Classic Motorcycle Club Tauranga

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Celebrating 50 years at Classic Flyers Museum over Labour Weekend 2026.

Fifty years of motorcycles and friendship

This month we look back at the club's anniversary display and luncheon at Classic Flyers, share photographs from the weekend, and continue Pat Smith's family story of John Charles Potter and his pioneering motorcycle.

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President’s editorial

Our 50th anniversary has now passed, marked by a memorable display of motorcycles at Classic Flyers over Labour Weekend and a luncheon at the same venue. Members and old friends gathered to share stories of their time with the club and their motorcycling backgrounds. You will find reports and photographs from the weekend in the pages that follow.

I must thank everyone who helped make the weekend such a success, especially those who gave their time to assist with the motorcycle display. Your efforts in bringing in bikes, setting up, talking with visitors and helping throughout the weekend were greatly appreciated.

One particularly encouraging result was the interest in club membership that grew out of conversations among the motorcycles. The display gave us a chance to meet people who share our enthusiasm and to show them something of what the club has to offer.

Our online presence also played an important part in the weekend’s success. The overwhelming response to the motorcycle display came through our Facebook posts and the groups in which they were shared. Finding groups with interests that overlap with our own, and building connections with them, will be an important part of growing the club. These connections can help us reach enthusiasts who may not yet know about us and invite them to become involved.

Members can help by sharing our Facebook posts and event notices with friends and other motorcycle groups they belong to. A shared post, a personal invitation or a conversation with someone who enjoys motorcycles could introduce them to the club. Those everyday connections can help us reach new people and keep the club thriving.

That response highlights the importance of becoming a more open and outward-looking club. We have much to offer beyond our regular riding group, and by welcoming other like-minded motorcycle enthusiasts we can share the friendships, knowledge and enjoyment that have sustained the club for fifty years.

