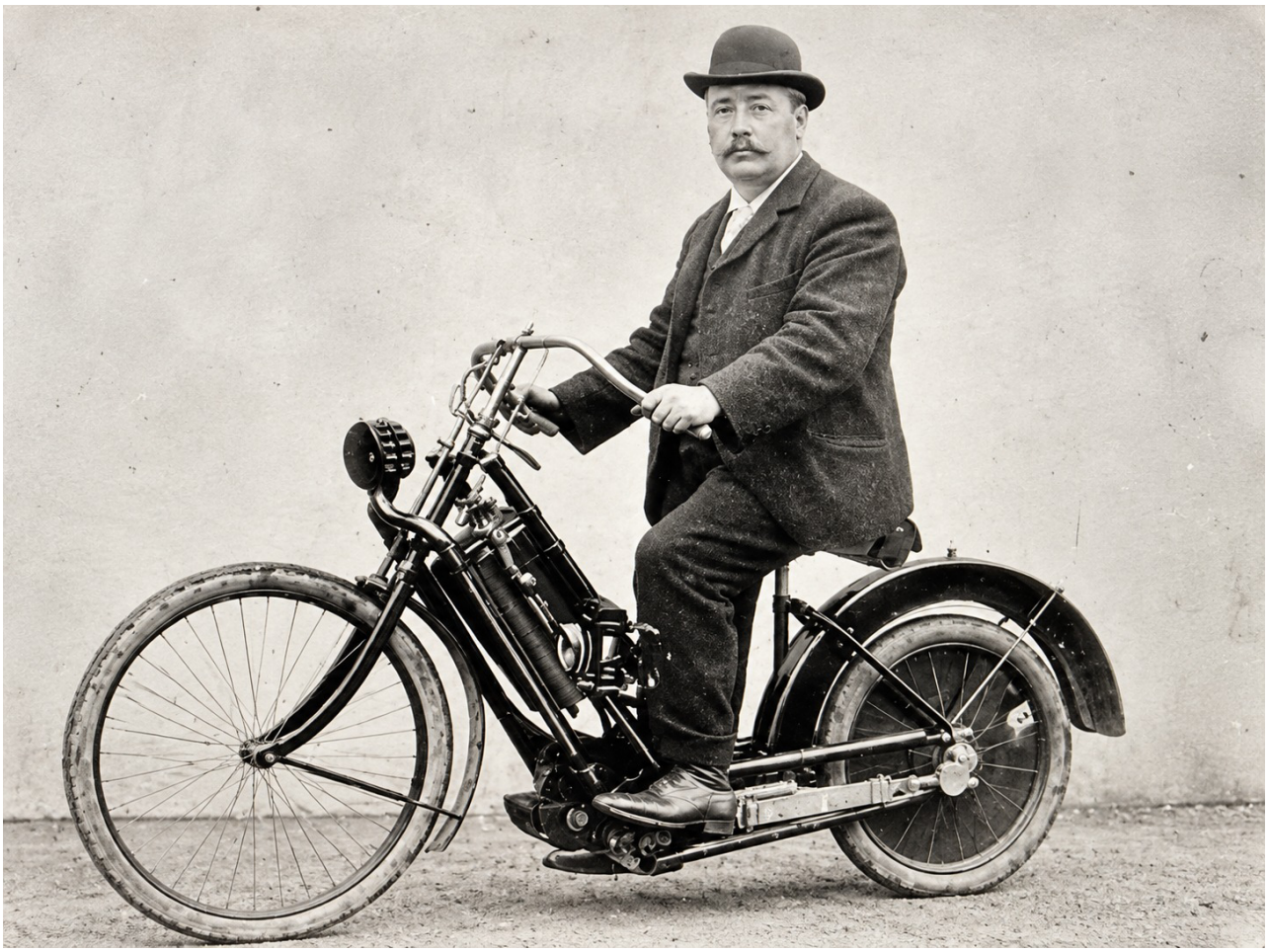
Tauranga Classic Motorcycle Club

50th Anniversary Newsletter October 2026



John Charles Potter and an extraordinary link to the dawn of motorcycling

John Charles Potter on the Hildebrand & Wolfmüller associated with the Potter family history. Original photograph supplied by Pat Smith.

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President's Message

October 2026 Our 50th Anniversary Edition

Well, here we are. Fifty years of the Tauranga Classic Motorcycle Club!

When a group of enthusiasts got together in 1976, I wonder how many imagined that the club would still be going strong half a century later. Over those years, motorcycles have come and gone, members have joined and moved on, and countless miles have been travelled. What has remained is the shared enthusiasm for old motorcycles and the friendships that go with them.

Our anniversary celebrations over Labour Weekend at the Classic Flyers Museum are now almost upon us. This is an opportunity not only to display some wonderful motorcycles but also to celebrate the people who have made the club what it is today.

My thanks go to everyone who has contributed to the preparations, particularly those making motorcycles available for display and helping with the organisation.

Keeping in touch

Over the past few weeks, we have put considerable effort into developing our club website. The aim is to make more material available to members, keep everyone informed about what is happening and provide another worthwhile benefit of belonging to the club.

There is already a growing collection of club history, motorcycle stories, newsletters and information about upcoming events. We will continue adding material, and member contributions are always welcome.

Like any club, you get out of it what you want. Some members simply enjoy keeping in touch, others want to ride, and some generously offer their time to help keep things running. All are equally welcome.

One of the challenges we face is an ageing membership, but we still have a solid core of Wednesday riders who regularly get together.

If all you want to do is ride your motorcycle, Wednesday gives you that opportunity. We take in some very interesting roads, enjoy the usual coffee and conversation, and often use these gatherings to dream up something a little more adventurous.

