Plate 5.19
MEMBERS OF THE SYDNEY BICYCLE CLUB ON TOUR, DATE UNKNOWN
(Sydney Bicycle and Motor Club)

Plate 5.20
'A ZOOLOGICAL CURIOSITY - OR SOON WILL BE'
(Bul 24/7/97:15)
In the east, rural residents were exposed to the bicycle reasonably quickly, either by locals owning them or metropolitan cyclists passing through (Goombe Goombe, NSW, school children came out to watch Pearson (1925:19) pedal by, for example). By the mid-1890s bicycle shops were found in many small towns and cycle clubs were formed as far afield as Bourke; in the Wimmera a 'fair sprinkling of cyclists' were noted by mid-1896 (AuWh 6/96:143) and riders reported that locals in small towns no longer joked about the 'the wheels going round', but instead inquired about the machines (Cyclops 1896:288).

Unlike Western Australia where there was a distinct, rapid, regional acceptance of the bicycle as a rural tool, in the east there was a gradual blurring of the line between social and recreational uses and its adoption by rural workers. Three months after Armstrong completed his overland ride of 1893, a man named Brindle pedalled from Broken Hill to Sydney (AuCy 11/1/94:1) and in 1894 Stewart rode from Melbourne to Brisbane (AuCy 17/5/94:8). Fletcher (1896) reported several long rides in Queensland during the next couple of years: a politician, who rode to Hughenden, Winton and Cloncurry; a commercial traveller for B.D. Morehead and Co., and a Brisbane insurance agent who, from January, 1894 through July 1895, pedalled to the southwest of Queensland and adjacent parts of New South Wales, reaching as far as the Bulloo River and Coopers Creek. In 1896, a man and his wife cycled from Stainburn Downs (near Aramac) to Normanton in 15 days.

The Australasian Pastoralists' Review of May 15, 1896 printed a letter from a station manager discussing the use of the bicycle on rural properties:
... their usefulness for station work seems to be overlooked by most owners and managers ... they can be ridden - and are ridden - across country. Even over loose, heavy ground ... A bicycle does not suffer from want of feed, so it does not matter how long it is kept ready to be mounted ... there are instances of long distances being ridden through bush. Only recently the bookkeeper at Wilgana, South Australia, rode on a bicycle from the station to Adelaide, 540 miles, and did the distance in four or five days, although much of the track is considered very heavy indeed ... If any one in the bush does think of buying a bicycle, he should be careful to be thoroughly taught how to ... repair it ... even a big smash can be put in order by anyone with sense ... I am quite sure it only needs for prejudice to be overcome to make the use of bicycles general for station work (p. 159).

One author of a short story published in 1898 (AdWh 4/98:96) described the use of bicycles on outback properties for the benefit of urban readers unfamiliar with the practice. He mentioned that in times of drought, when feed and water were scarce for stock, the machines were used for mustering and boundary riding; up to half a dozen cyclists could be found on some stations doing the work with 'expedition and economy'.

But in the story he also had the hero cursing his machine:

you inanimate soulless thing of metal ... I'll chuck up the billet and get a job on some station in the ranges where the ground is too rough for bicycles, and where they must give me a horse'.

In inviting tenders for the construction of a fence around a paddock, one New South Wales property owner reportedly specified a path for cycle-mounted riders (Murrer 20/9/97:2).

The first known reference to the bicycle's use by shearers dates from about mid-1897, by which time a shearer had reportedly cycled nearly 2,000 miles (3,200 km) in the New South Wales interior; two months later four shearers were described as 'careering from station to station' on their bicycles (Bul 4/8/97:24). In December, 1897 the Australasian (18/12/97:1347) reported the use of the bicycle by stockmen.
The sudden focussing of attention upon cyclists in pastoral areas led a Bulletin cartoonist to suggest the eventual extinction of the horse (Plate 5.20) and E.S. Sorenson, in a typical Bulletin (10/7/97:3) reaction to all cycling matters, to pen 'The Bicycle's Gone to the Bush':

It's all up the tree with the swagmen,
It's all over now with the tramp,
And the horsemen can daily with bagmen,
For they're wanted no more on the camp.
They're trooping in droves from the west-track,
With tidings of woe to their push,
For the inside, they say, is the best track,
Since the bicycle's gone to the bush.

........

On the stations out back they are riding
'T'long Boundary and rabbit-proof fence;
And rouseabouts swiftly are gliding
With shearsers and tank-seekers hence;
They're rounding-up sheep and scrub-cattle,
They stem the most desperate rush -
E'en the Nyalls will pedal to battle
On the bikes that have gone to the bush.

The Cycling Times (23/1/96:4) had earlier carried a cartoon of a cyclist with spiked wheels hitched to a plough.

The potential of the bicyclist as a portable power source was quickly recognised by John Howard (1899), mechanical manager of the Wolseley Sheep-Shearing Machine Company. He invented an attachment (Figure 5.5) for the bicycle that allowed the rear wheel to be raised off the floor, and a rubber wheel (with flywheel) lowered against the rotating bicycle wheel powered a hand-held shear. The flywheel doubled as a sharpening disc, and to increase the momentum it was recommended that the rear tyre be filled with water. The machine was suggested as applicable to cream separation and rotary brushing as well and was demonstrated at the Sydney Show of the Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales in 1899, reportedly enabling a sheep to be shorn in four to five minutes.

The Australian Pastoralists' Review (15/4/99:89) suggested that 'as the
Figure 5.5
BICYCLE ATTACHMENT FOR POWERING SHEEP SHEARS
(Howard 1899)
bicycle is fast growing in favour with shearers in search of employment, it is only reasonable to suppose that they will have the patent shearing process gear attached to their bicycles'. It is not known how many of the machines were manufactured nor how successfully or extensively they were used.

* * *

By 1900 the bicycle had been introduced to almost all of the settled parts of Australia. Its potential had been demonstrated and exploited to a greater or lesser degree by a number of individuals and institutions. The extent of its use varied, but in rural areas, as in the urban scene, there were few people who had not seen or at least heard of its use. Whether it fitted the 'image' of the bush or not, its value could not be denied.
Chapter 6

THE 20TH CENTURY: THE HUMBLE TOOL

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Introduction

By 1900 the novelty of the bicycle had worn off. Reflecting the changing mood, several cycle journals began to incorporate news and articles about the newly developing motor vehicle scene. However, by early 1900 most of the cycle journals, within a few months of one another, ceased publication. The Tourist, devoted to good roads, cycling and touring, was founded in August, 1901, but was absorbed by the Australian Cyclist in September, 1904. The Australian Cyclist, however, specialised in cycle racing; discussion of more general bicycling matters was increasingly left to the newspapers and general magazines. '... use of the cycle has become so general and thoroughly incorporated into our everyday life, that it creates no more interest (if as much) than the horse' (WASp 25/5/01:2); even visiting royalty was not enough to generate the previously mandatory cycle contingent in parades.

Societal attentions formerly lavished upon the bicycle now were progressively focussed upon motor vehicles and for some time magazines and journals dealt both with the bicycle and motor vehicle. The New South Wales Motorists' and Cyclists' Annual, 1905, for example, devoted 121 of its 196 pages to bicycles, and 75 to motor vehicles. Motor vehicles had become the fastest means of personal transport, and they were noisier, more complex, increasingly powerful, and subject to an endless degree of modification, experimentation, and creative endeavour. The bicycle was almost the antithesis: little could be done to it without impairing its performance and adding weight - anathema to the human-engine who had to power it along.

But the bicycle did not become obsolete nor disappear from the scene, either in urban or rural areas. It was, instead, relegated to the status and role of a humble tool and the two decades between 1900 and 1920
saw its greatest use throughout rural Australia. It was adopted by many private and government organisations and individuals. The particular advantages of the machine were exploited in a variety of physical and social environments. Thousands of travellers, workers, shearsers, rouseabouts, prospectors, dentists, commercial travellers, ministers, boundary riders, overlanders and others rolled silently about their business. It was the heyday of bush cycling. If not spectacular, it was pervasive.

The Overlanders

Overland rides continued, but with much less publicity than formerly; the line between an 'overland' ride and merely a long trip became less distinguishable or relevant. John Miles, who was to eventually discover Mt. Isa, pedalled an unheralded 1,500 miles from Broken Hill to north Queensland in six weeks in 1908 (Blainey 1960:66); the Cape York Peninsula was cycled during the first decade of this century (Morris 1977); and after the Cunnin Stock Route was marked in 1907 (Fyfe 1939), it too was cycled (Rutherford 1977). Innumerable riders covered thousands of miles annually in their wanderings, not necessarily in a continuous journey, but as a series of shorter rides punctuated by a few days, weeks, or months of work.

Some rides were still newsworthy, such as the 1908 ride from White Cliffs, NSW, to Darwin by Blakeley and the O'Neill brothers (Blakeley 1938) (Plate 6.1), reported in the Northern Times; Reichenbach's various rides (Plate 6.3); and the trans-Nullarbor efforts of men like Waltham, Warren and Lennie. The most publicised long distance ride was probably Opperman's (1977:205-212) 13 day sprint from Fremantle to Sydney via Melbourne, done in 1937. He covered 2,750 miles (4,425 km) of tracks and mostly unsealed roads. However, newspaper records (SNH Index) indicate that by the 1930s the Nullarbor was being cycled annually by scores of riders,
Plate 6.1
THE BLAKELEY PARTY AT BLOODS CREEK, SA, 1908
(Blakeley 1938:112)

Plate 6.2
'A DUGOUT IN THE DESERT SANDSTONE', SA, PRE-1908
(Blakeley 1938:48)
Plate 6.3
E.F. REICHENBACH, 1914
(Dunfile)

Who Rode Across Australia
FROM ADELAIDE TO PORT DARWIN
(1669 MILES)
in the Record time of
28 days 09h 7m on
and personal diaries (Dodgson 1904; Edge 1977) suggest that many more unreported travellers bicycled across.

Although long distance bush rides were not commonly newsworthy this century, they were not necessarily any easier than for those who had gone before, especially for riders in isolated areas. The Reverend Sussex (1902) accompanied a rider from Lawlers to Mt. Magnet, WA because, 'for one thing, he could not tolerate the loneliness of the road'. And Fred and Bert James, speaking of their Nullarbor crossing, summed it up well: 'At times the vast solitude of the desert had a depressing effect on us, the whirring of the bike, and an occasional glimpse of the telegraph line alone reminding us were still on the face of the earth' (James 1897b:8). Fortunately, the bicycle meant that the number of days spent in solitude were far less than would have been the case if horses or camels had been used. On the other hand there was probably a certain solace in being able to talk to an animal; the bicycle did not lend itself to that.

No discussion of Australian overlanding cyclists would be complete without a mention of Francis Birtles, itinerant pedallist extraordinaire, adventurer, and popular hero of some decades. He cycled across the Nullarbor several times, pedalled halfway around the continent, and wrote numerous books and articles of his journeys (Birtles 1909, 1910, 1910?, 1911, 1912, 1935). In addition he was involved in one of the earliest cinematographic expeditions in Northern Australia — also accomplished by bicycle (Bertrand 1964), the
film being shown in Sydney and Melbourne in 1912. He eventually changed to motor cars and was the first to drive across the Nullarbor and from London to Melbourne. In several of his outback drives, though, he still carried his bicycle as an emergency 'lifeboat' (Birtles 1935:39, 198).

Professional and Business Users

The use of the bicycle by commercial travellers had already occurred by the turn of the century in some very isolated areas. In May, 1899, for example, a stock buyer from Esperance shipped to Eucla and pedalled back to Esperance, buying sheep on the way (EucRec 27/5/99:5-6).

During this century the bicycle was widely adopted by rural commercial travellers, salesmen and other business and professional men. In the Orange area, for example, Williams (1977b) recalls that about 1930 many of the insurance agents used it to cover their district. The cost and upkeep of a motor car or horse was prohibitive at the time, and the bicycle allowed the agents to devote much more time to canvassing for new business than when restricted to train schedules and walking (Williams 1977a). Because they were covering short distances in a settled area there was generally no need to carry water or luggage, merely a small bag for papers and collecting book. Even when motor vehicles came in Williams (1977b) felt that the bicycle was more practical and convenient, as it 'could be thrown up against a fence and the rider talking at the door, while a motorist is parking and getting out'. Another agent (Plate 6.5) operating out of Orange much earlier pedalled a 550 mile (900 km) circuit, Orange – Condobolin – Cobar – Orange; he was occasionally accompanied by a doctor who carried out the medical examination on those applying for policies (Carr 1977a).

In Western Australia the Tate brothers did stocktaking for goldfields mining firms between 1909 and 1920. By pedalling upwards of 100 miles on
Plate 6.4
'TAKE THOU WHAT COURSE THOU WILT', DATE UNKNOWN
(Dunfile)
some days, they occasionally made more money out of the shilling-per-mile travel allowance than from their salaries (Tate 1976a). In Booleroo, SA, the bicycle was used extensively between 1904 and 1910 in getting a farmers' cooperative started (Reichstein 1977). Whether used by commercial travellers for hardware stores (Gould 1976), seed companies (RuRui 1977), or other agents (Farley 1977), tailors taking orders in the Eyre Peninsula (Simms 1977), or dentists travelling circuits (Bolton 1976; Little 1977; Dallas 1968:65), the machine was suited to the needs of many.