Safe riding,

Bruce Partridge

President

Anniversary motorcycle display at Classic Flyers Museum

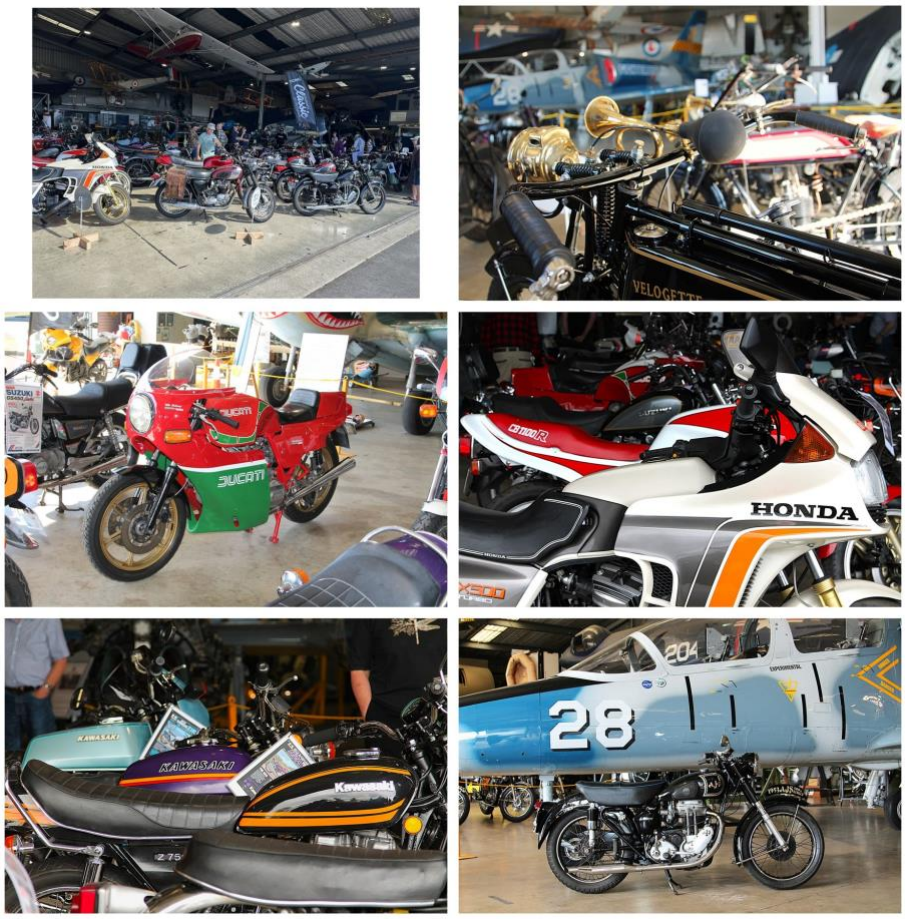
Labour Weekend 2026

Nearly 50 motorcycles, spanning the years from 1914 to 1999, made an impressive display at Classic Flyers Museum over Labour Weekend. The wide range of ages, types and styles attracted a substantial audience, with visitors, fellow motorcyclists and club members calling in to admire the machines and share their stories.

Among the special motorcycles exhibited, in no particular order, were a 1914 Velocette, a rare four-cylinder Indian from the mid-1920s, a 1972 Kawasaki H2 three-cylinder two-stroke, a Mike Hailwood Replica Ducati and a Honda CX500 Turbo. A collection of British motorcycles from the 1950s included Matchless models, among them a G9 and G80s, along with Ariels, Triumphs and other marques representing that era.

Particularly noticeable was the strong representation of motorcycles from 1970 to 1979, reflecting the growing influence of Japanese manufacturers. Honda and its competitors captured riders' attention with smooth engines, electric starting on many models, reliability and, as more than one visitor observed, their ability to leave the garage floor free of oil.

Several motorcycles from this period had been immaculately restored and were presented in exceptional condition, drawing many appreciative comments throughout the weekend.



Classics through the decades: a selection of the motorcycles displayed among the museum's aircraft.

Visitors and club teamwork

Club members rostered on duty provided welcome support, keeping an eye on the motorcycles and talking with visitors. Their stories, knowledge and helpful comments added considerably to the enjoyment of the display.

Classic Flyers staff said they were delighted with the response and the number of people who visited the museum over the weekend. For the club, it was a wonderful opportunity to showcase some of the outstanding motorcycles owned by members—machines often tucked away in garages, undergoing restoration or brought out for rides on suitable occasions.

It was also encouraging to see how many visitors arrived by motorcycle, some travelling considerable distances. When asked how they had heard about the display, the overwhelming response was Facebook, highlighting the value of members sharing club events through their networks.



Pride of ownership and a shared enthusiasm for classic motorcycles helped make the anniversary display a memorable occasion.

Behind the scenes, plenty of teamwork went into getting the motorcycles into place. A number arrived on trailers, with helpers assisting with unloading and setting up on Friday and early Saturday morning.

The same cooperation made packing up a smooth operation. Although the motorcycles had to be removed by Monday afternoon, virtually all were away by 3 pm on Sunday, thanks to a well-organised effort.

A great display, a successful anniversary event and a fine example of club teamwork. Thank you to everyone who supplied motorcycles, helped with transport, took a turn on duty or supported the event.

Fifty years of friendship celebrated at anniversary luncheon

Around 56 members, family and friends gathered at Classic Flyers in Mount Maunganui on Sunday, 25 October 2026, to celebrate the Tauranga Classic Motorcycle Club's 50th anniversary.

The luncheon provided a welcome opportunity for longstanding members to catch up, share stories and reflect on the friendships and adventures built through the club over five decades.

MC Kevin Taylor invited several members to speak about their motorcycling lives and their time with the club. Throughout the afternoon, photographs displayed on the large screen brought back memories of rides, events and members, both past and present.

Shirley Alderdice, now in her late eighties, shared recollections from her many years of motorcycling. The proud owner from new of a 1957 BSA Bantam D5, Shirley and her motorcycle have attracted plenty of interest and discussion over the years. She also recalled owning a 1929 Triumph—a machine she admitted she was ultimately pleased to part with. It was lovely to have members of Shirley's family there to hear her stories.