A few trips in the pipeline

There is currently some discussion about a South Island trip early next year. Nothing has been planned in detail yet, but if you are thinking of heading down to the Burt Munro Challenge, you may be able to join up with the ride.

The idea is to keep things flexible. Riders can join or leave the trip to suit their own circumstances, while a central group will complete the full journey. It should provide a good opportunity to enjoy some excellent South Island roads without everyone having to commit to exactly the same itinerary.

In the coming weeks, we also intend to revisit our previously aborted Wairarapa trip. This will probably be along the lines of our other excursions - around three days, travelling during the week when traffic is lighter, and taking the opportunity to explore some great riding country.

If either of these trips interests you, drop me a note.

For those already in our Wednesday riders' WhatsApp group, that is where much of the discussion, scheming and planning will take place. It is also a handy way of keeping up with the regular rides.

A little history for our anniversary

This month's feature article is particularly appropriate for our 50th anniversary.

Pat Smith has been researching the remarkable story of her grandfather, John Charles Potter, an engineer in Java who acquired a Hildebrand & Wolfmüller motorcycle during the pioneering years of motorised transport.

Pat has gathered photographs, family recollections and historical documents that bring his story to life. We are delighted to share the first instalment in this newsletter.

It reminds us that behind every old motorcycle there is a human story. Our own club has accumulated fifty years of such stories, and I hope the anniversary encourages more members to share theirs.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible over Labour Weekend. Whether you are displaying a motorcycle, helping out or simply coming along to enjoy the occasion, your participation will make the celebration worthwhile.

Fifty years is quite a milestone. Let's make it a weekend to remember.

Safe riding,

Bruce Partridge

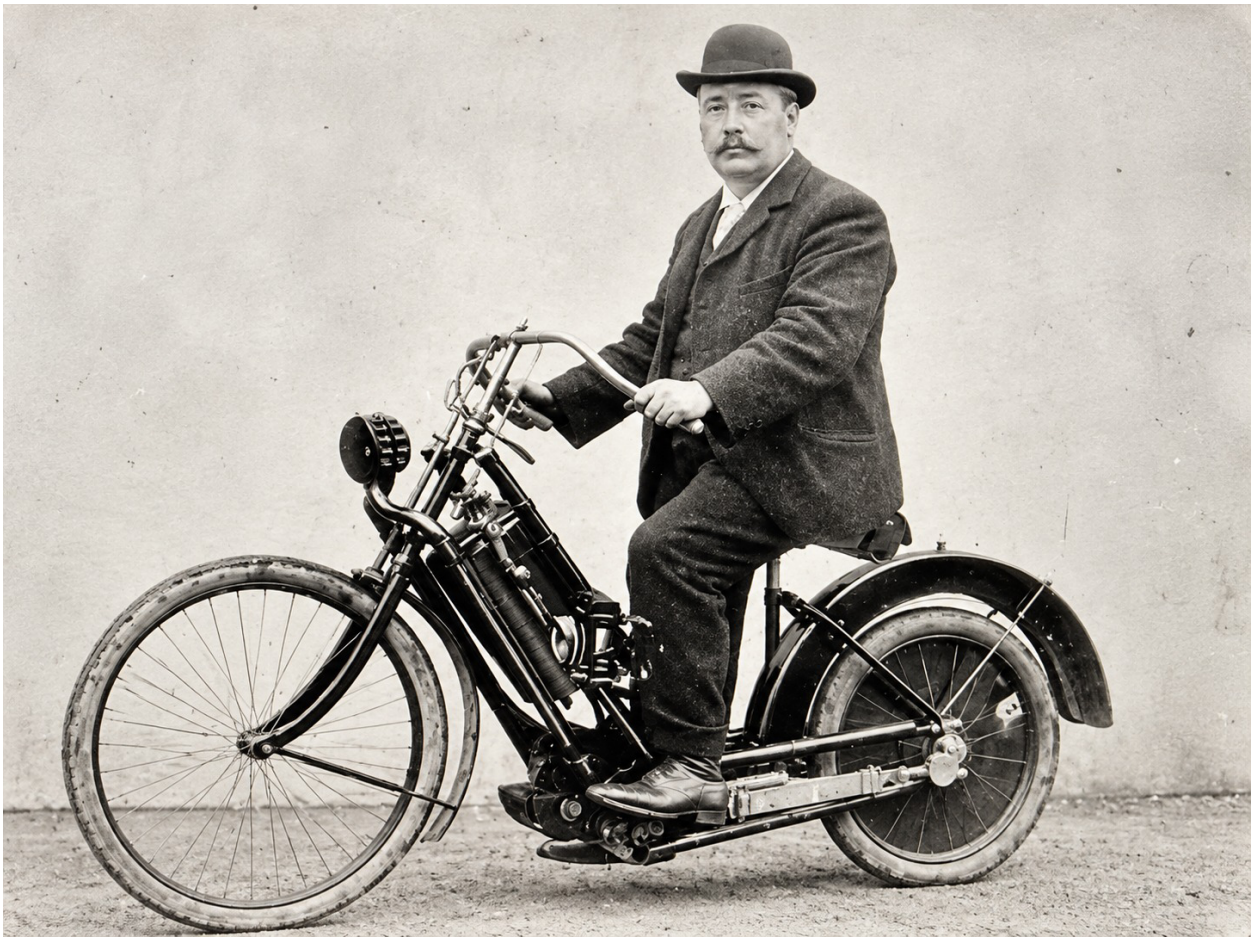
Feature

John Charles Potter and the devil's carriage

Part One: Pat Smith's family connection to the dawn of motorcycling

The man in this extraordinary family photograph is John Charles Potter. The machine beneath him is a Hildebrand & Wolfmüller, one of the earliest purpose-built motorised two-wheelers. Potter was a senior engineer in Java's sugar industry and, according to family and Indonesian historical accounts, he ordered the machine directly from Munich while working at the Oemboel sugar factory near Probolinggo in East Java.

