

1946

1996

WELLAND COUNTY



M.C.  
CANADA

50th Anniversary



Early Meeting held in Chippawa Park

## The History of the Welland County Motorcycle Club

The year was 1946, the second World War was over and many people were picking up where they had left off before the war. One such person was *Victor Svob*, the founding member of the Welland County Motorcycle Club. Vic remembered back to a time before the war when motorcyclists gathered in front of Russell's C.C.M., a local store in Welland.

Vic had a great love of motorcycling and wanted to see his favourite past-time survive and prosper. Vic found that as he was riding around by himself, he was lonely, so he thought it would be great to have some friends around to ride with. *Rodger Demers* worked at the John Deere plant with Vic and *George Harpwood*. Vic and Rodger started riding together and travelled around on rides to North Bay, London, etc. before deciding to start the club.

The first official meeting was held in the early summer of 1946 or 47 (there is some discrepancy). The location was in the backyard of Vic's house at 107 Regent Street, Welland, Ontario.



Vic Svob (Founding Member)

This meeting was attended by six men (*Vic Svob, Rodger Demars, Mike Stifel, George Harpwood, Stan Major and Jim Papp*). The main business topic at this meeting was the choosing of a name. "SKYHAWKS" is what the group came up with.

With the club established, the meetings were moved to the grass at Chippawa Park. At the second meeting, with Jim Papp as President and George Harpwood as Secretary and acting Treasurer, an important decision had to be made (should women be allowed to join the club?). A unanimous vote welcomed our first female member, *Audrey Sherk*, (now Mrs. Audrey Alexander, an active motorcycle rider to this day) who immediately assumed the role of Treasurer. Audrey proved to be a great asset to the club, even though, at the request of her father, she restricted her Harley to no more than 45 mph. Perhaps this is why Audrey always seemed to assume the rear guard position on many of the club rides.



Ed Given joined the club in 1947 and the first meeting he went to was held in Chippawa Park. The local Police showed up and announced that they had reports of motorcycles in the park. George Harpwood went over to talk to the Officer and since nothing was going on managed to smooth things over.

The winter of 1947 found the "WELLAND SKYHAWKS" meeting at Blanchards, a snack bar and service station. This meeting place

was soon dubbed "BLANCHARD'S BACKROOM" and although it was located on Killaly Street West in Port Colborne, it was to be the headquarters for the club for the next two years. The "Backroom" had a gravel floor, so the club members got together and, using a cement mixer powered by a motorcycle, poured a cement floor in their new meeting place.



Blanchards Meeting Place

In the fall of 1949 a new meeting place was established. The *Tait* brothers, *Bob*, *Don* and *Doug* graciously offered the upstairs of their barn located in Sherkston. This proved to be a prime location because of the natural "Dragstrip" right around the corner. It seems it was customary to hold Drag races before each meeting.

In 1951 the club members got together and bought shares in the club to finance their first dirt track race held at the old Welland Fairgrounds, on the corner of Lincoln St. and Prince Charles Drive. This was one of only five races held in Ontario that year. The race was well organized and everything seemed to go well until the financial situation was checked and the club was surprised to find out they had ended up in the red after such a monumental effort had been

put forward.



Club Members at Tait's Farm



Harold Wakil at Old Welland Fairgrounds 1952

The membership of the club had more than tripled by this time and the

club was becoming active in competitive events, such as Hillclimbs, as well as road riding. One of the favourite club events at this time was the "Hare and Hound" of which *Vic Svob* or *Ed Given* would usually take home the gold. Since many of the members were not from the city of Welland, they decided to change the name of the "Welland Skyhawks" to "The Welland County Skyhawks". Along with the name change came the design of a new crest.



In 1950 a truly historic event occurred, *Chester Osten*, affectionately known as "DAD" joined the club and is still one of the most respected and valued club members to this day. Chester got the name "DAD" because he was always warning the "Boys" not to drink too much when they had to ride their motorcycles.



Club Ride (1950) Wasaga Beach  
"Dad" (*Chester Osten*) "The General" (*Mike Balan*) On the Back

1950 also brought another prominent member of today's motorcycling community, *John Clare*, of Clare's Cycle, joined the club. John was Ed Given's brother-in-law and John purchased his first motorcycle, a 1930 Harley 45 cu.in. from Ed.

The "50's " found the club travelling around the province participating in Hillclimbs, Enduros, Trials and Field Events put on by other clubs in the province.

In 1954 Bob Tait won the First Canadian National title for the club. Bob pictured next page after winning a road race at Trois-Rivières, Quebec, on his on his 1953 500 Triumph Tiger.