Station Work

The use of the bicycle for boundary riding and mustering continued for several decades into this century. McTaggart (1977b) says that at Noonina, SA, for example, the bicycle was used until the end of World War I, and again from 1926 to 1930, 'when drought and depression combined to make them most useful'; it saved walking to catch the horse to start the day, and the combination of bicycle and dog was excellent for gathering 'ration' sheep. During times of drought men would 'get heartily sick of using poor and knocked up horses, and any man worth his "salt" would much prefer to ride his bike and save the horse' (McTaggart 1977a). He also mixed bicycles and motorcycles, using the latter for more distant work, and bicycles closer in and for droving (the motorcycles did not operate well at extremely slow speeds). Sheep dogs were carried on the bicycles to rest them when traversing long distances. Elsewhere in South Australia Boecke (1977a) used a bicycle in the 1930s in conjunction with a truck to muster sheep, as did Witt (1977) in Western Australia; both men reported carrying dogs on the machine to spell them (Plates 6.6, 6.7).

The bicycle was also extremely useful for such tasks as checking windmills; it was adopted on Gindalbie Station, northeast of Kalgoorlie,
early this century, for example (Gooding 1976), and Peterson (1977) referred to older aboriginal station hands reporting that they formerly used bicycles for that purpose in the Northern Territory. Witt (1977) found that he could cover the distance twice as fast as on a horse and spent the remaining time kangaroo shooting for extra money.

Aside from work on properties there were other situations where the bicycle had particular advantages; Barker’s (1964:29-30) effort to fulfill a contract for logs for mine pit-props in Western Australia presents an interesting example. The logs had to be relatively straight, seven feet long and at least four inches thick at the small end. Unfortunately such trees were very scattered in the surrounding areas and the cutter could not find and cut enough in one day to keep Barker’s camel team profitably occupied. Consequently he bought the cutter a bicycle. Mounted on the machine, with water bags, axe, tucker and billy-can, the employee could search a wide area and quickly move from tree to tree while cutting. The bicycle proved ‘ideal’ for the job.

The Western Australian Rabbit Fence

Beginning about 1904, Western Australia’s 2,000 mile (3,200 km) rabbit fence network (Figure 6.1) constructed during the first decade of the twentieth century in an attempt to stem the westward migration of rabbits across the continent (Rolls 1969; McKnight 1969a), was patrolled in part by bicycle-mounted boundary riders. Their use represents an excellent example of an institutionalised use of the bicycle to meet a specialised rural need.

The earliest known reference to the possible use of the machine along the fence is in testimony given at the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Rabbit Question, held in Perth in March, 1901. All witnesses interviewed on the matter of fence patrols agreed that bicycles would be
Figure 6.1
THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN RABBIT FENCE NETWORK - 1908
(After Davies 1908:736)
preferable to horses or camels (RepRC 1901). In particular the speed of the cyclist was noted by the Royal Commission. It was hoped that it would minimise the number of boundary riders required along the fence, thereby decreasing wage costs. Also, the bicycle cost less than a horse or camel and maintenance was relatively inexpensive when compared with feed being brought in for animals.

Most important initially, however, was the fact that a scarcity of drinking water restricted the use of animals. A scarcity of feed resulting from seasonal or general drought possibly played a role as well. Consequently, in 1902 (Wilson 1902:98) the adoption of bicycles was specifically suggested as an alternative; by 1904 (JDepAgWA 1904: 487) the machines were in regular use.

Evidence suggests that camels were not used by fence patrols until 1905. Although the camel's ability to survive on native vegetation was a definite asset for working the fence, its willingness to eat poisonous plants as well resulted in the death of many of the animals (Anketell 1907:358-359) and inhibited their debut because the need to constantly supervise their feeding habits was troublesome. Even after camels were introduced, bicycles continued to be relied upon for patrol work in areas with a heavy concentration of poisonous plants; in later years bicycles replaced some established camel patrols where there were problems with plants (Crawford 1910:12).

Another factor that may have delayed the camel's introduction, and certainly affected the nature of their subsequent use, was that the 'original plan of examining the fence from the top of a camel was never satisfactory and camels soon became fractious at being compelled to go down so frequently to allow proper inspection to be made' (Wilson 1906: 354). In this regard bicycles were superior in that riders could lean down without dismounting.
Little is known about the bicycles used along the fence. No
commens were made in departmental reports about such matters as
reliability, maintenance, and tyre wear and puncture resistance. However,
this very fact, in conjunction with the length of time they were used,
probably means that there were relatively few problems; certainly there
would appear to be no reason why there should have been.

Most bicycles used along the fence (Plates 6.8, 6.9) appear to
have been standard safety bicycles. Although one local cycle supplier
claimed that his machines were 'specially designed and equipped' (Davies
1908), there is no indication as to the nature of such features. However,
some rabbit fence patrols apparently used a B.S.A. spring frame machine
(Crawford 1976). No other information has been found concerning when or
why it was introduced, how many were used, its performance, or when and
why it was phased out.

A problem that plagued the Rabbit Department and had direct
consequences for the cyclists was illegal traffic along the fence.
(Permission was rarely granted for anyone to travel the fence reserve
because the animals and vehicles tore holes in the wire and knocked down
or bent the posts). Rough surfaces were created by vehicle wheels, animals
drawing them, and cattle plodding along the fence. Crawford (1908:937)
noted that in some areas the track was 'so cut up with ruts that it is
almost impossible for the boundary riders to ride bicycles on it and
keep an eye on the fence. It meant a decrease in the length of the
section a rider could patrol in a given period; along the Cunderdin
section of the No. 2 fence in 1908, for example, the department was
forced to put on two additional men (Crawford 1908:937). The issue rose
again in 1910 in the Barramblie area where continuous surreptitious wood
carting traffic left the surface so rough that camel carts had to replace
the cycle patrols (Crawford 1910:11). People travelling the fence also
Plate 6.8
A WESTERN AUSTRALIAN RABBIT FENCE BOUNDARY RIDER
(Davies-Franklin 1908:736)

Plate 6.9
ALONG THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN RABBIT FENCE
(JDAgWA 9/08:708)
took water from the tanks, mentioned as a particular problem for bicycle-mounted riders because of the limited water supply they carried (Crawford 1908:937).

There are no references as to specifically when and why the use of bicycles along the fence ceased. The last allusion to bicycles is in 1910 (Crawford 1910), at which time they appear to have been an integral part of the scene. However, a 'lengthrunner' along the Kalgoorlie pipeline (Jordan 1977) met a rabbit fence rider still using a bicycle sometime between 1912 and 1916. Broomhall (1976), who worked on the fence in 1926 - 1927, and Witt (1977), another former fence rider, indicate that bicycles were not in use in their day — both were in fact unaware that bicycles had ever been used at all. This suggests that by the mid-1920s the machines had not been in use for some years.

Evidence points to the fact that bicycles were retired from the fence during the First World War as a result of a forced change in maintenance logistics. For patrolling the fence as frequently as possible with a minimum of riders the bicycle, except in heavy sand, was the best mount. However, while a cyclist could cover long distances quickly, he was limited in the amount of equipment he could carry and consequently the extent of the repairs he could undertake. He depended upon a back-up crew for major repairs and a supply wagon to keep his food and other supplies stocked at storage points along the fence.

With gradual cutbacks in fence patrol expenditures over a period of years (Crawford 1916b) and the sudden loss of the majority of the staff when Australia entered the war (Crawford 1916a:30), the situation changed radically; with only a few men, the logistics had to be reorganised. Each section was patrolled less frequently and individual riders were relied upon to undertake repair work that previously was done by gangs.
The camel cart was adopted for all riders; only by this means could they carry posts (where not locally available), netting, food, water and other supplies. The bicycle, in these circumstances, was no longer a viable alternative.

Rabbit Inspecting

Crawford (1976) used a bicycle during the depression years as a rabbit inspector in the Western Australian wheatbelt. He camped at a central location and spent two or three days cycling about adjacent properties. The most important advantage in using the machine was that it saved petrol, oil and maintenance expenses on his car, for which he had a limited budget. Also the bicycle was well suited to the actual process of inspection. He could readily lift the machine over fences between paddocks or neighbouring properties, and could carry the bicycle across rough areas and watercourses that would have been impassable with a car. By eliminating the restrictions imposed by roads, fences and gates he was able to reduce much duplicate travel. Seated on his machine he could have a close look without the nuisance entailed in continually getting in and out of a car. The result was that by bicycle he could generally cover more ground more thoroughly in a given area, and inspect portions of properties which he might not otherwise have readily visited, than if he had relied upon a car for the entire task.

Kalgoorlie Pipeline 'Lengthrunners'

The bicycle was used by patrols along most of the 346 mile (557 km) Kalgoorlie pipeline (between Mundaring Weir and Kalgoorlie, plus branch lines) for about six decades. Interviews with several 'lengthrunners', as the patrols were called (Jeffery 1977; Creasey, 1976; Jordan 1977), and supervisors and administrators (Gawne 1977; Belford
1976) indicated that the machines were used from the very start of the pipeline's operation (just after the turn of the century) and probably by the initial survey parties as well. Jordan was employed as a bicycle-mounted 'lengthrunner' from 1912 through 1916. Creasey ceased patrolling by bicycle in 1957 and the last bicycle-mounted 'lengthrunner', Bert Jeffery, switched to a truck only in about 1962.

For several decades the pipeline was wood, with lead-caulked joints. Contraction and expansion in the extremes of heat and cold resulted in frequent leaks developing; it was necessary to patrol the entire line daily to plug them. Creasey, (Plates 6.10, 6.11), for example, rode a 15 mile (24 km) stretch of the line both ways each day. He carried caulking tools, shovel, lead and food on the machine. In addition to plugging leaks (or notifying the section office for assistance in the case of large pipe blowouts) he had to keep the pipeline route cleared of plant growth and maintain his bicycle pad. The high ratio of work to travel was such that the bicycle was far superior to a truck in terms of convenience and cost. The bicyclists were replaced by motor vehicle patrols generally only after welded steel pipes replaced the leak-prone wooden ones.

**Kangaroo Shooting**

A classic example of the misperception of the potential of the bicycle for use in rural Australia is provided by a report in the *Cycling Times* (23/1/96:4) published in Melbourne, in 1896. The Australian writer reported upon a London publication, *Pearson's Weekly*, which had recently commented upon the use of bicycles by kangaroo shooters. The London magazine had mentioned several thousand animals having been shot, and the value of the 'noiseless approach' the machine afforded. The Australian writer invited his readers to note the 'unlimited stock of
Plate 6.10
TED CREASEY (L.), KALGOORLIE PIPELINE 'LENGTHRUNNER', c. 1950
(Ted Creasey - Bicton, WA)

Plate 6.11
TED CREASEY ALONG THE KALGOORLIE PIPELINE, c. 1950
(Ted Creasey - Bicton, WA)
reliable information about things that never happen' that Pearson's Weekly provided its English readers. He informed his own readers that 'It is at once obvious that the [English] writer knows nothing about kangaroos, or the speed at which they [travel], nothing about Australian "country" and nothing about cycling'. In fact, that statement was most appropriate to the Australian writer himself. It is not known where the Pearson's Weekly information came from, but subsequent evidence suggests it was true. Len Witt (1977), for example, used the bicycle with Ernie Frandsen (Plate 6.12) for kangaroo shooting in Western Australia in the late 1920s and early 1930s. He specifically referred to the value of the bicycle's quietness, and the ability to cover extensive areas quickly while operating out of a central camp. Skins were carried back to camp on the rear carrier and handlebars. Beer (1977) also reported meeting a bicycle-mounted kangaroo shooter in New South Wales circa 1930.

Aborigines and the Bicycle

I have found only a few references to the Aborigines' use of, and reaction to, the bicycle. Early cyclists (e.g. Murif 1897; Coleman 1898f) in isolated areas reported that the machine generally aroused consternation, fear and curiosity among Aborigines. Murif (1897:180) said that an Aborigine called it a 'kangaroo engine'. Costello (1977) referred to Aborigines describing the bicyclist as 'white man run sitting down'; however, this is identical to a description attributed to North American Indians in the late 1890s. Probably the North American and both 'aboriginal' descriptions were white inventions and examples of racist 'humour'.