What makes the story especially relevant to our club is the family connection. Potter was the grandfather of Pat Smith, a well-known Tauranga Classic Motorcycle Club member whom many will know as a pillion rider with her husband Gavin. Pat has preserved photographs, documents and family recollections that connect this pioneering machine to the man who first rode it — and to members of our own club today.



John Charles Potter with the Hildebrand & Wolfmüller in Java. The original Potter family photograph was supplied by his granddaughter, Pat Smith.

The surviving evidence is unusually rich: family papers, a first-person account by Potter's son, a 1900 driving certificate, newspaper reports, an obituary, photographs of Potter and the machine, and material from an Indonesian motoring history.

From Java to Britain

John Charles Potter was born in Java in 1865. After his mother died, he was sent to Britain for his education. The 1881 census records John M. Potter, aged 15 and born in Java, living at Field House School in Leicestershire with his uncle, schoolmaster Edwin W. Potter. Even then his occupation was recorded as an engineer's apprentice.

Family history then places him in Ayr, Scotland, during his engineering training. The move matters because it was there that his technical interests met another passion: speed on two wheels.

A passion for speed in Ayr

Potter raced the high-wheeled "ordinary" bicycle now usually called a penny-farthing. In the mid-1880s this form of cycling was at its peak: fast, demanding and unforgiving, with the rider perched above the huge direct-drive front wheel.

On 13 June 1885, the 20-year-old Potter won the one-mile bicycle race at the Annual Sports of the Ayr Academy Athletics Club in Scotland. The engraved presentation cup remains in Pat's family today, giving this part of his early life an unusually direct and tangible link to the present.

It is worth stopping for a moment to consider what a one-mile bicycle race meant in 1885. The familiar safety bicycle was only beginning to emerge, and competitive cycling was still very much the era of the high-wheeled "ordinary" — the penny-farthing.

The rider sat high above a huge front wheel, with the pedals attached directly to its axle and no gears to multiply the effort. Speed depended largely on the size of the wheel and how rapidly the rider could turn it. Getting aboard required a running start and a small mounting step at the rear; getting off in a hurry could be considerably less elegant.

The great danger was the rider's position. With his weight high and almost directly above the front axle, a rut, stone or other obstruction could suddenly stop the wheel and pitch him head-first over the handlebars — the notorious "header". There was little protection: just the rider, the machine and considerable nerve. Against that background, Potter's one-mile victory takes on a rather different character.



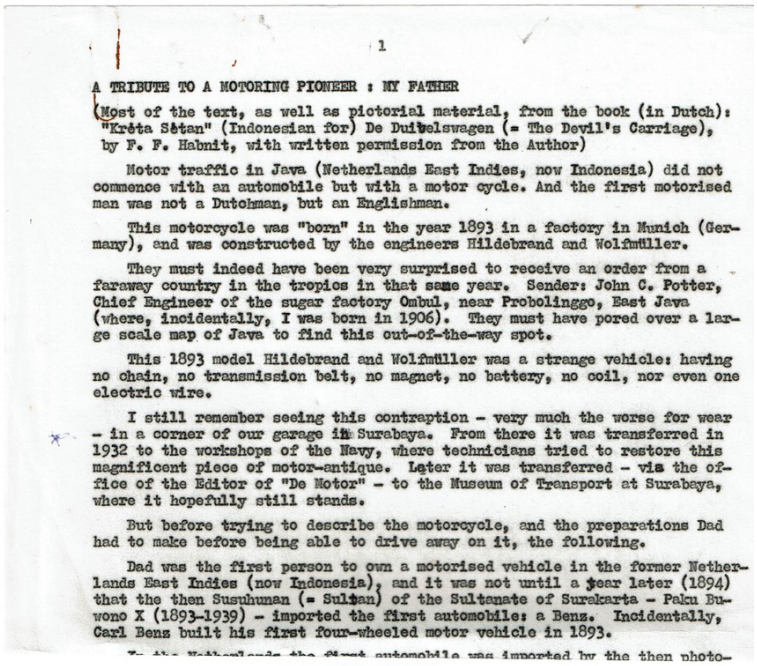
John Charles Potter's Ayr Academy Athletics Club presentation cup. Its inscription records the Annual Sports of 13 June 1885, the one-mile bicycle race and "Won by J. C. Potter". The cup remains with Pat Smith's family.

Back to Java — engineering meets speed

Potter returned to Java and built a substantial career in the sugar industry. He became chief engineer at the Oemboel sugar factory near Probolinggo, and his obituary says that numerous factories were built or modernised under his direction. The competitive cyclist had become an experienced industrial engineer, but the fascination with speed and machinery remained.

According to the family account, his work involved buying machinery from German firms. It is easy to see how an engineer in that position might hear about an unusual experimental motorised two-wheeler being developed in Munich. Potter's son wrote that his father ordered a Hildebrand & Wolfmüller directly from the manufacturer. The family account describes it as an experimental model and dates the order and motorcycle to 1893, before the machine's public production period.

Indonesian motoring histories also repeat the account of a direct 1893 order from Munich. Standard motorcycle histories generally date the production Hildebrand & Wolfmüller to 1894. The family description, Potter's engineering background and his German machinery connections support the possibility that he obtained a very early or pre-production example, although no surviving factory order has yet been located.



1

A TRIBUTE TO A MOTORING PIONEER : MY FATHER

(Most of the text, as well as pictorial material, from the book (in Dutch): "Kréta Sétan" (Indonesian for) De Duivelswagen (= The Devil's Carriage), by F. F. Habnit, with written permission from the Author)

Motor traffic in Java (Netherlands East Indies, now Indonesia) did not commence with an automobile but with a motor cycle. And the first motorised man was not a Dutchman, but an Englishman.