Bob Tait on his 500 Triumph Tiger



Flat Track Race in Oshawa Early 50's





Field Meet at the Canal Banks (late 40's)  
(Behind the Present Site of the Seaway Mall)



Another Field Event "The Slow Race"



Shopping at the War Surplus Again !  
Jan and George Harpwood on Bike



The End of a Hare & Hound  
Chester Osten on the right



Ed Given  
Field Meet

Don Tait on his  
Indian Chief



Doug Tait on his  
A.J.S.



Ron Alvey on his Harley



1955 The "BOYS" go racing at Wasaga Beach. (left to right) Bob Tait, John Clare, Ken Howell, George Harpwood, Merle McKlertoc, John Vukanics (Our 1996 President) and Mickey Little.



Taking a Break on a Club Ride in the 50's



One of the Club's favourite rides to go on was the Blessing of the Bikes held every year in Buffalo, New York. This picture was taken in 1955 enroute to this event.

1956 must have been the year that everyone got the urge to travel.

### **A Trip to Remember *John Clare* and *Chester Osten***

In the spring of 1956, about six riders from the Welland area were talking about going to the Calgary Stampede in Alberta. When it came time to go at the end of June only *John Clare*, on a new Triumph 650c.c. and myself on a 1952 74 ci. Harley took off on the trip west.

We got to northern Michigan the first day and the next day we rode over 500 miles in the rain through northern Minnesota. On the third day the sun came out and it was 90 degrees through Montana. Boy did we get sun-burned! Our lips swelled up so bad that we had to press cold beers against them to keep the swelling down.

In 3 1/2 days we had put on 2250 miles and made it to Calgary. We took in some of the events at the Stampede and then took off to Lake Louise, in Banff National Park to go for a swim. After checking the water temperature ( 32 degrees ) we headed back to Calgary.

After the Stampede events were over we travelled south through Montana to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. We took in the sights, Old Faithful and the bears in the park. We left Yellowstone and headed east to Rapid City, South Dakota. After visiting Mt. Rushmore we continued travelling east to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. While in Milwaukee we took a tour of the Miller Brewing Co. and spent some time in the Hospitality Room because it was raining outside and the beer was free.

The next day we arrived back in Welland after two weeks, 6000 miles and a lot of memorable moments.

Chester Osten



Chester Osten on the way to The Calgary Stampede



John Vukanics also decided to take a trip that year. John and some friends were headed out to California when John had an altercation with a car in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. The car won. John spent

ten days in the hospital and rode the rest of the trip on the back of his friend's bike. By the way, he did make it all the way to California.



Club Ride to Harewood Acres (Near Nanticoke, Ontario) to watch the Road Races in 1956. Harewood was a paved Road Race Course built out in the middle of a farmer's field. Although it was a humble track it saw some of the world's best riders, such as Mike Duff, ride there.

In 1957 the club decided that they would like to put on some events, however they needed a suitable location. *Ed Given* and *John Clare* went out to Fonthill to the **Leslie Farm** and were successful in persuading the Leslie's to let the club use their land to put on Hillclimbs and Scrambles.

The first scramble put on was an excellent event, only to be marred by a fatality, when a local rider was involved in a freak accident during the racing program. Strong determination persuaded this confused and disheartened club to persist, and the jinx was broken when the following year brought good fortune and security to the club again.





Fonthill Scrambles on the Leslie Farm June 3, 1962



Fonthill Scrambles on the Leslie Farm 1958



The Starting Line for a 1959 Fonthill Scramble



Two of our Club Members "Rose to the Top" in the sport of Hillclimbing - John Vukanics and Jimmy Orosz. John Vukanics at the Fonthill Hillclimb in in 1958.

Another sport that the Club was actively participating in was Enduros. John Clare and Ed Given would ride their bikes to the event, ride a

very long Enduro and then ride home again. Ed Given was the first person to finish the Corduroy on a 74ci. Harley. Chester Osten would go with them and run a checkpoint. On one occasion Chester rode to the Enduro and when he was assigned his checkpoint he found that it was 130 miles from where the Enduro started. Gotta love that Corduroy Enduro!



1958, the end of the 2nd Corduroy Enduro. John Clare on the left. Ed Given finished that year on his 74 ci. Harley because they said it couldn't be done.

Good leadership and careful planning in the winter of 1957 allowed the club to become taxpayers by midsummer of 1958. One half acre of land was purchased from Chester's mother in July. Construction of a 600 square ft. Clubhouse began in August and was completed in late November.