Neil Barnard entertained those present with memories of his long association with the club and his adventures aboard his Vincent Comet. Having owned the bike in his younger days, Neil sold it before buying it back several years ago. He continues to ride it around the countryside, adding new chapters to their shared history.



A member and a classic motorcycle at the anniversary display, another opportunity to share stories over the weekend.

Memories from fifty years together

Longstanding member Kelvin Mitchell also contributed his recollections. Kevin's recurring question—"British, Japanese or American?"—prompted some good-humoured discussion about motorcycle loyalties, with Kelvin remaining diplomatically noncommittal.

Richard and Marie Patching, both now in their late eighties and no longer riding, spoke warmly of their years with the club. Their memories centred on shared adventures, lasting friendships and the many connections made along the way.

Visiting from Hawke's Bay were longtime friends of the club, Jim and Maggie Lord. Jim, well known for his association with vintage Indian motorcycles, spoke about the links between the clubs and encouraged support for his annual Mail Run from Taupō to Napier. Originally organised for girder-fork motorcycles, the ride has evolved to include more modern machines as the original bikes and their riders have become fewer.

Life member Peter Jones travelled from the Far North on his 1984 Moto Guzzi to take part in the anniversary weekend. Peter has a particularly strong connection with the Alderdice family and shared stories from the club's early years, including racing adventures with his close friend Barry Alderdice.

The afternoon was a fitting celebration of the people, motorcycles and shared experiences that have kept the club together for 50 years.



Pride of ownership at Classic Flyers during the club's anniversary weekend.

Anniversary weekend in photographs



Early motorcycles beneath the museum's aircraft.



Kawasakis among the Japanese classics on display.



The distinctive Mike Hailwood Replica Ducati.

More from the anniversary display



Honda's CX500 Turbo alongside other motorcycles in the display.



A Honda four-cylinder classic beneath the aircraft.



British motorcycles formed an important part of the anniversary collection.

John Charles Potter

The motorcycle that survived

Part Two From a forgotten garage to a museum

In Part One, we followed the remarkable life of John Charles Potter, from his early years as a competitive cyclist in Britain to his engineering career in Java and his ownership of one of the world's earliest production motorcycles.

But what became of that extraordinary machine?

Forgotten in a Garage

The Hildebrand & Wolfmüller had been a sensation when it first appeared in the 1890s. Yet motorcycle development moved quickly, and within a few years its unusual engineering had been overtaken by more practical designs.

Potter's motorcycle eventually ceased to be used and was left in a family garage in Java.

There it remained, gradually deteriorating, a relic of a pioneering period in motoring that was already disappearing from living memory.

By 1932, the machine had attracted renewed attention. According to the account preserved by Potter's son, it was transferred to naval workshops in Surabaya, where work was undertaken to restore it.

It was an extraordinary survivor. Few motorcycles from the very beginning of the industry had been preserved, and even fewer had a known history stretching back to their original owners.

A Second Life

The restored motorcycle subsequently became part of a transport museum collection in Surabaya.

What had once been an unfamiliar and perhaps rather alarming contraption on the roads of Java was now recognised as an important piece of transport history.

Its significance was greater than its age alone. This was a machine associated with the earliest introduction of motorised transport to the Dutch East Indies, with a documented connection to the engineer who had originally acquired and ridden it.

The motorcycle had made the transition from everyday mechanical curiosity to historical artefact.

But its story was far from over.

War comes to Java



John Charles Potter's 1885 one-mile bicycle racing trophy, recovered by the family after the Second World War and preserved in New Zealand. Photograph courtesy of Pat Smith.

In 1937, John Charles Potter died in Lawang, having spent much of his life in Java.

Five years later, Japanese forces occupied the Dutch East Indies. The occupation brought enormous hardship, particularly for European families, many of whom were interned and lost their homes and possessions.

The Potter family was among those affected.

After the war, recovering even a small part of what had been lost was an enormous challenge. Family possessions had been scattered, buildings occupied or looted, and familiar communities disrupted.