This motorcycle was "born" in the year 1893 in a factory in Munich (Germany), and was constructed by the engineers Hildebrand and Wolfmüller.

They must indeed have been very surprised to receive an order from a faraway country in the tropics in that same year. Sender: John C. Potter, Chief Engineer of the sugar factory Ombul, near Probolinggo, East Java (where, incidentally, I was born in 1906). They must have pored over a large scale map of Java to find this out-of-the-way spot.

This 1893 model Hildebrand and Wolfmüller was a strange vehicle: having no chain, no transmission belt, no magnet, no battery, no coil, nor even one electric wire.

I still remember seeing this contraption - very much the worse for wear - in a corner of our garage in Surabaya. From there it was transferred in 1932 to the workshops of the Navy, where technicians tried to restore this magnificent piece of motor-antique. Later it was transferred - via the office of the Editor of "De Motor" - to the Museum of Transport at Surabaya, where it hopefully still stands.

But before trying to describe the motorcycle, and the preparations Dad had to make before being able to drive away on it, the following.

Dad was the first person to own a motorised vehicle in the former Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia), and it was not until a year later (1894) that the then Susuhunan (= Sultan) of the Sultanate of Surakarta - Paku Buwono X (1893-1939) - imported the first automobile: a Benz. Incidentally, Carl Benz built his first four-wheeled motor vehicle in 1893.

In the Netherlands the first automobile was imported by the then photo-

Opening page of "A Tribute to a Motoring Pioneer: My Father," written by Potter's son and drawing on the Indonesian book Kréta Sétan.

The devil's carriage

The Hildebrand & Wolfmüller was a purpose-built motor cycle, but operating it was worlds away from turning a key and pressing a starter. Its water-cooled, horizontal two-cylinder engine drove the rear wheel directly through connecting rods. The rear wheel served as the flywheel. There was no chain or belt drive, no clutch, no battery or magneto, and no ordinary electrical ignition system.

The curved rear mudguard doubled as the cooling-water tank. Heavy rubber bands or springs assisted the return stroke of the pistons, and the rider adjusted their tension as engine speed rose. Period descriptions give a bore of 80 mm, a stroke of 150 mm, an output of about 2.5 horsepower and a top speed of roughly 30 km/h.

Period photographs of the actual motorcycle and a schematic showing the cylinders, connecting rods, crank and water tank.



Quaint vehicle

TWO views of Mr Potter's first vehicle, an 1893 Hildebrand and Wolfmuller motorcycle. Features of the machine are the curved water tank over the rear wheel for water-cooling of the engine and the fuel tank-carburettor below the handlebars.

The trials of early motoring

By Dave Blanshard

TO the pampered motorists of today effortlessly hissing along generally sealed roads in their weatherproof and heated machines, the trials faced by this country's pioneer car drivers often seem appalling.

But their trials and tribulations pale against those of an intrepid Englishman who introduced the motor age to Java in 1893.

Motorcycle enthusiasts specially will be interested to learn that the new era was ushered in by a motorcycle of a sort and not a car.

The man responsible for this historic event in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) was one John C. Potter, chief engineer at a sugar factory in Ombul, East Java.

His decision to order a Hildebrand and Wolfmuller motorcycle from Munich beat by 12 months the local sultan's move to acquire the island's first four-wheeled motor vehicle — a Benz — in 1894.

A son of that Mr Potter is Mr W. G. Potter, who now lives in Tauranga, and recently found a reference to his father's motorcycle in a book just published on the history of motor vehicles in Indonesia.

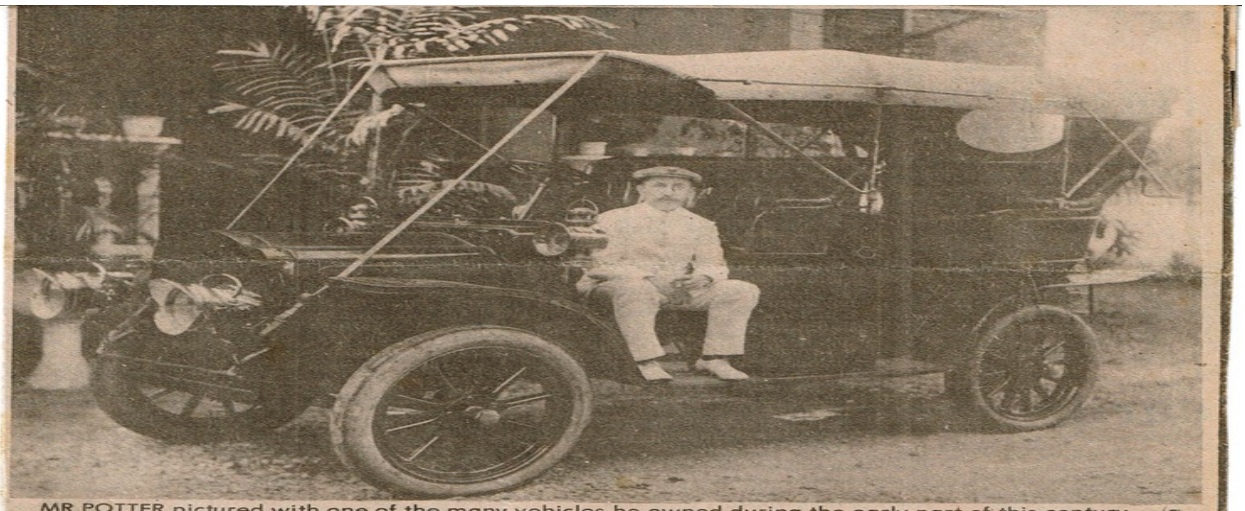
Unusual

He said he could still recall seeing the "contraption" in the back of his father's shed in a rather dilapidated condi-

Starting the machine was a ritual. The moving parts first had to be lubricated and two small bowls above the cylinders filled with oil. Methylated spirits heated the platinum glow tubes. Only when the tubes were red hot could the rider attempt a push start. If the mixture was correct, the engine announced itself with a loud bang.