This proved to be a very important event in the history of the Club. Now that they had put down roots, the Club would grow and prosper from that point on.



Building the Original Clubhouse. Many thanks to Harold Wakil of WAKIL CONSTRUCTION for a lot of labour and expertise donated. There was no heat or hydro in the Clubhouse yet, so the club continued to meet at Tait's farm.



Chester and John Hurdell inside the Clubhouse at Tait's Farm



Work on the Clubhouse continued in April, and the first meeting in the present Clubhouse took place in May of 1959. The washroom facilities (Outdoor) were donated by Chester (his old bike shed).

During this era, *Ed Given* lived in Port Colborne and it seemed that every afternoon his neighbours would have to walk down to Ed's garage to pick up their newspapers. The paper boy (*Wesley J. Pierce, AKA Scooter Dan*) could not get by the garage due to his keen interest in motorcycles. Soon after, Wes bought a 125 James and started riding it everywhere (he even peddled papers on it). It is rumoured that on one "Scooter Trip" to New York City, Wes did not have enough money left to pay the bridge toll out of New York City and had to wait at the Toll Booth until someone gave him enough money to get back across.



Wes Pierce on his 125 James

A few years later Wes, (being the nice guy that he is) let this little guy (*Jimmy Orosz*) start tagging along behind him everywhere he went.

During the Early "60's" many events were staged such as Hillclimbs, trials, etc. Many of the club members enjoyed riding enduros with a great deal of success.



The Club continued to do a lot of road riding during this time.



John Vukanics, Ron Putman, Ron Ferland and Rudi Marczy on a trip to Pittsburg.



Ron Putman on his 500 Triumph Tiger. Nice "Ape Hangers"

Harewood Acres was a very popular place for the Club to go and watch Road Racing. Jimmy "O" told me "it was really neat" if you got there early you could take your bike around the track.



1964 Club Ride to Harewood Acres. Check out the familiar faces.





1964 Getting ready for a Club Ride.

In 1964 *Wes Pierce* originated the first of many "Massasauga Enduros". This went on to be one of the largest one day enduro events in Canada and was the National Championship for a number of years. The Massasauga Enduro continued until 1984.



"The Yamahole" Massasauga Enduro John Clare in the water.

Atlas Cycle and Clare's Cycle helped by donating layout bikes for the event in later years. Murry Fisher Maurice Bell, Mike Sullivan, Jack Lightfoot, John Vukanics, some of the many Club members that helped to make this a successful event every year.

1965 was a ambitious year for the Club. The membership had increased and the Club was rapidly outgrowing the Clubhouse. Some additional land was purchased and work began on the first addition to the Clubhouse. John Clare and his father installed the "Indoor Plumbing".



1965 First Addition to the Clubhouse



1969 Port Colborne Winter Carnival Ice Race on Lake Erie

1964 brought a name change. "Skyhawks had nothing to do with motorcycles so the name was changed to "The Welland County Motorcycle Club". The Club incorporated in 1966.

The work load of putting on the Scrambles and the loss of our hillclimb site in Fonthill, caused the Club to put some thought into building a racing facility on the newly acquired property behind the clubhouse. A decision was made to build a 1/4 mile oval with a "TT" track. The "TT" track was a right turn off the front straight going back to the Clubhouse with a left hair-pin and a jump back onto the track in turn one. Doug Browes laid out the track using his railway engineering skills. John Vukanics brought numerous loads of stone. The track was graded by Ghislain Loubier and with tremendous effort from the Club the track was built.



The "TT Track" as built in 1970. A new Era for the Club



1970 Doug Browes on his Indian Chief. Laid out the track.



The first race was held in the fall of 1970, on a Sunday afternoon with borrowed grandstands from the City of Port Colborne.



1971 Turn Four as seen from the Grandstands

During the fall and spring lights were put in thanks to *Bill O'Sullivan*, *Jean Chabot*, *Fred Hunt*, and *Chester Osten* and the first grandstand was built. Three races were run that summer under the direction of *Paul Steed*, president at the time. A lack of profit and a high work load, looked as if the club was not interested in further promotion. *Wes Pierce* came in with the idea of co-sponsoring the races with the club for the next season. The financial results were not good and it was decided that Wes would rent the track from the club and be responsible for its running. Wes ran a full year with good crowds and built the second grandstands. The club built washrooms and then expanded them as crowds made the weekly racing program successful. The Speedway National Championships and many more events were born during this period. In 1979 a promising young racer (*Bob Harpwood*) was taken from us in a tragic accident. The Harpwood Memorial Race Committee was formed and worked hard to improve track conditions, lighting etc. The Harpwood Committee Motto Was "*Dedicated to Dirt Track*". There is a Memorial plaque in Bob's memory at the bottom of a light standard out by the track.