In 1897 Calvert, in a book about his travels through Western Australia, published a sketch of an Aborigine on a bicycle, with the
Plate 6.12
KANGAROO SHOOTING ON DANDARAGA STATION, WA, c. 1930
(Len Witt - Coolgardie, WA)

Plate 6.13
'POSSIBLE EARLY DEVELOPMENT IN THE BUSH'
(Calvert 1897:308)
caption 'Possible Early Development in the Bush' (Plate 6.13); there was no reference to the sketch of Aboriginal use of the bicycle in the text. On the Western Australian goldfields in the late 1890s a 'Australian "Major Taylor''' (referring to the American negro racer) was photographed on a bicycle with a white attendant, and apparently raced in at least one cycle meeting. However, the whole situation appears to have been a spoof. The La Trobe Library holds a collection of 'scenes' (taken in a studio setting) portraying an Aboriginal woman and child in various poses with a bicycle (e.g. Plate 6.14). Barker (1964:105-106) offered the following comments concerning Aboriginal use of the bicycle:

They are fond of bicycles, treating them as playthings and not as a means of travelling. Often they buy one or are given one, and young men and boys learn to ride it quicker than whites. When a tyre is punctured they keep riding and never attempt to mend the puncture. They ride it round and round, one after another practising, until both tyres are punctured. Riding two flat tyres makes the novelty wear off, and the bicycle is neglected. It is not even stood against a tree but is left on its side at the exact spot where they lose interest.

Peterson (1977), an anthropologist, said that older Aborigines in the Northern Territory talked of formerly using bicycles for bore-maintenance rounds on properties (no specific dates were given, but the use occurred several decades ago). O'Connell (1977) said that the Alyawara people in the Northern Territory, between Derry and Old MacDonald Downs, occasionally used bicycles, at least into the 1950s, for sporadic mustering and droving of cattle and for very limited personal travel. An appeal through an anthropological journal (Fitzpatrick 1978d) for further information proved unrewarding.

A seminar on the use of the bicycle in rural Australia led to a request for further technical details by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (Fitzpatrick 1977j). The possibility of the bicycle eventually being adopted for rural travel in the context of
Plate 6.14
'GOOD BYE MOTHER', c. 1900
(La Trobe Library)

Plate 6.15
AN ALYAWARA HUMPY, MACDONALD DOWNS, NT, 1974
(Jim O'Connell - Canberra, ACT)
the Aboriginal Outstation Movement was discussed. However, the opinion was that it would not occur in the foreseeable future (Nuecke 1977; Peterson 1977).

The Shearers

In the eastern states after the turn of the century the bicycle was adopted by many shearers. In that it did not require food, water or other maintenance when not in use, it was superbly suited to their regime of often prolonged work broken by a few days travel. As well, after several days or weeks of shearing the men were extremely fit and capable of immediately pedalling off on a one-day trip of 100 miles (161 km) if necessary. In contrast, neither a horse nor walkers were capable of such performances.

Evidence suggests that the proportion of shearers using bicycles was high. Bourke residents wrote of the 'horse and bike days' of shearing (Bourke 1966:194), when bicycles 'galore' were pedalled through the area (Glover 1971:66; Lack 1971:73). Near Port Augusta one property owner estimates that about half the shearers used bicycles between 1912 and 1917 (McTaggart 1977a). A shearer who worked in New South Wales between 1909 and 1918 recalled sheds 'where there was almost all bikes' (Maloney 1976). Taylor (1978), a wool classifier in western New South Wales sheds from 1914 - 1924, recalled sheds employing over a hundred men (including shearers and shed hands) in which nearly all had bicycles.

Bean (1910), during his travels in northwestern New South Wales in 1909, noted that 'each year from July to November, the shearers come across New South Wales', and 'the sign of them was their bicycles', which 'had spread through the country as fast as the rabbit. It is extraordinary in what unlikely places one finds those tyre-tracks' (pp. 81-82). As the season got under way 'there began to appear - leaning against the huts
around the big shearing-sheds of the "outside" Australia - bicycles' (p. 83). The use was so integral to the shearing scene that the Shepherds' Agreement in New South Wales eventually required, in addition to food, bunk and other amenities, that 'the employer will provide a suitable room or other place, outside the kitchen and sleeping accommodation, for the housing of the saddles, harness, and cycles of the employees' (PasUn 1916).

The bicycle made it possible for shearers to cover much greater distances in the course of their work. About 1910, in South Australia, for example, one group of shearers annually pedalled 550 miles (885 km) north along the Strzelecki Track to shear in southwest Queensland before returning to their home district for the local season (Wheatley 1977). An excellent illustration is provided by a group of Tasmanians who sheared in the eastern states from the turn of the century to the First World War (Fitzpatrick 1977k). The two men pictured (Plate 6.16) at Deniliquin, NSW, about 1910, left Tasmania with several others in early March, taking a boat to Melbourne, then the train to Wagga. They carried their bicycles with them, stocking up on perishables on the mainland. Each year they covered several thousand miles in their cycling journeys, shearing in such places as Jerilderie, Narrandera, Yanco, Ivanhoe, Menindee, Wilcannia, and Tibooburra. At the end of the season the men returned to Tasmania to shear locally (Schroeter 1977a, 1977b).

The integration of the train and bicycle was common (Ford 1976). Benn (1910:31) reported that at a wool siding

at one time of the year there would come passengers -- a score or two of them within two or three days -- who would climb down from the mail train and lift down their swags and their bicycles. As the train pulled out, they would already be strunging off through the white gate, the hubs and spokes of their machines twinkling across the paddock.
Plate 6.16
ROBERT AND FRANCIS LYON, OF TASMANIA, AT DENILIQUIN, NSW, c. 1910
(Mary Schroeter - Longford, TAS)

Plate 6.17
A.W.U. BICYCLE CORPS, COONAMBLE
(SyMail 6/9/02:602)
The ultimate effect of the bicycle upon the economy is difficult to assess. McQueen (1977) suggested that because of the lower transport costs it may have been a factor in keeping wage increases down. The bicycle also meant a potential improvement in the ratio of shearing time to travel time, as men could move much faster from station to station. From another perspective, by tripling the rate of travel in a day from 25 miles (40 km) to 75 miles (121 km), the cyclist increased the potential work area from a theoretical maximum of 1,962 square miles (5,081 km²) to 17,662 square miles (45,744 km²), a factor of nine, a great increase in work opportunity.

The full effect of the bicycle's use upon sheep shearers' activities and travel patterns is an intriguing question that may be unanswerable, for statistics on shearers' movement patterns are probably now unattainable. But it would be very surprising if such a modifier of time and distance, used by so many for so long, did not result in some significant changes in the shearing scene.

The bicycle served shearers (and other rural workers) in other ways. Socially it meant that their sphere of leisure activities was expanded. On weekends they could visit sheds and communities that otherwise would have been impossible, and many engaged in cycle races on properties and in nearby towns (McTaggart 1977a).

The bicycle was used by labor organisers. McIntyre (1972:30) noted that in Western Australia Tom Beasley, Organising Secretary and later General Secretary of the A.W.A., bicycled to various goldfields camps, and 'Paddy' Lynch, later a Labor Senator for Western Australia, pedalled 800 miles (1,290 km) in 15 days registering union members. Hegney (1977) described similar experiences in great detail. In Coonamble, NSW, in 1902, an Australian Workers' Union bicycle corps
was formed (Plate 6.17) during a strike (SyMall 6/9/02:602), presumably for the purpose of quickly dealing with scabs at distant properties.

The Bicycle and the Military

Australian cycling writers and enthusiasts in the 1890s were continually pointing out the potential of the bicycle for military use and citing overseas developments. The formation of cycle corps abroad (WesMall 10/3/99:35), the United States' (Norton 22/10/97:2) and England's (CooMin 4/5/97:2) military trials, and Germany's purchase of cycles (AusC 2/96:40; AusC, 11/4/95:2) and training of Alsatians for counter-cyclist work (Norton 31/8/97:2), among other items, were reported throughout Australia. Writers frequently criticised local colonial (and later Commonwealth) military authorities for their hesitancy in forming cycle units, corps or regiments, and for failing to support the few cyclist units that were formed by private individuals (WAMh 29/4/98:13). It was noted that the bicycle was in use in the dispatch service of nearly every other army in 'the civilised world' (WAMh 19/3/97:18).

There was a strong conviction on the part of some that the bicycle had a definite role to play in some future, if nebulous, defence of Australia (WAMh 29/4/98:13). Although various small cycle units did serve (HawCt 28/3/96), particularly after 1900, the bicycles were generally privately owned (Cordou 1905).

The real impetus for the encouragement of the military use of the machine, from an Australian perspective, came from the local experience in messenger delivery work, overland rides, relay rides, and reports of its use for scouting and dispatch (spelled commonly as either 'dispatch' of 'despatch') work elsewhere. By 1897 writers had concluded that there was not 'the slightest doubt but that in all future warfare the cycle will play a very important part in all despatch and scouting work'
In that respect the use of the bicycle in rural Australia offered superb examples of the machine's capabilities. As well, in 1896 a team of Melbourne cyclists had raced several miles with a 3D word message, received a reply, and returned it several minutes faster than a team of flag signallers could do it (WACit 28/3/96; black 4/96:89).

With the outbreak of the Boer War there was a redoubled effort by a variety of Australian individuals and organisations to encourage the formation of cyclist units for service. Reports from the war bolstered such movements, citing the cycle's use by both the British and Boers for dispatch work, and by civilians fleeing from the Transvaal when the fighting broke out (WACy 10/11/99:7). The British War Office's dispatch of cyclist soldiers to the war periodically rekindled Australian demands to form cycle corps or send cyclists as part of larger regiments (WASp 11/5/01:2). In reporting on the dispatch of 25 cyclists with a New South Wales Bush contingent, the Dunlop representative in Western Australia maintained that 'the finest corps of bush cyclists in the world, suitable for South Africa, could be sent from the colony; as nowhere else are the conditions more similar than on our goldfields' (Mather 1900). This sentiment was echoed by Western Australia's largest cycle dealer, Percy Armstrong (1900), who pointed out that a 'low set, swiftly moving cyclist, swinging along the winding track, would be a more difficult object to aim at than the horseman. Also dozens of bullets might pass through the machine either without touching it or at least without doing much damage, whereas one bullet through a horse would very soon stop the rider's career'. Armstrong reported that the Boers commandeered 'all the good makes of bicycles' in Johannesburg; that this specifically included Humbers, for which he was the Perth representative, was a point not intended to be lost upon the readers of his letter!
In New South Wales the Secretary of the League of Wheelmen wrote directly to the Federal Minister for Defence, Sir John Forrest, offering assistance in forming a Cycle Regiment. He said that he could form one or two companies of 100 men each as a nucleus of such a regiment, and had been encouraged by cyclists to do so (O'Brien 1901).

However, it was frequently suggested that cyclists not be formed as specific regiments, but as smaller companies or detachments attached to other units, or as a special unit attached directly to the General himself, so as to 'make the best use of them' (Armstrong 1900); otherwise it was felt that the cyclists' utility would be practically thrown away (Nather 1900). This view was reflected by Australian military men in later years when, in response to an inquiry by Bridges (1905), the New South Wales District Commandant suggested that cyclists should be formed as companies, similar to the signalling corps (Cordou 1905).

To read occasional Australian writers, the rural Western Australian environment would have appeared to have been the ideal training ground for cyclists in preparation for military dispatch and scouting work:

There cannot be any question as to the value a dozen of the best cyclists from this colony would be in scouting and despatch work ... one cannot help thinking that given the opportunity, some of our "special" riders and overlanders would perform the work which would come as a revelation to even those who believe in the utility of the cycle in service of that description. From England wheelmen are being sent out attached to several corps, but to Australians it is somewhat amusing to read that their machines are of the heavy roadster type, and are fitted with mudguards and brakes. A hundred of such cyclists would not be as valuable as half a dozen of the pioneer wheelmen of Australia (WestMail 24/2/1900).

The General Secretary of the League of New South Wales Wheelmen was no less enthusiastic as to the value of road racing in preparing cyclists for military service. In a letter to the Minister of Defence in 1905 he suggested that
These men by virtue of their magnificent physique, and the constant physical training they undergo, and the long, hard Road contests raced for in all weathers, combine to produce a race of men equal to the hardships and discomforts of the Battlefield. If courage, endurance and perfect discipline will help to keep the invader from our hearth, then the Citizen Cyclist Soldier will not be found wanting.

He went on to promise that 1,000 cyclists could be quickly enrolled (McIntosh 1905).

Individuals and private organisations approached military authorities and Department of Defence officials directly (McIntosh 1905; Sullivan 1905), and efforts to form cycling contingents included offers by volunteers to furnish their own machines (WesMail 24/2/1900). Commercial organisations actively promoted the official military adoption of the bicycle and formation of cycle units, both during and after the Boer War. Individual cycle agents occasionally offered cash or machines as evidence of their sincerity (Armstrong 1900), and the offer of cycles by overseas manufacturers was reported (WesMail 10/3/99:35).

By far the greatest lobbying for the adoption of the bicycle was by Dunlop, either directly from Melbourne, or via local representatives. Western Australia's agent offered up to 20 sets of tyres for bicycles destined for the Boer War (Mather 1900). The financial benefits accruing if the various colonies or federal government adopted large number of bicycles would have been great, given Dunlop's near monopoly of the tyre market. For two decades Dunlop sponsored or supported a series of relay rides to demonstrate the value of the bicycle for military dispatch purposes.