There was no clutch. Once the engine fired, the rider had to leap aboard and go. In the family account, this new arrival became the kréta sétan - the "devil's carriage" - to onlookers encountering motorised travel for the first time. A later sidecar and an encounter with a bullock cart reportedly left Potter's future wife with a lasting distrust of motor vehicles.

First half of a New Zealand newspaper feature based on an interview with Potter's son, W. G. Potter of Tauranga.



MR POTTER pictured with one of the many vehicles he owned during the early part of this century — a White steam car.

tion and it had certainly been an unusual machine.

Its German designers clearly believed in simplicity. The Hildebrand and Wolfmuller had no chain or transmission belt, no battery or magneto, no coil electric wire.

It was propelled by a water-cooled horizontal, two-cylinder engine featuring glow-tube ignition, and ran on naptha fuel.

There was no sump and the connecting rods were directly attached to cranks on the back wheel (which was built of cast iron with a solid rubber tyre).

A further unusual feature by today's standards was that the two cylinders fired in unison.

As the rear wheel lacked any counter-weights, the connecting rods were fitted with heavy-duty springs (like a set of chest expanders) to balance out the operation.

Adjustments

According to Mr Potter the tension of these springs had to be adjusted frequently by the rider (through use of a lever) according to the number of revolutions.

The higher the speed the more tension was needed, building up to a maximum of 30 km/h at 325 rpm.

According to Mr Potter's book the primitive engine was fuelled by a primitive type of carburettor which sucked air through the "petrol tank". This resulted in a very rich mixture, which was leaned down by an automatic air valve.

The engine had a bore of 80mm and a stroke of 150mm and produced a theoretical output of 2.5 horsepower. This astonishing machine required a full 20 minutes to start.

After first oiling the various moving parts, Mr Potter Snr had to fill two small bowls above the cylinders with oil. These were then heated with methylated spirits and when the platinum glow tubes were red hot, an attempt could be made to push-start the machine.

No clutch

If the air valve controlling the fuel mixture was set correctly the engine would start with a loud bang. But there was no time for self congratulations because the machine lacked a clutch.

"With a hasty jump the rider leapt aboard, and with a roar the first motorised man on Java drove away on his kreta setan, or "devil's carriage", as the initially terror-stricken local natives called it," Mr Potter said.

He said his father later acquired a sidecar for his extraordinary machine and an incident involving a bullock cart gave his consequently injured bride-to-be a lifelong dread of motor vehicles.

Mr Potter Snr also had the distinction of holding the first "driving licence" issued in East Java. It was dated 1900.

According to his son, Mr Potter had by this time graduated to owning a car,— a tiller-steered Oldsmobile.

And though there were only 15 cars on an island the size of the North Island, the authorities saw fit to regulate them at this time.

A speed limit of 20km/h was set (8km/h going downhill or turning corners) and cars had to constantly warn of their approach with a horn, whistle or bell audible 100 metres ahead and used constantly.

A separate licence was required for each residency (equivalent to an NZ county) as well, so Mr Potter Snr had to go to considerable trouble passing tests that allowed him to continue something he had already done for years.

His son commented that only a few years later the authorities introduced personal driving licences which included the photograph and thumbprint of the holder.

Car owners were issued also with certificates proving their ownership of a vehicle. At that time it had been viewed as a safety measure by owners — a fact that seemed ironic in view of the tremendous fuss made today in New Zealand whenever it was suggested modern drivers' licences should be personalised, he said.

In subsequent years Mr Potter Snr owned several interesting motor vehicles, including marques that have now passed into history.

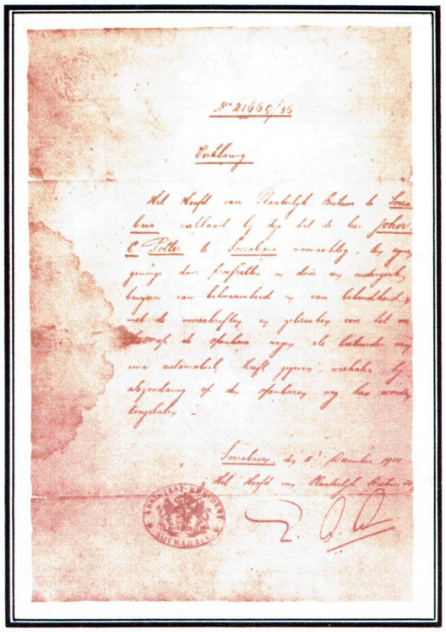
A motor car for the Sultan

The Potter family account also says that his expertise led to another remarkable commission: assisting with the purchase of a Benz motor car for Pakubuwono X, the Susuhunan of Surakarta. The car is described in Indonesian motoring history as the first automobile in the country. This connection is consistent with Potter's role as an engineer familiar with German machinery, although the precise details of his part in the transaction should remain attributed to the family and historical accounts.

Licensed to drive in 1900

A surviving certificate dated 11 December 1900 records that John C. Potter of Soerabaja had demonstrated, through test drives and examination, his competence and knowledge of the rules and customs governing traffic on public roads. A contemporary newspaper notice also records permission for J. C. Potter to drive an automobile in the Soerabaja residency.

The family and later newspaper account describe this as the first driving licence issued in East Java. The documents securely establish that Potter was licensed in 1900, not many people licensed to drive at that time, certainly not in Java.