It was during this period that another remarkable survivor from John Potter's earlier life reappeared.

The Cup That Came Home

Readers of Part One will remember the silver presentation cup Potter won in the one-mile bicycle race at the Ayr Academy Athletics Club's Annual Sports on 13 June 1885.

It had accompanied him from Britain to Java and remained a treasured family possession.

During the wartime upheaval, the cup disappeared along with other family belongings.

After the war, members of the family were searching through a warehouse containing recovered and looted possessions when they came upon a silver cup near a doorway.

The engraving provided the proof:

1 Mile Bicycle Race — Won by J. C. Potter.

Against considerable odds, the trophy awarded to a young cyclist in Scotland in 1885 had survived the upheaval of war in Java some sixty years later.

Today, the original cup remains with the family in New Zealand, a remarkable physical link to Potter's early enthusiasm for two wheels.

The motorcycle’s continuing story

The Hildebrand & Wolfmüller also survived the passage of time and the upheavals that transformed Indonesia during the twentieth century.

The motorcycle is associated today with the Museum Negeri Mpu Tantular collection in East Java, where it is recognised for its place in the country's early motoring history.

There is something rather satisfying about that outcome.

A machine ordered from Germany by an English engineer living in Java, ridden when motorcycles were scarcely known, then left to deteriorate in a garage, had survived long enough to become a museum piece.

And unlike many very early motorcycles, its story did not end with an unidentified exhibit.

Its original rider had a name, a family and a history. More importantly, the family had retained the photographs, documents and recollections that allowed much of that history to be reconstructed.

A Family Connection Across Generations

For Pat Smith, John Charles Potter is not simply a name associated with an important motorcycle.

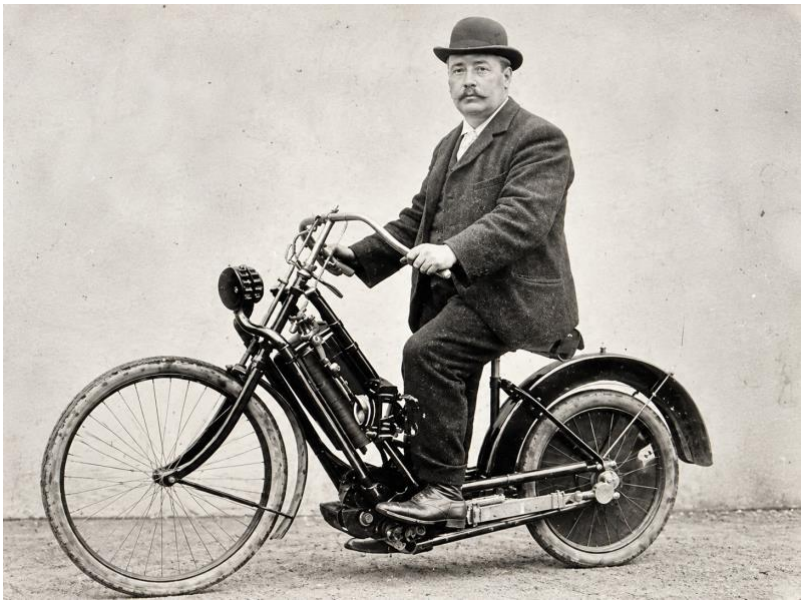
He is her grandfather.

Through Pat's research and the material preserved by her family, we can connect a surviving pioneering motorcycle with the man who rode it, his engineering career, his sporting achievements and the extraordinary experiences of his descendants.

It is a connection few motorcycle clubs could hope to have.

And perhaps that is what makes this story so appropriate for the Tauranga Classic Motorcycle Club's 50th anniversary. Motorcycles are important, but the people and stories behind them are what make their history come alive.

Our thanks to Pat Smith and her family for sharing this remarkable history and the photographs and documents that accompany it.



John Charles Potter with the Hildebrand & Wolfmüller in Java. Potter family photograph supplied by Pat Smith.