**Early Relay Rides**

A relay ride was planned as early as 1893 'to show the public what really can be accomplished on the safety' (AuCy 19/10/93:7). It was
to run from Melbourne to Colac and back on Melbourne Cup day. However, because of 'unsuitable weather', and upcoming cycle races pre-empting the riders' interest the relay never took place (AuCy 9/11/93:2).

The first major relay ride in Western Australia, in 1899, was arranged by Mather, the local Dunlop representative (and former Darwin - Adelaide overlander). It was reportedly undertaken at the suggestion of Sir Gerard Smith, the Western Australian Governor, and a military man (WACy 1/9/99:9). The objective was to demonstrate the speed with which a team of cyclists could carry dispatches from the defence fort at Albany to Perth in the event of a 'foreign invasion interfering with our telegraph and railway service' (WACy 1/9/99:5). Cyclists were to be located intermittently along the route and the dispatch was to start from Albany. Mather calculated that the 250 mile (400 km) run could be made in about 15 hours. Unfortunately the Railways Department would not allow the cyclists free or concession passes to get to their respective locations along the relay route (which roughly paralleled the rail line). When the riders were forced to pay their own full fares some refused, and consequently longer relay legs had to be substituted (MorHer 20/10/99:2); several riders never managed to get to their posts at all -- so much for supplanting the railway! The _West Australian_ (26/9/99) castigated the Railways Department for their failure to assist in this event 'of public interest', as Sir Gerard Smith called it, but the _W.A. Wheelman_ blamed the niggardliness of some of the Perth riders for their 'how much can I get out of it' attitude (WAWh 27/9/99:6). In contrast, the Albany men, riding the southern and most difficult part of the route, proved reliable.

The ride started in rain at 12:30 a.m. Saturday morning, at Albany, with a hard wind and a poor lamp: 'the latter went out, and the former didn't' (WAWh 27/9/99:6). The finish was scheduled for 3:30 that afternoon in Perth, hopefully to a welcoming crowd. The hardest stretch
was the 31 miles (50 km) that included a notorious 7-mile (11 km) sand
patch at Kojonup, much of which had to be walked. Even so, the rider
covered the leg in 2 hours, 40 minutes, an average of 11.6 miles per
hour (18.7 kph). On a double leg one rider broke a pedal, radically
slowing his progress. Another then took over for an anticipated double
leg, but none of the following three riders showed up. He ended up
riding five legs, a long, tiring effort that took its toll in energy and
time. That rider finally gave the effort over at Armadale to the last
cyclist, who rode to the Perth Police Station for a time stamp at 1:37 a.m.,
in lieu of waking up his excellency, to whom he was originally instructed
to deliver the message. Perhaps it was as well that Sir Gerard had not
been present, for the rider would have had nothing to hand him: the
dispatch itself was lost on the Kojonup sand patch (reportedly in a
collision with a kangaroo), a fact quietly buried in a brief note some
one and a half weeks later (WARcy 4/11/99:10). The ride was anything but
a success and blame was laid everywhere. A second attempt was cancelled
because of influenza (Norther 18/11/99:2). Mother probably wished the
whole episode had never been dreamed up.

Although the ride was not officially known as a Dunlop ride, the
fact that their agent had been the sole organiser, and that it had failed
in its objective, undoubtedly led to the firm taking a cautionary attitude
towards such future events. They had much to gain by such rides if
successful, of course, but if the event proved a failure it would not
help in selling bicycles and tyres to the military. The first officially
sanctioned Dunlop relay ride was not to take place for another ten years.

The 1909 Dunlop Military Dispatch Cycle Ride

By 1909 Dunlop had proposed the idea of a Dispatch Relay Ride
between Adelaide and Sydney, via Melbourne. The 1,143 miles (1,839 km)
were to be ridden in 80 hours by 64 relay teams of two men each to
demonstrate the value of cyclists in carrying messages and the
dependability of the bicycle under a variety of weather and terrain
conditions (James 1939a). In January, Dunlop's General Manager asked
the Department of Defence for military patronage and solicited any
recommendations, from a military standpoint, that might further the
trip's objectives (Proctor 1909a). In February he reiterated his request
(Proctor 1909b). The ride was also promoted by a director of Dunlop,
who sent a personal handwritten note directly to Bridges, the Chief of
the General Staff (Hughes 1909). Within hours Bridges had endorsed the
idea (Bridges 1909a) and Dunlop had the imprimatur of the Department
of Defence; from then on it was known as the Dunlop Military Dispatch
Cycle Ride. In exchange for its endorsement, the military requested a
report on the transit times between various points and on any exceptional
difficulties encountered (Pethebridge 1909), and copies of a map of the
Coorong area that Dunlop had prepared especially for the trip (Wilson
1909a). Bridges and other officials of the Department of Defence
eventually received three souvenir portfolios of the ride (Wilson 1909b)
and a commemorative Gold Medal (Bridges 1909b). For Dunlop, the endorsement
was of considerable value, imparting an aura of national importance and
civic-mindedness to the venture. The tyre company certainly took advantage
of the situation in its publicity.

In preparation for the trip a Dunlop team motored over the route
(Figure 6.2), interviewed riders, investigated conditions, and affixed
red discs to trees, posts and fences at the changing stations. The
greatest concern was the Coorong area, where sand dunes and flats, marshy
lagoon edges, and backwater reaches made for difficult travelling; on
several occasions the survey team had to resort to coconut matting and
tow ropes to extricate their vehicle. Cyclists on the Coorong sections
DUNLOP

MILITARY-DISPATCH CYCLE RIDE

MAP of ROUTE

TO BE HELD

APRIL 8TH 9TH 10TH 11TH '09

TOTAL DISTANCE 1148 M.L.S
DIVIDED INTO 63 RELAYS.

Dispatch Will Leave Adelaide
10 PM Thursday April 8th '09.
spent several days inspecting the various tracks and were to receive special gold medals for their work over the 'horrible stretch of country' (Argus 16/1/09); the departure from Adelaide was timed to allow the Coorong to be ridden in daylight.

The ride was divided into 64 stages, each ridden by two riders. In case of a breakdown the accompanying rider was to continue on his own; if necessary he was to walk. The riders were unpaid volunteers and included some of the best cyclists in Australia. The stages ranged in length from a short, steep 12½ mile (20 km) climb out of Adelaide to a 37 mile (60 km) section in the Coorong. In fact, the preceding Coorong leg was 28 miles (45 km) so that the two teams between them would cover 65 miles (104 km), the longest double leg on the entire ride, and through the most difficult conditions. The Adelaide – Melbourne half, 577 miles (928 km), was the roughest and had the fewest riders. The final time allotted for the ride was 73½ hours.

The relay began at 10:00 p.m., Thursday, 8 April, when the Adelaide District Commandant handed the dispatch to the first rider. The 12½ mile (20 km) leg over Mt. Lofty was done in 50 minutes. Even allowing a 6 minute deficit in punting across the Murray River, the riders at Meningie headed into the first of the Coorong stretches 11 minutes ahead of schedule. At the start of the next leg, the 28 mile (45 km) run from Wood's Well, the two riders, Pfundt and McKinnon, were still ahead of schedule.

During the preceding day Pfundt, McKinnon and the two riders to whom they would hand the dispatch at Cantara, Hieght and Hartmann, had set out north together from Kingston. However, McKinnon had broken his frame when hitting a hole, and Hartmann, a Cantara-based rider, gave his machine to McKinnon to continue on with. However, instead of the remaining rider, Hieght, waiting alone at Cantara, he alternately rode and carried the
broken bike back to Kingston with Hartmann, and wired Mount Gambier for a replacement. By the time it arrived, some hours later, they were so late in returning to Cantara that they tried a shortcut through the dunes.

In the meantime Pfundt and McKinnon had reached Wood's Well, rested overnight, and accepted the dispatch just before 6:00 the next morning. When they reached Cantara, Hieght and Hartmann were not there! They had no alternative but to continue on. Unfortunately Hieght and Hartmann had become temporarily lost and not only did they not reach Cantara in time, but missed Pfundt and McKinnon completely. However the pair concluded the 65 mile (105 km) double leg in 5 hours and 20 minutes, only 25 minutes late. They had averaged 12.2 miles per hour (19.6 kph) through the sand. Subsequent riders made up time and Melbourne was reached 9:26 Sunday morning, two hours ahead of schedule.

The legs from Melbourne to Sydney were shorter than those from Adelaide - To Melbourne, but involved some very poor roads and hilly country. However, the stretch from Melbourne to Albury was covered in only 9 3/4 hours, an average of 20.6 miles per hour (33.1 kph). At this stage, as a southerly wind developed to aid the riders, the race organiser, James, began to worry -- there was a probability of dispatch riders reaching changing stations well before the next scheduled riders would be ready! Telegrams were sent to all riders along the route. Unfortunately it was night and many of them lived on farms or away from the nearest telegraph offices; consequently James (1939:7) ordered the telegrams delivered as if 'on urgent military service', an undoubted exaggeration of his authority. Surprisingly, no serious delays were encountered, despite the fact that at Upper Tarcutta, for example, the dispatch arrived five hours ahead of time.

There were numerous accidents along the way. One rider crashed into a creek and another collided with a flock of sheep (both at night),
several experienced falls, and there were some punctures. However, the
dispatch was handed over to Captain Brand 69 hours and 35 minutes after
having left Adelaide. It was 3½ hours ahead of schedule and 10½ hours
faster than felt possible when the relay had first been conceived. It
was a highly successful effort.

1912 Dunlop Relay Ride

By mid-1911 the speed and reliability of motorcycles and motorcars
during various overland journeys led to suggestions that they could
negotiate the 1909 military dispatch ride route far quicker than cyclists
(James 1939h). This led to Dunlop planning a second relay ride matching
cyclists against motorcyclists and motorcars. Early publicity releases
pointed out that the 'Commonwealth military authorities, who took such a
keen interest in the 1909 Relay Ride are to be applied to for their
support and patronage' (Dunlop 1911). With this preliminary leverage,
Proctor again solicited military support, felicitously asking how the
ride might be made more valuable from their perspective, and requesting
a repetition of their 'goodwill and cooperation' (Proctor 1911a). The
Minister for Defence was reminded of his complimentary remarks about the
1909 ride, and advised of the forthcoming 'biggest Relay Despatch Ride
ever held in the world'. Proctor asked the Minister to give it 'gracious
consideration' -- never directly asking for patronage -- and pointed out
that it would cost Dunlop between £300 and £400, and considerable
administrative effort (Proctor 1911b). Within 6 days patronage had been
granted (Trumble 1911). In exchange the military requested that a report
on the ride be submitted to them (Wilson 1911).

The 1912 ride was highly publicised and claimed to be 'the greatest
sporting event ever promoted in Australia, if not the whole world' (Dail
Tel 2/8/11). The paper went on to suggest that it would be watched by
'some millions of interested people'. Inasmuch as the popular and extensively used bicycle, whose reliability and speed was known, was to be pitted against the more fascinating, less common, potentially less reliable, but faster, motor vehicles, the event certainly had the elements to interest a broad spectrum of the society. Interestingly, Dunlop rarely called it a 'military' relay ride, unlike 1909, despite Proctor's specific use of the term in his appeal to the Minister for Defence, and the Minister's use of it in reply (Trumble 1911). While occasional documents were entitled 'Dunlop Military Relay Dispatch Contest' (Dunlop 1912a) the event was generally referred to as a 'sporting contest', both by Dunlop (1911, 1912b) and the newspapers, who received most of their information and copy from Dunlop. However, the military value of the ride was referred to in the text of many news reports.

The 1912 relay race was run over the same route as the 1909 ride. An additional team of cyclists was added, but otherwise the race conditions remained essentially the same as before. The motorcars ran only four legs: Adelaide - Mt. Gambier - Melbourne - Albury - Sydney, while 52 motorcyclists rode 26 legs.

James, Dunlop's organiser, calculated handicaps upon the basis of times turned in during the previous relay ride and recent record runs by motorcars and motorcyclists. He allowed the cyclists to start 30 hours ahead of the motorcars and 24 hours ahead of the motorcycles. Newspapers suggested that the motorcyclists would easily win the race, but critics pointed out that during some of the night stretches the motorcycles (as well as cars) would not be able to exceed the cyclists' speed, and while the motor vehicles were capable of 40 mph (64 kph) on good roads, such stretches were 'few and far between on the overland route from Adelaide to Sydney'. The 'absolute reliability' of the bicycles was considered an important factor. James stuck to his handicap times, and the company
hoped for 'good weather and freedom from accidents to ensure a great
and instructive contest' (Dunlop 1912c). The event was indeed to prove
'instructive', but it was run in atrocious weather and saw several
accidents, both mechanical and personal.