1900: Hoe de eerste rijbewijzen er in het jaar 1900 uitzagen laat bovenstaande foto zien van het rijbewijs van John C. Potter uit Soerabaja. De tekst van het document luidt als volgt:

VERKLARING

Het Hoofd van Plaatselijk Bestuur te Soerabaja verklaart bij deze dat de heer John C. Potter te Soerabaja woonachtig, ten zijne genoege door proefritten en door een onderzoek, bewijzen van bekwaamheid en van bekendheid met de voorschriften en gebruiken voor het verkeer op de openbare wegen als bestuurder van een automobiel heeft gegeven, weshalve hij als zodanig op de openbare weg kan worden toegelaten.
Soerabaja, den 11en December 1900
Het Hoofd van Plaatselijk Bestuur vd
E.A. ARENDS

DAD's FIRST DRIVING LICENC

100

Reproduction and transcription of Potter's 1900 driving certificate.

Delpher
Geraadpleegd van https://www.delpher.nl
Gebruiksvoorwaarden zie: https://www.delpher.nl/nl/platform/pages?title=gebruiksvoorwaarden

8- 12- 1900 Soerabaijasch handelsblad.

teur

Groote letters worden berekend naar de plaatsruimte, die zij innemen.
Voor advertentiën bij abonnement worden uiterst billijke schikkingen getroffen.
Betaling Contant.

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RECLAMES f 1.— per REGEL.
Drukkers: Naamlooze Vennootschap Soerabaiasch Handelsblad en Drukkerijen.
Agenten voo Nederland J. H. de Bussy Rokin 60 en J. H. N. Janssen Laurierg. 45 Amsterdam

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HET OMBILIN KOLENVELD. In aflevering 6 van deel LXI van het *Tydschrift voor nijverheid en landbouw in Nederlandsch-Indië* schetst ATHOS JUNIOR de onvoldoende exploitatie van het Ombilinkolenveld. „De verwachtingen waren hoog gespannen. De staatsspoorweg ter Sumatra's Westkust, waarvoor met de werkzaamheden in 1887 een begin was gemaakt, en de Ombilinmijn met haar onmetelijken schat aan zwarte diamant zouden dat op economisch gebied achterlijke gewest doen opfleuren en de schatkist weer doen vullen. Reclame werd niet gespaard.

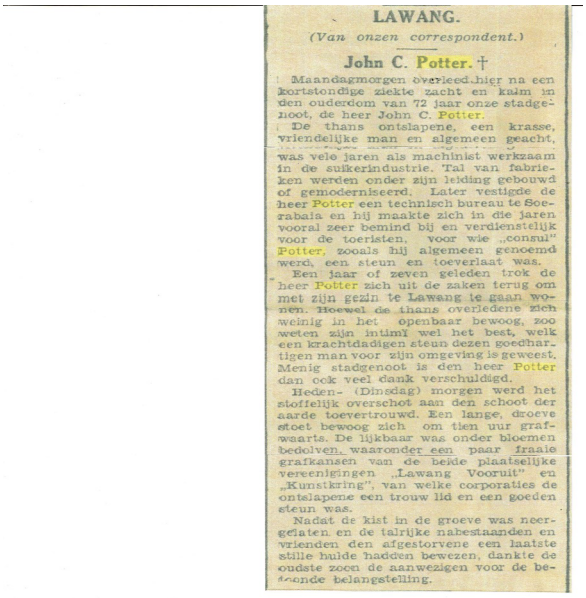
als boven bedraagt f 309900, f 76100, f 12500, f 15400, f 400 en f 13400.

Aan den heer J. C. Potter is vergunning verleend tot het rijden in een automobiel in de residentie Soerabaia.

Het stoomschip tot tegengang van den opiumsluikhandel *Tegal* is gisteren naar Batavia vertrokken; het zal, zooals wij reeds meldden, de *Argus* vervangen, die hier in het dok ter reparatie zal opgenomen worden.

Translation = To M. J. C. Potter is licensed to drive an automobile in the residence of Soerabaia.

Contemporary newspaper notice recording that J. C. Potter had been granted permission to drive an automobile in the Soerabaja residency.



LAWANG.

(Van onzen correspondent.)

John C. Potter. †

Maandagmorgen overleed hier na een kortstondige ziekte zacht en kalm in den ouderdom van 72 jaar onze stadgenoot, de heer John C. Potter.

De thans ontslapene, een krasse, vriendelijke man en algemeen geacht, was vele jaren als machinist werkzaam in de suikerindustrie. Tal van fabrieken werden onder zijn leiding gebouwd of gemoderniseerd. Later vestigde de heer Potter een technisch bureau te Soerabaia en hij maakte zich in die jaren vooral zeer bemind bij en verdienstelijk voor de toeristen, voor wie „consul" Potter, zooals hij algemeen genoemd werd, een steun en toeverlaat was.

Een jaar of zeven geleden trok de heer Potter zich uit de zaken terug om met zijn gezin te Lawang te gaan wonen. Hoewel de thans overledene zich weinig in het openbaar bewoog, zoo weten zijn intimi wel het best, welk een krachtdadigen steun dezen goedhartigen man voor zijn omgeving is geweest. Menig stadgenoot is den heer Potter dan ook veel dank verschuldigd.

Heden- (Dinsdag) morgen werd het stoffelijk overschot aan den schoot der aarde toevertrouwd. Een lange, droeve stoet bewoog zich om tien uur grafwaarts. De lijkbaar was onder bloemen bedolven, waaronder een paar fraaie grafkransen van de beide plaatselijke vereenigingen „Lawang Vooruit" en „Kunstkring", van welke corporaties de ontslapene een trouw lid en een goeden steun was.

