists of. A newly overhauled dynamo 'converted' to 12v, a new 12v battery, a new 12v regulator, new 12v bulbs and so on. Chances are, while these parts are being changed, poor wire loom connections are noticed and corrected – maybe even a complete new wiring loom is fitted. In short, a new 12v system is bound to be so much better than the poor, worn out 6v system it replaces. A similar overhaul on the original 6v system is likely to produce very similar major improvements for a fraction of the cost.

Our recommendations for obtaining a good 6v system are:

- Service/overhaul the dynamo and if of the 3 brush type, convert to 2 brush operation.
- Fit an electronic regulator – far more efficient than the old mechanical regulators.



- Fit a battery of at least 8Ah. Gel batteries are good as they require less maintenance and hold their charge for longer when only used infrequently. Lithium Ion Batteries are way better. Lead acid batteries fitted into hollowed out rubber battery cases will be of too small a capacity and will not last.
- Keep the battery fully charged. A so called 6v battery will be nearer 7v when fully charged but will drop to zero if not looked after. The dynamo will have a hard job powering the lights and attempting to charge a flat battery at the same time.
- Fit LED bulbs in the rear lamp and instruments. On a 6v system, an 18W/5W filament bulb taillight takes nearly one amp when the lights are on and another 3 amps when the brake is applied. LED bulbs are just as bright but require around a tenth of the power. That frees up valuable power capacity which is better used in the choice of headlamp bulb.
- Don't be too ambitious on the chosen headlamp wattage. A 60W headlamp, though superb when first switched on, will probably flatten the battery and dim to practically nothing after a few miles whereas a 35W or 40W headlamp will give an acceptable light all the way home. Quartz halogen headlamp bulbs give better light output.
- Ensure the headlamp reflector is in top condition
- If rewiring, use cable with a large cross sectional area and as few connectors as possible. This will keep resistance to a minimum, thereby allowing more power to actually reach the bulbs. For the same reason, run a separate heavy gauge earth wire from the headlamp to the battery earth terminal so that the earth return is not trying to get through greased head bearings or along control cables.
- Remember that current has to flow along the wire to the bulb but also has to flow from the bulb holder, through the frame and back to the power source (battery and/or dynamo) so make sure ALL connections are clean and tight – this includes bulb holders, switches and fuse holders.
- The dynamo body itself is an important electrical connection. Make sure that a paint finish on the dynamo doesn't prevent a good contact. Similarly ensure that the engine is electrically connected to the frame. It may be necessary to scratch off some of the paint under engine mounting bolts or run a separate earth wire from engine (or dynamo) direct to the battery.
- If possible, change the dynamo drive gearing so that the dynamo runs faster at a given engine speed.

The resulting 6v system will be perfectly adequate for short night time journeys. If you are contemplating running for hundreds of miles of night time riding on a regular basis, then yes, a 12v conversion is the way to go but it should ideally involve a change to an aftermarket 12v alternator rather than an attempt to 'convert' a Lucas or Miller dynamo!

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**Coventry Spares Ltd**, USA: Fantastic service and deep product knowledge plus extensive range of excellent Vincent Spares and tools. Ships Worldwide. See website for more information <http://www.thevincentparts.com>

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