The race began at 5 a.m., Good Friday, 5 April, 1912. The
cyclists faced an ominous situation. It was raining, strong headwinds
were blowing, and the roads as far as Melbourne were already reported
heavy. By 5 a.m. Saturday, when the motorcyclists left, rain was still
coming down, although decreasing. When the motorcars departed, at 11
a.m., the weather was clearing. The roads, however, were very heavy
and rain was again struck to the south; no one was to be able to take
advantage of the moonlight during the race.

The cyclists, in summary, pedalled a remarkable ride. Although
they suffered from rain, wind, and muddy roads most of the way, they
succeeded in bettering the 1909 time by 3 minutes! Throughout the entire
journey they were rarely more than thirty minutes from schedule, although
they had their share of falls and punctures.

One motorcyclist broke his leg (his partner fell twice in the same
stretch), another broke a hand, and a third bruised a shoulder. From
Wangaratta to Albury one machine's engine seized and his partner broke
his frame. In descending Jugiong Mount the two motorcyclists hit a fence,
and the next pair had one rear tyre blow out, while the partner was
delayed with a wet magneto. In the early stages the motorcyclists had
a difficult time closing the gap on the cyclists; they covered one 36
mile (58 km) Coorong stretch only one minute faster than the cyclists.
The motorcyclists eventually increased their rate of travel, and drew
closer to the cyclists, but as a result of the troubles encountered from
Melbourne on, they were unable to catch them. They arrived in Sydney at
9:20 Monday morning, 6 hours and 18 minutes after the cyclists.
The motorcars started out well, and the run over the Coorong was among the fastest legs of the entire journey; the driver averaged 35 mph (56 kph) on the sandy stretch, reaching Kingston in 5 hours and 15 minutes, far faster than the race organiser had thought possible. While the cars suffered no notable mechanical troubles, rain and slippery roads eventually slowed the pace considerably. One car got lost for a while in western Victoria and had three punctures before reaching Melbourne, the drivers a 'sorry spectacle' (Leader 13/4/12). Worse, the car with the dispatch took the Wagga turnoff at Germanton (Holbrook), while the other vehicle went on to Gundagai. The first car to arrive in Sydney did not have the dispatch, but the second pulled in an hour later with it, some eight hours after the cyclists, and two hours after the motorcyclists.

The motorcars had covered the distance in 46 hours, 44 minutes (24.7 mph - 39.7 kph), the motorcyclists in 51 hours, 50 minutes (22.2 mph - 35.7 kph), and the cyclists in 69 hours, 32 minutes (16.5 mph - 26.5 kph).

**Military Evaluation of the Relay Rides**

Public comment by the Defence Department upon the various relay rides was scarce. With respect to the 1909 ride, Colonel Bridges referred to an important service having been done 'in connection with defence possibilities', but did not go into detail, commended the 'excellent spirit of enthusiasm' on the part of participants and organisers, and felt it 'gratifying to know that such a big work was accomplished,' and probably more importantly, 'without any expense to the Commonwealth'. Senator Pearce (the Minister for Defence) lingered a bit more on the potential of cyclists in military service and suggested that the matter had been discussed by the Military Board, with cyclists to be trained in each company in the future (James 1939h), but no details were forthcoming. The comments committed the military men to little, but undoubtedly lent
prestige to Dunlop. For the 1909 and earlier relay rides the discussion of the value of cycles for military use was essentially the province of letters-to-the-editors and cycling columns of various newspapers and journals.

For the 1912 relay ride a military report was filed (Nixon 1912) and subsequently slightly revised (Beake 1912). Beake thought that the bad roads and weather had 'provided a physical test of endurance as severe as any likely to be met with on service'. Nixon judged the bicycle, although slower, 'more reliable than either of the other vehicles' and 'less likely to be put out of action by road and weather conditions or either mechanical or tyre troubles', and commented favourably upon their consistency of pace. However, he felt that the bad roads had not allowed either the cars or motorcycles to demonstrate their best work. Despite the fact that the cars proved faster and had few troubles on the trip, he deemed the motorcycles less likely to be 'rendered useless' and felt that the motorcycles -- given dry roads -- were superior to bicycles and cars for the transmission of messages. It was a very strange and unwarranted conclusion given the facts of the race. The tone of the report conveys the impression that Nixon had already decided that motorcycles were best and proceeded to qualify the race conditions and results to the point of not having to take them into consideration in his report.

The ultimate conclusion of both men was that 'the value of this ride from the military aspect depends less upon its actual performance than upon the organisation which rendered it possible' (Nixon 1912). Given that the ride required several weeks of organisation and utilised postal and telegraph facilities, and that such a relay would only be needed if these very facilities were inoperative, Beake concluded that 'it would appear difficult, if not impossible, to organise such a ride in War'. He
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For the 1912 relay ride a military report was filed (Nixon 1912) and subsequently slightly revised (Beake 1912). Beake thought that the bad roads and weather had 'provided a physical test of endurance as severe as any likely to be met with on service'. Nixon judged the bicycle, although slower, 'more reliable than either of the other vehicles' and 'less likely to be put out of action by road and weather conditions or either mechanical or tyre troubles', and commented favourably upon their consistency of pace. However, he felt that the bad roads had not allowed either the cars or motorcycles to demonstrate their best work. Despite the fact that the cars proved faster and had few troubles on the trip, he deemed the motorcycles less likely to be 'rendered useless' and felt that the motorcycles -- given dry roads -- were superior to bicycles and cars for the transmission of messages. It was a very strange and unwarranted conclusion given the facts of the race. The tone of the report conveys the impression that Nixon had already decided that motorcycles were best and proceeded to qualify the race conditions and results to the point of not having to take them into consideration in his report!

The ultimate conclusion of both men was that 'the value of this ride from the military aspect depends less upon its actual performance than upon the organisation which rendered it possible' (Nixon 1912). Given that the ride required several weeks of organisation and utilised postal and telegraph facilities, and that such a relay would only be needed if these very facilities were inoperative, Beake concluded that 'it would appear difficult, if not impossible, to organise such a ride in War'. He
went on to add that 'Further, it would appear a waste of time and energy, while means of visual signalling — heliograph and flag — remained available'. How he planned to organise signallers over such a distance in lieu of riders was not mentioned, and he was probably unaware of the results of the 1897 signaler-versus-cyclist ride in Melbourne. Also, if one of a series of visual signallers is missing the message can not be transmitted. But, as the 1899 and 1909 relay rides showed, if one cyclist is missing, the gap can be ridden by another. In summary, Nixon's and Beake's 'analysis' of the ride was neither comprehensive nor particularly penetrating. It appears to have been one of those things that had to be done, but with little interest displayed by those writing it. Presumably that reflected their perception of the level of interest of those who ordered it and would be reading it.

The Decline of the Use of the Bicycle

The decline in the use of the bicycle in rural Australia appears to have begun about the end of World War II, and is generally related to the increasing availability, reliability, affordability and comfort of motor vehicles.

Motor vehicles were introduced into Australia before the turn of the century, but by 1910 there were only about 5,000 (Blainey 1966:295; P-P Project). However, the number of registered vehicles steadily increased until in 1923 there were about 115,000 motor cars, 42,000 motorcycles and 12,000 commercial vehicles (Figure 6.3). From then on the number of vehicles in use increased even more sharply; by 1929 there were some 475,000 motor cars, 88,000 motorcycles and 70,000 commercial vehicles in use.

(It is important to note that some writers occasionally use the term 'motor vehicle' as a synonym for 'motor cars'. Forster (1964:
Note: some vehicles now classified as commercial were registered as motor cars prior to 1935.
Table 13), for example, says that there were 99,270 'motor vehicles' in Australia in 1921/22, but he failed to include the 37,578 motorcycles (AusYrBk 1923:340) which accounted for 27 percent of all motor vehicles. Given the early use of a relatively large number of motorcycles in Australia, this is unfortunate. In the following discussion the term 'motor vehicle' refers to motor cars, trucks and motorcycles combined.

The rapid increase in the number of motor vehicles in Australia was made possible by the relative affluence of the country. During the 1920s Australia's per capita income was sixth in the world (Forster 1964:32). In 1926, for example, the average annual adult male award wage was £250, while a new Ford or Chevrolet Tourer cost about £200 (Forster 1964:32). This represented a new car price to annual income ratio of 0.8. Today, the average adult (non-managerial) male's annual income is $11,300 (ABS 1978), while the price of a new Ford Cortina, Falcon (ShepFord 1978) or Holden Kingswood (BeazBru 1978) is about $7,500. This represents a new car price to annual income ratio of 0.66. Hence comparable new car models in the 1920s were about 20 percent more expensive, in terms of annual income, than today. (Officers of the Australian Bureau of Statistics felt that for purposes of this comparison, the use of the actual 'income' value for 1978 is more realistic than the much lower (and not commonly earned) 'award wage'; they indicated that for the 1920s, however, the 'award wage' was in fact reasonably representative of the actual 'income', as overtime and penalty payments were not nearly as common as they are today.) Used cars were much cheaper than new ones, however. Several interviewees and correspondents (e.g. Witt 1977; Ford 1976; Jones 1976) said that they had bought second hand motor cars in the late 1920s and early 1930s for less than £50.

For Australians the use of the motor vehicle was quickly and solidly established. By 1923 Australia was sixth in the world in terms
of absolute numbers of motor vehicles (Table 6.1), and in 1931 retained that ranking. On a per capita basis Australia was exceeded only by the United States and New Zealand in 1930 (Forster 1964:30); in 1921 there was a motor vehicle for every 44.2 persons in Australia (AusYrbk 1969:121, 1926:303), and by 1933 one for every 10.7 persons (AusYrbk 1969:121, 1937:172). Thompson (1932:246), an Englishman who visited Australia in 1928, commented upon the number of 'rough homes' that had motor cars parked outside.

The number of motor vehicles owned by rural workers and travellers is impossible to estimate, as local registration figures do not indicate the purposes to which the vehicles were put. However, some indication of the impact of the automobile upon the travel patterns and behaviour of rural workers, and its influence upon the use of the bicycle, has been obtained from interviewees and correspondence.

It appears that, as an identifiable group, shearers were among the first rural workers to abandon bicycles; numerous persons commented upon the relative scarcity of cycling shearers in the 1920s and 1930s. One possibility was that since shearers tended to work long periods at one location there was not the element of 'commuting' to make them as visible as some other rural travellers. However, other evidence suggests that as a result of their earnings and work pattern (long periods at one location, punctuated by group travel to another point, often established well ahead of time by contracts) they were in an excellent position to quickly take advantage of motor transport (Plate 6.19). McTaggart (1977b) said that after 1918 in South Australia, increased wages and the general availability of the motor car made many shearers lose 'a good deal in their enthusiasm' for the bicycle. Ford (1977a) said that at 'times you could hire an old T-Model Ford in the town if you could pick up enough people to make it payable', and rides were available on mail vehicles if
### Table 6.1
**REGISTERED MOTOR VEHICLES, SELECTED COUNTRIES: 1923, 1931**
(AusYrBk 1924:335, 1931:216)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Motor Cars and Trucks</th>
<th>Motorcycles</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1923</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>15,222,658</td>
<td>176,630</td>
<td>15,399,288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>655,318</td>
<td>430,138</td>
<td>1,085,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>642,571</td>
<td>23,400</td>
<td>665,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>460,000</td>
<td>84,732</td>
<td>544,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>152,068</td>
<td>59,409</td>
<td>211,477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>130,096</td>
<td>42,649</td>
<td>172,745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1931</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>26,690,949</td>
<td>110,915</td>
<td>26,801,864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>1,558,032</td>
<td>702,878</td>
<td>2,260,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1,500,387</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>2,000,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1,215,071</td>
<td>9,369</td>
<td>1,224,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>658,686</td>
<td>731,237</td>
<td>1,389,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>593,510</td>
<td>95,000</td>
<td>688,510</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
space was not booked out (Doecke 1977a). Shearing contractors occasionally transported shearsers from one job to another (McTaggart (1977b).

Individual shearsers who owned cars transported their mates in exchange for petrol and other costs. Both Hegney (1977) and Witt (1977) felt that the ability of shearsers to travel in gangs contributed to their rapid abandonment of the bicycle in Western Australia.

Interestingly, despite the large number of motorcycles in use in Australia by the early 1920s (Figure 6.3), they do not appear to have been an important element in the shearsers' progression from the bicycle to motor cars or trucks. No interviewee or correspondent indicated having used a motorcycle and several suggested reasons why others did not commonly adopt them. For one thing their reliability was a problem in the early years. In 1904 Crawford (1904:486) tried one along the Western Australian rabbit fence, but it broke down and he finished the journey by horse. He judged the machine's use along the fence 'out of the question', partly because the roots, suckers and timbers on the track obscured the path. Probably part of his problem resulted from the fact that the early machines were not easily ridden at extremely slow speeds, such as is possible today; this factor was specifically mentioned by McTaggart (1977b) as a problem in using motorcycles for droving and mustering. Taylor (1978), who cycled extensively in Western New South Wales from 1914 - 1924, said that motorcycles were often unreliable, parts were often hard to obtain, the machines were not always easy to repair (as they often needed specifically engineered parts), and their weight meant that they bogged down easily in heavy conditions, were hard to push if they developed an unrepairable puncture or breakdown, and could not be lifted over fences to take advantage of shortcuts across paddocks.