Nadat de kist in de groeve was neergelaten en de talrijke nabestaanden en vrienden den afgestorvene een laatste stille hulde hadden bewezen, dankte de oudste zoon de aanwezigen voor de betoonde belangstelling.

Potter's obituary in the Dutch-language press. It records his work in the sugar industry, later technical bureau in Soerabaja and service to his community.

Forgotten in the garage

Years later, Potter's son remembered the motorcycle sitting much the worse for wear in a corner of the family garage in Surabaya. In 1932 it was transferred to Navy workshops, where technicians attempted a restoration, and later passed via the editor of De Motor to the transport museum in Surabaya. That is where Part One leaves the machine.

Part Two will follow what happened next: the motorcycle's survival and rediscovery, and the way Pat and her family pieced together the story and reconnected with the machine in Indonesia.

See and hear one being ridden

A surviving Hildebrand & Wolfmüller has been demonstrated in recent times. The video below gives a vivid impression of the noise, exposed mechanism and physical effort involved. Even on fine modern pavement it looks demanding; Potter's roads in Java in the 1890s would have made the experience more extraordinary still.

Watch: Hildebrand & Wolfmüller being ridden (YouTube, 10 minutes 16 seconds)

Next issue, what happened to the bike and the story behind that.....

Member Profile

Ray Knowles

Ray Knowles has been riding motorcycles since he was 15. His story carry the same mixture of practical experience, dry humour and affection for the people around old motorcycles that has sustained the club for decades.

The first motorcycle

Ray's first bike was a 1947 BSA 250 C11 rigid. He was in the first year of an engineering apprenticeship and cycling about four miles each way to work, so the C11 felt "like a gift from heaven." It cost about £40 - roughly 20 weeks' wages for a first-year apprentice in 1953.

A woman in a Vauxhall later hit him at an intersection. Ray came away with a broken arm and the BSA with a broken fork leg, which he replaced with a second-hand part paid for by her insurer. Soon afterwards he and a mate rode the little BSA from Wellington to Rotorua and back, at a time when the main highway included pumice and the Desert Road and Napier–Taupo road were still unsealed.



Ray Knowles on his 1947 BSA 250 C11, the motorcycle that replaced a daily four-mile pushbike commute.

A lifetime around motorcycles

The following year Ray sold the C11 and bought the first of eight AJS and Matchless machines he would own. During the years when his family was growing he always had a motorcycle, although trailer-sailers and other family activities limited his riding. Shirley first rode pillion on his first Matchless when she was 17 and was still occasionally riding with him 63 years later.



Ray and Shirley on the first Matchless - the beginning of a long shared motorcycling story.

Finding the Tauranga club

In 1989 Ray read in the Bay of Plenty Times that the Tauranga club was hosting the National Classic Rally at Tauranga Intermediate School. On his way home from golf he called in to see the display. He still owned the AJS Model 20 he had bought in 1955 and joined the club later that year.

He joined the committee the following year and, apart from two or three breaks, remained involved for most of the years that followed. Before moving north, he had belonged to Wellington's Ixion Motorcycle Club and served on its committee. He never had a machine fast enough for road racing, but competed in trials, motocross and hill climbs on a genuine Trials James and later a Francis-Barnett.

Ray describes the Tauranga Classic Motorcycle Club as an important part of his life. The club was the second classic club formed in New Zealand, a year after Rotorua, and he credits the founding members with the foresight to secure clubrooms jointly with the Tauranga Motorcycle Club and establish standards later committees maintained. He served as president for the club's 25th and 40th anniversary celebrations.

Best ride, worst ride

The best rides were South Island tours: first with Shirley in 1959 on their 1953 AJS 500 twin, and then the same journey with Graham and Ann Holmes on their respective BMWs in 2002.

The worst lasted about two minutes. Arriving late for a motocross in Wanganui in the early 1950s, Ray went straight to the start without seeing the track. Everyone else knew it dropped almost vertically into a deep gully after 50 or 60 yards. Ray did not. He launched into space, picked himself up at the bottom, found the tank, seat and the rest of the Francis-Barnett in different places, loaded it onto his Ford Model A pickup and went home to Lower Hutt.



Another of Ray's Matchless motorcycles, part of a lifelong interest in British singles and twins.

The machines and the advice

At the time of the profile Ray owned two AJS, one BSA, two Matchless and two BMW motorcycles. Asked what he might have changed, he wished he had been able to afford a Vincent Black Shadow years earlier. Asked what might surprise members, he said: "Nothing, I'm an open book. I do hate onions though. Ask Allan Roberts."

His advice to anyone considering classic motorcycles was direct: stop thinking and do it. Find an old British single and, except perhaps when it refuses to start in front of an audience, it will make you smile. More importantly, the people around old motorcycles become lifelong friends.

Ray expected the classic movement to continue much as it had. Members often want the bikes of their youth, and the club register already held more than 300 classics. Not all were runners, but cared-for machines would keep changing hands and surviving "until petrol runs out."



Trials days: the competitive riding background behind Ray's long involvement with classic motorcycles.

Away from motorcycles, Ray played golf, danced twice a week, ran a teaching workshop on Friday nights, travelled by caravan, and belonged to the AJS and Matchless Owners Register and the BMW Owners Register. His closing thought was characteristically definite: he hoped to keep doing what he did for as long as possible, and it would take a Caterpillar D11 tractor with a Hyster haul winch to get him into an old people's home.

From scooters to BMWs

Ray was an avid Matchless enthusiast and a regular at Jampot rallies with Shirley. In later years he developed a strong affinity for BMWs and owned several. He continued attending rallies around the country and renewing old friendships until his riding was curtailed.



Ray and Shirley in their younger years on the scooter - a family photograph supplied for Ray's story.