Also the fact that the motorcycle did not provide protection from the elements was a distinct disadvantage. In exposing the rider to the
cold, wind and rain, at relatively high speeds it made for a much more uncomfortable ride than other forms of transport. As well, because the rider merely sat on the machine, he did not even derive the benefit (as he did with the bicycle) of working to generate heat. The motorcycle was certainly used for various rural tasks, and was adopted on Gindalbie Station, WA, very early, for example (Goding 1976), for riding windmill circuits or making the trip to nearby communities or properties. But the very clear impression from my research is that the machine was not a 'logical' step in the motorisation of rural workers and travellers.

The gradual decline in the use of the bicycle for rural work and travel during the 1920s and 1930s was occasionally arrested. Smith (1977a) said that during the depression motor vehicles became noticeably scarcer in the Tennant Creek, NT, area and McTaggart (1977a) said there was a definite resurgence in the bicycle's use on properties in parts of South Australia. As a result of the economic conditions it was only after much 'scrimping and saving' that Fisher (1977a) was able to become the 'proud possessor' of a bicycle in the early 1930s, and despite the increasing number of motor vehicles, bicycles were still highly valued and ownership was considered by some to be a privilege (Fergusson 1977).

The severe drought of 1926 – 1930 in South Australia also encouraged the readoption of the bicycle in the Eyre Peninsula (McTaggart 1977a). From 1912 to 1914, drought brought the bicycle into more common use in other parts of South Australia; Reichstein (1977) was 'going to say into "favour" but that would be quite an exaggeration'. As well, severe restrictions on petrol and the limited availability of spare parts and tyres for motor cars and trucks during World War II probably contributed to the substantial continued use of the bicycle for several more years than would otherwise have been the case.
Through the 1940s the bicycle was commonly used by itinerant and local agricultural workers in such areas as the Barossa Valley (Rosenzweig 1977) and the La Trobe Valley (Lade 1977). Williams (1977b) reported that in parts of New South Wales in the 1930s he remembered 'an invasion of bikes with big bundles on the carriers or the rider's back, in pea picking season and again at fruit picking time'. Nicholson (1977) and O'Brien (1977) described their own such travels in detail.

Along the Newcastle - Maitland road in May, 1925, a two day traffic count tallied 5,511 bicycles and 2,573 motorcycles and cars (NewSun 25/5/25); the extensive use of the bicycle in the Maitland area had been going on for many decades before that time (NSWLC 1903:1467). Even in the early 1950s the bicycle remained a popular device for commuting between urban and rural areas or between communities; many workers pedalled between Boulder and Kalgoorlie (Costello 1977), to and from the smelter works at Port Pirie (Farley 1977), and about the Collie area, with its numerous mines (Riley 1976).

For many - probably most - cyclists, the adoption of the motor car was undoubtedly a result of its positive aspects. While Williams (1977b) claimed that a cyclist could get acclimatised to almost any weather and found a 'pair of gloves on a frosty morning quite ample for comfort', many did not agree with him; 'who would ride a bicycle when the journey could be accomplished with comfort and speed in a car?' (Edge 1977). That the motor car was a 'great time saver' (Travers 1977) is a recurrent theme in interviews and correspondence. Also, as motor cars became more affordable and available, 'motorisation became a status symbol' (McKenzie 1977a).

Unfortunately those who climbed into motor cars did more than just abandon bicycles themselves. They made it progressively more difficult
for those who would have preferred using bicycles to continue doing so. Some businessmen found that they had to adopt motor cars to 'keep up with the Joneses' (Williams 1977b). As well, motor cars made bicycle travel increasingly dangerous. Riders were 'blasted with car-horns, splashed with mud and/or water, or even abused by some drivers' (Leithead 1977); 'I would not like to be doing the same journey today with the motor traffic around' (Watson 1977). The motor car eventually did not allow coexistence.

For all the benefits of the motor vehicle, many interviewees and correspondents expressed regret at the decline in the use of the bicycle, both for the changes in attitudes that it reflects, and the benefits lost to those who no longer pedal as part of their work routine. Smith (1977a) appreciated the leisurely philosophy of life that the bicycle entailed, in contrast to the 'mad rat race' of the past two or three decades; Wheatley (1977) commented that the use of the bicycle in the past was possible because 'time wasn't quite so important, there was more of it then'. Stewart (1977) said that complaints about bad backs among shearers seem more frequent today than in the past, and suggests that pedalling between jobs was an effective antidote to prolonged hours in the shearing crouch. And many former riders attribute their longevity, good health, and in one case '(no kidding) virility', to the long use of the bicycle.
Chapter 7
LESSONS AND LEGEND

The Impact of the Bicycle in Rural Australia 331.
Appropriate Technology 333.
The Bicycle and the Australian Language 337.
'Bicycling' and Plant Dispersal 340.
The Bicycle and the 'Australian Legend' 341.
The four objectives of the study were to:

- describe and assess the nature and characteristics of rural Australian cycle use;
- to understand the relative importance of, and the interactions between, the various factors contributing to that use;
- to suggest something of the impact of that use; and
- to draw some lessons from it that may be applied towards understanding the bicycle's use in other contexts.

The first two of these objectives have been considered in detail in the past five chapters.

The bicycle was indeed widely used throughout rural Australia for some decades. It represents an excellent example of the introduction, adoption and adaptation of a particular technology in a given situation. As little has been published about the use of the bicycle in overseas rural areas, it is impossible to be certain about the uniqueness of various aspects of the Australian experience. As indicated in Chapter 1, similar use may well have occurred elsewhere and so far gone unreported. However, in considering the complex of factors peculiar to the rural Australia of that period (summarised in the 'Prologue' to Chapter 1, pages 2 - 4), it appears that in few other areas of the world could a use of a similar nature and with the same social and economic significance ever have occurred. In any case, the thesis that the bicycle and the rural Australian environment were a highly propitious and effective blending of man, machine and environment is well established.

The Impact of the Bicycle upon Rural Australia

The basic fact, which must not be lost sight of, is that the bicycle allowed travellers to cover a greater distance in less time than was ever before possible through most of the Australian countryside. Aboriginal
man was confined to walking. Although Europeans brought with them the horse, bullock, camel and donkey, and these allowed him to move himself and large amounts of goods across the countryside, the rate of travel was not substantially increased. Aside from the limited railway, riverboat and coaching networks (permitting relays of horses to be used), most of rural Australia in 1890 could not be crossed any faster than man had been doing it for millenia. In increasing man's rate of travel by a factor of between two and three, 'bicycling' represented a significant personal transport revolution.

Particular effects of this revolution upon Australian society have been indicated at various points in the preceding chapters: among these are such things as the adoption of the bicycle for goldfields communications, its widespread use by shearers, the development of road maps and touring guides, possible benefits to hoteliers resulting from increased tourism, the popularity of cycle racing in many rural communities, the growth of a bicycle manufacturing, distribution and sales network across the country, the machine's replacement of animals in many work situations, and its contribution to an enhanced awareness of rural Australia through increased touring and reporting of overland rides.

There is nothing to suggest that the bicycle's use altered the settlement pattern of rural Australia, as occurred with the introduction of such transport modes as riverboats, railways, or motor vehicles. The most important intermediate factor influencing the location of most rural settlement has been the transfer of goods, which requires a network of navigable rivers, railways, and roads. The effect of these modes, separately and together, upon the location of settlement in Australia is well known. The bicycle, in contrast, was essentially for personal movement, and the cyclist was remarkably unconstrained in his range and direction of movement. While enhancing the provision of personal services
in rural areas, the inability of the cyclist to influence the freight
distribution network, meant that he left no permanent mark upon the
landscape. The cyclists' passing was ephemeral.

The spatial and temporal effects of the bicycle took more subtle,
often unrecognised forms. McQueen (1977), for example, suggested that
its widespread use by shearsers may have meant cheaper travel (both in
terms of absolute costs and less time spent in getting from one job to
another); such cost factors would have tended to keep wage demands down.
Unfortunately, the scarcity of data on travel patterns of workers before
and after adopting the machine and the failure of many to recognise and
chronicle the use of the bicycle severely restrict our ability to
definitively answer questions like these.

**Appropriate Technology**

'there is a need to develop appropriate technologies not only among those
people on the planet who have too little, but equally among those people
that have so much that they are extraordinarily wasteful'.

Darrow (1976:10)

The development and utilisation of technology is part and parcel
of the evolution of human culture. It is beyond the scope of this study
to consider in detail the bicycle's place in this broader context,
although previous discussion has indicated some of the more important
technological developments that the bicycle has incorporated, generated,
or represented, and the results or implications of its use in some
circumstances. It is for others to explore the significance of the
bicycle in the wider study of technology and society.

However, having observed and read about the use of the bicycle
in a variety of circumstances and cultures, and having been involved in
bicycle route planning and implementation, both professionally and as a
layman, the present work has raised some questions about the nature, perception and use of 'appropriate' bicycle technology. It involves complex, value-laden and controversial issues which evoke strong reactions from many, and which can not be analysed here in detail. But I offer some observations for further consideration and as examples of the way in which historical research may, as Trevelyan (1945:17) says, suggest 'many things, some of great value, that man has thought, experienced, and forgotten'.

I consider appropriate technology to be that 'which is suitable for a particular person, condition, occasion, or place' (The Heritage Illustrated Dictionary 1975); there is no universal standard. However, the concept of appropriate technology is defined in a variety of ways by others. Darrow and Pam (1976:10 - 11), for example, considering a definition suitable for less industrialised countries, suggest that the following are among the characteristics of appropriate technology: low capital costs, use of local materials, the creation of jobs employing local skills and labour, small in scale, affordable jointly by a group of farmers, does not require a high level of 'Western-style' education, and so forth. They pointedly refer to the bicycle as an example of appropriate technology. Unfortunately the term appropriate technology is commonly used as a synonym for such concepts as alternative, intermediate or simple technologies (Darrow's and Pam's emphasis is clearly in this direction). The result is a confusion in which it is not always clear as to exactly which aspect the author is referring to, and what are the premises and assumptions underlying the definition.

Regardless of semantic or conceptual problems, the bicycle is one of the most common symbols or examples associated with the numerous alternative, simple, appropriate or other such technological philosophies. This is certainly the case in many Australian circles. However, the
bicycle as now used in Australia has been modified (and I do not mean 'improved') to such an extent that a paradox exists: while its advocates hold it up as an example of low, simple or alternative technology, they demand sealed bicycle paths upon which to ride it.

The bicycle as now most frequently sold in Australia (and many western countries) has, among other things, high pressure, narrow,untreaded tyres, an effectively unsprung saddle, alloy rims that bend easily when run against obstacles, and handlebars designed for a seating position that forces the hands, wrists, elbows and shoulders to absorb much more shock than when the rider is seated in a more upright position where the feet and legs (which have evolved as shock absorbers) take the brunt. The position and the saddle are not ideal for most cyclists for most daily riding needs, nor are they comfortable or conducive to looking about (whether to view the countryside or for greater safety in urban riding). Former bush cyclists recognised this and chose an upright position. It is not surprising that modern cyclists want smooth, sealed surfaces to ride upon.

As the Develop relay rides demonstrated, the more technologically 'advanced' motor vehicles required technologically more 'advanced' roads for their effective performance. The modern bicyclist, by adopting equipment and a riding position suited to 'advanced' riding conditions, effectively demands the laying of miles of expensive 'appropriate' surfaces and materials; the 'need' for more appropriate facilities in many areas is due partly to the cyclist's own choice of equipment.

Also, by selecting the bicycles they do, cyclists are not able to take advantage of opportunities for recreational rural cycling that alternatively-equipped machines would afford. By using more 'appropriate' tyres and riding position and 'old fashioned' sprung saddles, the natural
surfaces of many hiking trails, fire trails and stock routes could be used for cycling, as thousands of former bush bikers proved. Many paths and trails in such places as the Kosciusko National Park, or the Heysen Trail now being planned and constructed along the Flinders Ranges, could be developed to incorporate both hikers and cyclists. Cyclists and recreational planners should realise that there is nothing wrong with pedestrians and cyclists using the same route or surface in many situations. Bicycling can take place on other than a derailleur geared machine on a sealed road with a six percent maximum grade at any point!

The great forte of the bicycle throughout much of Australian cycling history -- its ability to serve widely in a variety of environments -- has been abandoned in favour of equipment specialisation. Riders have lost some riding opportunities as a result. And for those advocating less expenditure on the 'high-technology' systems of motor transport, the modern bicycle currently in vogue -- requiring well maintained, sealed surfaces for practical use -- is not the most 'appropriate' platform from which to argue the case.