Golf was another important connection. Bruce Partridge often played with Ray and former club member Neil Attwood. A conversation on the golf course eventually led to Bruce buying Ray's 2007 BMW R1200RT, which brought Bruce back to motorcycling after a break of some 15 to 20 years.



Ray's 2007 BMW R1200RT, later bought by Bruce Partridge and instrumental in bringing him back to riding.

From the archive

The first newsletter March 1976

The club's first newsletter reported that its opening meeting began shortly after 8 pm with 30 people present - "far more than we had anticipated." Rotorua supporters attended, Ross Simons was elected president, Jan Simons secretary and Yvonne Allen treasurer, with Ivan Allen, Chas Belk, Lyall Black and B. Brewer forming the committee.

Monthly meetings were agreed, and Jack Ollerenshaw offered the Ascot Lounge in 11th Avenue as a meeting place and occasional Sunday road-run base. The annual subscription was set at $5 to cover newsletter costs.

The first recorded road run left the New World car park at 10 am with ten motorcycles, plus wives and children travelling by car. At Maketu the Rotorua riders joined them. The bikes were lined up for public viewing while everyone shared a picnic lunch and a chat before heading home at 2.30 pm. Fifty years later, the ingredients remain familiar: motorcycles, a ride, a public display and time together.

TAURANGA CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE CLUB

NEWSLETTER NO.I. MARCH 1976

Well our first meeting got underway shortly after 8.00 p.m. with thirty people in attendance, far more than we had anticipated.
We were pleased with the support shown by the three Rotorua Guys that attended, and some of the help on different matters brought up at the meeting was greatly appreciated.

After a chat outside the hall the meeting got of to a start with the election of officers as follows :
PRESIDENT - R. Simons SECRETARY - J. Simons TREASURER - Y. Allen
Also a committee of four was formed: I. Allen, C. Belk, L. Black, B. Brewer

It was decided to hold monthly meetings and Jack Ollerenshaw kindly gave the club the use of the Ascot Lounge at IIth Ave. This was greatly appreciated as Jack said we could use it on the occasional Sunday for a Road Run. Thanks once again Jack.

It was decided that the subs would be $5.00 per year, this is to cover costs of the Newsletters.

Hope everyone red the publicity the Bay of Plenty Times gave us before and after the meeting. This was able to give the public a better understanding of the aims of the club.

For those who were unable to attend : OnSunday 7th March the club supported Rotorua on there 2nd road run, this time to Maketu. We all met at the New World Car Park at 9.30 a.m. A guy from the Bay Sun was there to take photos for the paper and we had to do a write up on the club and of course the days outing.

We started on the run at IO.00 a.m. with IO bikes and wives and children in cars. Shortly after arriving at Maketu Seaw Seven Rotorua Bikes arrived with an IIth Tauranga one not far behind. The bikes were lined up for the public to view while everyone enjoyed a picnic lunch. Following that everybody had a chat with other members and by 2.30 p.m. we were packed to go hame.

Yvonne would like to see more subs paid at our next meeting.
Thats all for now - Jan and Ross Simons.

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COMING EVENTS

MARCH 27th - Hamilton IOO Road Race Meeting - Members are invited to display there Classic Machines restored or unrestored in special roped off area adjacent to the pits. Members exhibiting are to enter through London Street Entrance Only. Any futher information contact Steve Gladding. Hamilton 66.I54

APRIL 6th - Club Meeting 8.00 p.m. Ascot Lounge

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MEMBERS

Barry Adams
N 288 Ngatai Road
TAURANGA PH. 65.780

I953 James Cadet I25cc
I954 James ~~?=I48cc~~ Captain 197cc
I96I James ? I48cc

Yvonne Allen
78 Maunwai Drive
TAURANGA PH. 64.429

I950 Triumph Speed Twin

Page one of Newsletter No. 1, March 1976. The original scan is reproduced here as part of the 50th anniversary record.

The club grows

By a later 1977 newsletter, the club listed 62 members and approximately 200 motorcycles - “quite staggering” for a club only recently formed. A run through Tauranga and Otumoetai to the museum drew 14 machines. The newsletter also recorded the practical business of club life: workshop progress, parts wanted, ride notices, new traffic laws and the cost of batteries and seats.

The second summer rally

Newsletter No. 22 reported on the February 1978 summer rally at Sapphire Springs. There were 81 full-weekend entries and additional day visitors, bringing the total to about 120 motorcycles. The report makes clear that the organisers welcomed later machines as visitors even though official entries were restricted to vintage and pre-1970 motorcycles.

The programme combined the things a classic motorcycle club does best: riding, comparing machines, meeting people from further afield and making room for both restored showpieces and the working bikes members actually rode.

Roads, rallies and workshops

Across the 1976–78 newsletters, the destinations changed but the pattern endured. Members rode to Maketu, Rotorua, Matamata, Katikati and the Karangahake Gorge; visited private collections and workshops; supported neighbouring clubs; shared restoration progress; hunted for scarce parts; and debated what should count as a classic.

One 1978 report describes a winter run to Matamata where Tauranga, Rotorua and Hamilton members gathered around rare machines, including a 1936 TT Replica 500 cc HRD. Another article offered hard-earned Cold Kiwi Rally advice: take a tent that can survive wind, rain and snow, keep yourself off the damp ground, bring working waterproofs and a torch, and accept that a hot-water bottle may be the wisest concession to comfort.

A thread through fifty years

The old newsletters are modest, typed documents, but they preserve the club’s character with unusual clarity. Members turned up, helped one another, rode where the road led, wrote down what they had learned and kept old motorcycles moving. The anniversary is not only a celebration of age. It is a chance to recognise the continuity between those first pages and the club members still making plans today.