Another application of technology with respect to bicycles which is likely to prove inappropriate lies in the efforts of those who are experimenting with radically different shapes or manufacturing techniques. Attempts to develop a recumbent bicycle (Henry 1968: Whitt 1974: Chapter 121) and Stuart Wilson's (1977) development of a tricycle using box-channel, rather than tubular, frame members, are good examples. A recumbent bicycle (with the rider in a supine position) would require a much softer and more elaborate support system for the body than presently used if the machine were to be practical on rough roads. Those designs that have appeared suggest that the cargo carrying capacity will be restricted. Wilson's use of box channel construction for frame members is for the avowed purpose of making the machine more suited to local manufacture than
it is at present, doing away with the need for machine made tubing.

The hundreds of millions of safety bicycles that have been used around the world for many decades in a wide variety of circumstances provide a prima facie case that the basic design is eminently practical and convenient. But it must be accepted that the machine never has been a device of primitive technology. The chain, tubular members and bearings require sophisticated manufacturing techniques and equipment, although on a scale suitable for factories of 'intermediate size'. It is significant that the safety bicycle was developed only within the last 100 years. Because the bicycle always has been light, durable, strong, human-powered, and easily assembled and repaired locally, does not mean that it is a device of simple technology. Third world countries have long accepted that most of the machine is most appropriately made by relatively developed industrial processes, and have in fact been making them this way for many years; a strongly made safety bicycle equipped with brakes, mudguards, and chainguards retails in India for A$28 (Hughes 1978). The efforts of bicycle engineers may be more fruitful if applied to improving the basic machine and accessories and manufacturing processes.

The Bicycle and the Australian Language

The importation of the bicycle and bicycle journals from both the United States and the United Kingdom resulted in a variety of linguistic adoptions and adaptations and provides another perspective on the development of Australian English.

The word 'bicycle' was used in England as early as September, 1868 (Oxford 1970), and in the United States as 'bysicle' and 'Bicycular' by February, 1896 (Oxford 1970). The term 'cycle' was used in a similar sense at least by February, 1870 in England (Oxford 1970). Both words -- used as nouns and verbs -- were in common use in all Australian cycling
literature. Baker (1945:103) says that the Australian phrase 'bicycle
bum' was an Australian adaptation of the United States term 'bum', which
refers to a tramp, hobo, or dissolute person; he did not indicate when
the phrase came into use in this country. I did not encounter it in my
research.

The term 'wheel' was used to refer to the whole machine in the
United States at least as early as 1882 (Mathews 1951:1856). It appeared
in Barrere's (1890:408) English Dictionary of Slang, Jargon & Cant in
1890. However, in 1897 an Englishman (Wallis 1897:2) said that the term
was more of an American than English one. The terms 'wheel' and 'wheeling'
(riding), were used in Australia in the 1890s, although not as commonly as
'bicycle' or 'cycle'.

The word 'bike' was used by at least 1882 (Oxford 1972), but it is
not clear whether it was of American or English origin. 'Bike' is commonly
listed in American dictionaries, and is considered neither slang nor
colloquial. It is listed in the Supplement to the Oxford English
Dictionary (1972) and the Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary (Johnstone
1976) as a colloquial reference to either a pedal or motor driven bicycle.
The term 'bike' was occasionally used by 1896 in Australian literature
(e.g. AuCy 8/10/96:13), and several elderly interviewees referred to
their machines as 'bikes'. Baker (1945:123) refers to the term having
been adopted in Australia to refer to 'a sexually willing girl' (in the
promiscuous sense) -- the 'office bike' or 'town bike'; he does not
indicate when it originated in that sense. Also the word is used in the
phrase 'to get off his bike' (Baker 1945:123), in the sense of losing
one's temper.

In Australia a popular word for a bicycle -- possibly even more so
in some circles than 'bicycle' itself -- has been the term 'pushbike'.
The term's earliest recorded use was in an English newspaper in June, 1905
(Oxford 1970). The earliest use of it in Australia that I found was in the title of an unpublished typescript manuscript prepared by Francis Birtles in about 1910 (Birtles 1910?). 'Pushbike' is not listed in most United States dictionaries; the unabridged Webster's Third International Dictionary (Gove 1961) specifically notes the word as British and comments upon it being used to differentiate between pedal and motor driven bicycles. The American failure to adopt the word is surprising, for Americans use such terms as 'pushcart', 'pushcar' and 'pushball', a sport. The Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary (Johnstone 1976) refers to 'pushbike' as a slang word. However, from my experience the term is so common in Australia -- both today and in the past -- that it could hardly be considered as 'peculiar to one class of people' or 'outside of standard English', the Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary's own definitions of 'slang'. Because of the increasing tendency in many circles to use the term 'bike' to refer exclusively to motorcycles, the word 'pushbike' would seem to be more valuable than ever.

The word 'puncture', with the meaning extended through the concept of deflation to mean giving out, or tiring, was used in western New South Wales by at least 1909. Bean (1911:7) referred to a man who gave out, 'puncture' as they say out there', and later to another who 'nearly punctured getting up that bank' (p. 32). However, the use of the word in that sense was not listed in Morris' (1898) Austral English, English slang dictionaries of the era (e.g. Farmer 1902), nor later Australian language studies (e.g. Baker 1945; Wilkes 1978).

The use of 'jigger' as a synonym for bicycle was encountered a couple of times in Australian writing, in both instances in association with descriptions of American bicycles.

An apparently unique Australian adaptation of a word to refer to a bicycle is the term 'grid'. 'Grid' is not indicated in any American or
English standard or slang dictionaries as referring to a bicycle (one American source suggests it was used to refer to motorcycles about 1925 (Wentworth 1960)). However, the Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary (Johnstone 1976) lists 'grid' as slang for a bicycle. While many of the elderly interviewees did not recognise the term, some did recall its former use; Hughes (1978) said that it persisted as school slang until at least 1950. The phrase 'kangaroo engine' (Murif 1897:180) and the use of "Major Taylor" handlebars as a synonym for adjustable handlebars are probably also uniquely Australian.

'Bicycling' and Plant Dispersal

Some botanists regard the rubber tyred vehicle as a prime means of dispersal of some plant seeds (Gilbey 1975:24; Wace 1978). Among these scientists, 'rubber tyred vehicles' have been considered as synonymous with motor cars, trucks, farm machinery and aeroplanes; thus their importance as a dispersal mechanism in the rural environment has been dated from about 1910 - 1915, when such vehicles began to be commonly used in some areas. However, extensive use of the bicycle by the mid-1890s means that plant dispersal by rubber tyred vehicles began about two decades earlier. Mud stuck to the frame (Plate 4.2), thorns stuck in the tyres (Plate 4.9), tyres were occasionally filled with grasses, and, in camping out, the bicyclist, like other rural travellers, picked up seeds of various types in his clothing and equipment. Given its speed, 'bicycling' not only facilitated short-distance, cumulative plant movement along rural roads over an extended period of time, but also aided the spread of weeds rapidly over long distances, throughout sparsely settled areas as well as areas of closer settlement. Its relative importance is now impossible to gauge, but there is no doubt that it was a means of plant dispersal as early as the mid-1890s.
An interesting question that arose in the course of this study centres about the weed Soliva pterosperma. The plant, which produces prickly burrs, is a native of South America and was brought to eastern Australia in the 1850s and 1860s, possibly on cattle boats (Wace 1978). In the eastern states it is commonly called 'bindi-eye' and 'jo-jo'. In Western Australia the plant is called 'jo-jo' and 'onchunga', and is so referred to in an official government publication (WesGov 1974) prepared for local residents (It is a troublesome weed requiring spraying for control). Groves (1978) and Wace (1978) said that they had never heard the plant referred to as 'onchunga' in eastern Australia. Interestingly, 'Onchunga' is the name of a New Zealand seaside town that is now a suburb of Auckland. How and when a New Zealand place name (or Maori word (Wise 1932:284)) came to be used in Western Australia to describe a South American plant is a mystery. Laracey (1978), a New Zealand historian interested in New Zealand – Australian interactions, could throw no light on the matter. It is a curious aspect of Australian linguistic parochialism and Australasian diffusion.

The Bicycle and the 'Australian Legend'

'A people's literature is the great text-book for real knowledge of them. The writings of the day show the quality of the people as no historical reconstruction can'.

(Hamilton 1932:v)

'With the many incidents, some humorous, some pathetic, but all intensely interesting, which occurred on the different [Western Australian] gold fields, we, as a sober historian, have nothing to do'.

(Batty 1913a:242).

When beginning this study I thought that popular writing and occasional scholarly works would provide references to attitudes to the bicycle in the bush. Through fiction, in particular, I had hoped to gain
insights into the value placed on the machine and information about the nature and extent of its use. What resulted was a fascinating series of facts and questions concerning the popular image of rural Australia and the nature and accuracy of observation of bush life by literary and academic writers.

The use of the bicycle was discussed, directly or indirectly, in a number of works of fiction. Several provide excellent insights into the impact of the bicycle upon Australian society and the attitudes it engendered. In 'Paced', for example, Arthur Adams (1899a) used the cycle track as the setting for an allegory portraying the contest between good and evil. In 'Love and the LL.D.' (Adams 1899b) he discussed a New Zealand girl who was a lawyer, but pointedly did not ride the 'wheel'; a suggestion that she was independent of her cycliste cohorts who saw the bicycle as the ultimate symbol of female progressiveness at the time.

Norman Lindsay, in Redheap (1930) and Cousin From Fiji (1945), illuminates the attitudes of people in small and large country towns towards cycle racing and towards cycle shop owners during the 1890s. (Although first published in 1930, Redheap was written about 1915; Cousin From Fiji was written after the publication of Redheap (Hetherington 1973)).

Useful literary references to the bicycle in the countryside are scarce. While some, such as Franklin's (1936) All That Swagger, provide some feeling for the attitudes associated with its use, most only casually mention it and provide no insights. The well known bush writers -- those who helped build the 'Australian Legend', as Ward (1958) puts it -- failed to discuss the machine. Though A.B. Paterson travelled through areas where the bicycle was used -- he took the photograph of the A.W.U. Bicycle Corps at Coonamble in 1902 (Plate 6.17) -- he wrote only one poem, 'Mulga Bill's Bicycle', which was a satirical look at a frustrated bushman's efforts to learn to ride the machine. Semmler (1977) said that 'I don't remember any
reference to bicycles in my researches for the various Paterson books'. Even the long article accompanying the 'A.W.U. Bicycle Corps' (and other) photos in the Sydney Mail (6/9/02:602) did not mention the bicycle or the photo.

In popular non-fiction, a few authors recount 'adventures' or 'incidents' of personal travel in the outback concerning the use of bicycles; Blakeley's and Barker's books are the most notable. Much effort to locate further such works turned up only a handful, however.

References in scholarly writing are even more sparse. In 1897, Kimberley, in his History of West Australia, devoted one long paragraph to the use of the bicycle on the Western Australian goldfields, focussing upon its use by the cycle express messenger riders. He appears to be the sole Australian historian to discuss the use of the machine in urban or rural areas in any detail. In the two volume 1913 Cyclopedia of Western Australia, Battye (1913b:396) gave only five lines to cycling, 'which at one time had a great vogue as a pastime'. In his 1924 history of the state he does not mention it at all. Crowley's (1960) history of Western Australia (1960:90) gave one sentence to the bicycle, referring to its use by the goldfields express riders. These three works represent the sole output on the use of the bicycle by general historians in a state that had possibly the highest per capita bicycle ownership, in which the machine was possibly more important, and was adopted for more varied uses, over a longer period of time, than anywhere else in Australia.

I am aware of only one study — Dunstan's (1973) chapter in his popular book, Sports — which examines the introduction and use of the bicycle generally in Australia, and none that considers or even suggests its rural use. In Blainey's (1966) well known work, The Tyranny of Distance, the bicycle is not discussed at all, and the word appears only incidentally a couple of times. He certainly was aware of the machine's occasional bush
use; his earlier work, *Mines in the Spinifex* (1960), reports the ride of one man from Broken Hill to near the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The reader of Australian literature, scholarly or popular, fiction or non-fiction, could be forgiven for not knowing that the bicycle was ever significant in Australia, in town or country.

In conversation, many suggestions have been offered to explain the bicycle's absence from Australian writing. Some persons have suggested that perhaps the bicycle simply was not common in the bush and that Paterson possibly took his photo of the cycle corps, for example, because it was unusual. But if so, the point would surely have featured in the accompanying text. Later discussion will suggest that people like Paterson were fully aware of the machine's use but chose not to write about it.

It has also been suggested that those who rode bicycles were not those who would have been expected to write about it, implying that they were perhaps uneducated people. On the other hand, many horsemen would fall into the same category, but horses are a rich theme in Australian writing, both popular and literary. As will be seen presently, some prominent Australians did in fact ride bicycles and occasionally discussed the machine in their writings.

The principal reason why the bicycle was not written about was that it was seldom 'seen' -- either literally or figuratively -- in normal everyday experience. Compared with the horse, which is large and animate and roams about paddocks and stockyards when not being ridden, the bicycle is small and inconspicuous; in leaning against or stored inside a building it was not obvious to the passerby.

More importantly, once the novelty of cycling was over, that is by 1900, the bicycle was just another commonplace tool; like the woodpile, it was often necessary, but of no particular interest. Many of those of
whom I requested interviews could not at first understand how they could be of help; all they had done was 'just ride an old pushbike'. They were surprised that anyone had any interest in such a common and mundane experience.

In addition, there is unquestionably something inherent in the use of the bicycle that leads to the rider and machine being ignored. Behrman (1973) said that he was able to pedal unnoticed through areas in New York City in which, on foot, he would have attracted immediate attention. A man recently arrested in London was asked why he had transported extremely valuable stolen works of art by bicycle; he replied to the effect 'when did you ever stop someone on a bicycle to see if he was carrying stolen goods?' (ABC Radio 11/78). And an academic field worker told me that not only did the bicycle prove efficient while he was collecting data, but in some instances it appeared to make him less 'obvious' in the process (Clarke 1977).

The unremarkable, inconspicuous, and seemingly innocuous nature of the bicycle explains much of the lack of popular writing about it after 1900, and the failure of historians to be interested in it. Perry, who pointed out the role of the bicycle in altering genetic patterns in England (1969), said that 'I would regard its humdrum everyday adoption, and not least because of its social implications, as really a great deal more important than interesting' (1978). Many aspects of social history have only come into vogue in Australia relatively recently; 'sober historians' long had more 'important' topics to study. By the time researchers came to be generally interested in such matters as the bicycle, the fact that it had ever been used in rural Australia had all but disappeared from memory. Since we tend to find our stimuli for research in the work of our predecessors, it is not surprising that the theme had not been taken up. Not even Kimberley's paragraph suggests that the topic might prove of
sufficient extent or interest to merit serious attention.

It also appears that the bicycle came to be associated with a particular social class. In his study *Horse Power*, Dallas (1968:69) throws off a line laden with value judgement: 'It is common knowledge that the pneumatic tyre and coiled steel springs made the bicycle the poor man's horse'. Ted Mayman (1976) suggested that the 'snob element' came in, in the sense that a horseman looked down upon cyclists and pedestrians, both literally and socially. Also the bicycle was commonly used by union organisers throughout Australia, as it was in New Zealand where visiting organisers from Australia employed it (Laracey 1978). Hegney, a bicycle-mounted union organiser in Western Australia in the 1920s, recounted an anecdote in which he suggested to a property owner that the workers would some day have motor cars; the owner replied that by that time he would have an aeroplane. The bicycle was a material element as well as symbol in the 'class struggle'. A photograph of Frank Anstey mounted on a bicycle appeared on the cover of *Overland* magazine in Autumn, 1965; and Evatt's (1945) biography of Holman, the Labor politician, recounts his use of the bicycle during election campaigns about 1910. Interestingly, I have not found references to conservative politicians using bicycles, or nostalgically referring to their use in campaigns! Possibly Paterson's use of the Coonamble 'Bicycle Corps' photograph of A.W.U. members was intended to suggest a relationship between social standing and material equipment — perhaps reflecting his sympathies with the 'squatocracy' (McQueen 1977).

And not least important was the great love of Australians for the horse. The bicycle could hardly have been seen as a fitting test of manhood or suited to rural work in the same way as the horse: as Xavier Herbert (1978) suggested, the 'fact of riding a bike meant nothing like riding a horse ... the mastery of a horse is mastery ... manhood was
measured by your capacity to handle a horse.' And, of course, horses have personalities, something the inanimate bicycle lacks. (Motor vehicles are in many respects similar to an animal, in that the driver also masters, controls and directs an external power. On the bicycle, in contrast, the rider gets out of the machine only what he puts into it -- he masters or controls no power but himself.) It must have been galling to horse lovers to find the bicyclist faster over long distances. In contrast to all his verses about horses, Paterson's single poem on cycling (a spoof at that) reminds one of Charles Russell, the American western artist who produced over 3,500 works and never once depicted a sheep (Richener 1974:629). Blakeley (1938: 76-77) said that the Mount Poole Station manager in western New South Wales once gave him very clear -- but deliberately erroneous -- directions; 'he hated bikes like hell. Strange as it may seem, all horsemen have this feeling towards push-bike men'.

At the time bicycles became popular much of the reportage of bush life was by the Bulletin's school of writers. The Bulletin's reaction to the introduction of bicycles into the bush in the late 1890s in New South Wales (discussed in Chapter 5, page 274) was one of unremitting satire and disparagement, and conveys the unmistakeable impression that the machine should have no place in the Australian countryside. In fact, the Bulletin's satirisation of the bicycle in Australian society in general provides some of the most pointed insights into the impact of the machine in the 1890s. Paterson's poem 'Mulga Bill's Bicycle' dates from this era; it appeared in the W.A. Cyclist in November 1897, reprinted from the Cyclist (presumably the short-lived Sydney version, not the venerable English journal of that name). Thus the poem fell squarely in the period when the Bulletin's writers and cartoonists were lampooning the rural bikers; other than for humorous purposes, they were ignored.
An unfortunate aside, from the perspective of accurate history, is the fact that the Collins publishing company has produced a children's version of 'Mulga Bill', beautifully illustrated (it won an award), which sells well in Australia and abroad. Sadly, the illustrators mounted the hero on a penny-farthing. Given the period and circumstances in which the poem was written, Paterson's Mulga Bill was undoubtedly mounting a safety bicycle. By showing Mulga Bill wrestling with an awkward penny-farthing, Collins' book completely misses Paterson's real satirical purpose.

The suggestion that writers like Paterson ignored the bicycle or perceived it selectively is given great impetus by the work of C.E.W. Bean, who travelled in western New South Wales in 1909 and wrote a series of articles for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, later published as *On the Wool Track* (Bean 1910). It has been described by MacKirdy, (1968:145) in his discussion of Australian historiography, as 'one of the best accounts of the continuing element of conflict in the settlement of Australia, man's struggle with, and adaptation to, an inhospitable environment'. Bean mentions the use of the bicycle on several occasions and devotes several pages of his book to its use by shearsers. The question of why someone like Bean wrote about the bicycle's use and others, such as Paterson, did not, is partially explained, I believe, by Bean's background. He had returned to Australia only five years before, after having lived for 15 years in England. By his own admission, he had never met a rouseabout, shearer, drover or boundary rider and he would not read (or recall having heard of) Tom Collins' *Such is Life* for another 35 years (Bean 1963:vii). Inglis (1970:9) suggests that Bean was 'uncertain about his own identity' and spent the period from 1904 - 1914 making 'his own discovery of Australia' (p. 32). As is the case with so many visitors (or returning expatriates) they often perceive acutely what the resident takes for
granted. The heavily loaded bicycles, the country in which the men travelled, and the great distances all fascinated the long-term English resident. Bean's book (1910:82) conveys a great sense of wonder at the nonchalant accomplishments of bush cyclists: 'The shower set out on these trips exactly as if he were going from Sydney to Parramatta. He asked the way, lit his pipe, put his leg over his bicycle, and shoved off'.

In a country long enamoured of a rural image characterised by the stockman and the drover, the appearance of an apparently incongruous technical device like the bicycle must have often struck a false note or no note at all. Probably most of those who visited the bush and wrote about the land and the people and their way of life had preconceived visions of what was there. The degree to which cycling rural workers and travellers were ignored raises intriguing questions about the development of Australian culture. To recognise the fact that bush cyclists were ignored has implications about the accuracy with which other, often more subtle, aspects of the bush were reported and manipulated to shape the formation of the 'Australian Legend'.

MULGA BILL'S BICYCLE

'Twas Mulga Bill, from Eaglehawk, that caught the cycling craze; He turned away the good old horse that served him many days; He dressed himself in cycling clothes, resplendent to be seen; He hurried off to town and bought a shining new machine; And as he wheeled it through the door, with air of lordly pride, The grinning shop assistant said, "Excuse me, can you ride?"

"See here, young man," said Mulga Bill, "from Walgett to the sea, From Conroy's Gap to Castlereagh, there's none can ride like me. I'm good all round at everything, as everybody knows, Although I'm not the one to talk - I hate a man that slows."
"But riding is my special gift, my chiefest, sole delight;
Just ask a wild duck can it swim, a wild cat can it fight.
There's nothing clothed in hair or hide, or built of flesh or steel,
There's nothing walks or jumps, or runs, on axle, hoof, or wheel,
But what I'll sit, while hide will hold and girths and straps are tight;
I'll ride this here two-wheeled concern right straight away at sight."

'Twas Mulga Bill, from Eaglehawk, that sought his own abode,
That perched above the Dead Man's Creek, beside the mountain road.
He turned the cycle down the hill and mounted for the fray,
But ere he'd gone a dozen yards it bolted clean away.
It left the track, and through the trees, just like a silver streak,
It whistled down the awful slope towards the Dead Man's Creek.

It shaved a stump by half an inch, it dodged a big white-box:
The very wallaroos in fright went scrambling up the rocks,
The wombats hiding in their caves dug deeper underground,
But Mulga Bill, as white as chalk, sat tight to every bound.
It struck a stone and gave a spring that cleared a fallen tree,
It raced beside a precipice as close as close could be;
And then, as Mulga Bill let out one last despairing shriek,
It made a leap of twenty feet into the Dead Man's Creek.

'Twas Mulga Bill, from Eaglehawk, that slowly swam ashore:
He said, "I've had some narer shaves and lively rides before;
I've rode a wild bull round a yard to win a five-pound bet,
But this was sure the derndest ride that I've encountered yet.
I'll give that two-wheeled outlaw best; it's shaken all my nerve
to feel it whistle through the air and plunge and buck and swerve.
It's safe at rest in Dead Man's Creek – we'll leave it lying still;
A horse's back is good enough henceforth for Mulga Bill."

A. B. Paterson
1897
I reviewed all the cycle journals that I could find. The single most valuable source of information for my purposes proved to be the Austral Wheel, a cycle journal published in Melbourne from 1896-1900. It reported on technical developments and the general use of the machine around the country far more thoroughly than any other source. The Austral Wheel is much cited in this thesis because it was often the best or sole source of specialist information.

Newspapers were sporadic in their coverage. I found the indexes of some of value in locating material. Because the Perth Morning Herald appeared to provide a well balanced coverage and was especially good at chronicling the overland rides, I read all issues of it from 1896-1900 to obtain a feeling for general trends. I had originally intended to sample various rural and urban newspapers over a period of years to chronicle the changes in the cycle's use. This proved to be totally impractical; even in areas (such as the Western Australian goldfields) where other sources told me the bicycle was intensively used, a random sample of newspapers was relatively fruitless.

Many people provided leads and material. The information on the Dunlop Relay Rides and the PNG maintenance records, for example, were both found by archivists in the Australian Archives in files whose labels did not suggest that they contained material on the bicycle. Many files of government departments are culled prior to being given to the archives. It is my suspicion — and that of archivists — that the bicycle was one of those things about which it was thought unnecessary to keep information, especially on such matters as purchase and maintenance, and the records were destroyed.

Queensland did not get the detailed treatment that I would like to have been able to give it. I was unable to find any copy of the Queensland Cyclist. Popular literature suggested that the bicycle was used along the dingo fence at one time, and that an unusual number of bicycles were in the Charters Towers area in the 1890s. While no other leads pointed particularly to Queensland, the general similarity of much of Queensland with Western Australia leads me to suspect that some more interesting examples of bicycle use may be found in time.

Unlike many historians' experience, my data became progressively more scarce in recent times. After most of the cycle journals collapsed in 1900, few published leads were found, and personal correspondence and interviews became the main source of information. I placed a letter in approximately 200 newspapers, and was interviewed on nationwide rural ABC radio and television programs as well as on radio stations in Adelaide and Townsville. This brought about 300 replies, and exchange of correspondence with some of these continued over several months.

People to be interviewed were chosen on the basis of the letters and as a result of leads provided by other research workers and those involved in oral history. I found no evidence that my informants 'manufactured' testimony nor that their memories were seriously at fault; it was hardly an area of controversy, and that no doubt helped. Because of the dearth of written material on 20th century rural cycling, the study could not have been completed without the correspondence and interviews. The Kalgoorlie pipeline section, for example, was based almost entirely upon interviews — only a handful of letters were found in Public Works Department (WA) files, and they were almost useless.
Photographs proved to be valuable sources for such matters as technical details.

The nature and extent of my source materials are indicated in the following section, 'Sources', which includes a bibliography. I have included only materials cited in the text, with the exception of about 40 items of special interest to those who may wish to pursue further research on Australian cycling history.

I have dropped the definite article 'The' from the titles of all newspapers and journals as it was often inconsistently used, and in some cases it was not clear whether 'The' was in fact part of the title.

Many pen names were used in the 1890s journals and newspapers. In several cases I know the authors' real names, but for consistency have left all names as published.
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