The late 60's and early 70's saw the Club start up other events of a social nature. 1969 Annual Banquet and Awards Night.



As the membership was maturing (at least getting older because they still haven't grown up) a Christmas Party was started for the kids. 1971 Christmas Party. The *Rainvilles* and *Tony Paparoni*.



The Club Picture taken in 1971 beside the Clubhouse.

The seventies found the Club building another addition to the Clubhouse to accommodate the increasing membership and also the "after the races crowd". One of the areas where the Club was very active was Trials Riding. The # 1 Plate, John Ranger, Randy White, Jeff Dulaj and Gerald Huff were among the riders on the Trials Circuit. The W.C.M.C. two day event was a real big hit with the riders. Saturday we rode at MacPherson's Farm and Sunday we rode in the Robin Hood Quarry. (We won't talk about Saturday night!)



1974 Robin Hood Quarry, Al Fair on a Modified 100 cc. Kawasaki

## Welland County Motorcycle Club Trials Over 50 Years

The way we were: By *Dave Thomas Sr.*

*John Clare's* memories: John first remembers riding trials at the Robin Hood quarry and the Dikes in 1951. Riders used basically a single cylinder bike like the BSA Gold Star or twin cylinder like the Ariel Red Hunter twin street bike with a "grass hopper" rear tire and a large rear sprocket. The same bikes would be used for enduros, field meets or sportsman hill climbs as well as road riding. Some of the Club members riding trials in the 1950's were *Ron Alvey, John Clare, Edgar Given, Bob Tait, John Vukanics* and later, *Wes Pierce*. The Welland Sky Hawks, as W.C.M.C. was known then, attended events in Hamilton put on by **The Hamilton Black Hawks** and **The Flying Midgets** (now Steel City Riders).

*Dave Atkin's* Memories: Dave first remembers seeing a trials event in 1958 or 1959 near the dikes. Most riders then rode general purpose off-road bikes for trials.

Dave's first bike he used for riding trials was a 500 c.c. single cylinder A.J.S. (for A.J. Smithwick Co. of England). It was a heavy torque bruiser, not that suitable for a small but youthfully enthusiastic Dave Atkins.

The next hot set up, before specialized trials bikes were available, was to modify a 200 c.c. single cylinder Triumph Tiger Cub. Most of the trick parts were obtained from Sonic Cycle, owned by former trials rider, road racer, enduro rider, moto crosser, *Bill Sharpless* of Toronto. Modifications included: adding a 21 inch front wheel; altering the steering stops for sharper turns; adding a smaller gas tank; rear setting the foot peg from stock. Club member *Marv Nash* - who it is said, can **weld a bone to a dog's ass** - often welded up special parts. Club member *Rudi Marczy*, a skilled machinist, machined



engine mods. and small parts.

During the 1960's *Dave Atkins* and *Rudi Marczy* actively participated in trials, organizing W.C.M.C. trials and following the trials circuit in Ontario and Quebec. Rudi advanced to expert class while Dave advanced to the senior class; they were good in Canadian trials but were heroes in the U.S. where trials were not as advanced at that time.

The hometown boys were now riding specialized trials bikes like Grieves, Montessa, Ossa, Bultaco, and were attending trials schools organized by their European heroes, Sammy Miller and Mick Andrews.

Trials was booming in the 1970's because it was relatively cheap, kids had lots of money from part-time jobs, and land use problems were starting to have an affect on other motorcycle sports which either require much more space or were too noisy for built up areas. Dave thinks he sold 6 time Canadian Champion, *John Ranger*, his first bike. Was this Dave's beginning of his motorcycle sales career as well as John Ranger's trials career?

The next decade of W.C.M.C. Trials, a large group of young riders from Port Colborne developed because of the proximity of the Robin Hood quarry, an ideal and available riding site. Later a new group of riders from Fonthill developed and started organizing W.C.M.C. trials at MacPherson's Farm near Fonthill. This site was used until the mid 80's.

It was an ambitious decade. Specialized trials bikes were now mass produced by all major Japanese manufacturers and were relatively inexpensive. Entries at the Port Colborne trials could be as high as 120 for a single event. Layout of trials sections was shared by the many riders in the Port Colborne group with *Randy White* being the liaison with the W.C.M.C.

In 1975 with *Randy White* as Club president, W.C.M.C. put on six

trials. At one of those trials, World Champion Yamaha rider, *Mick Andrews* of Britain, conducted a trials school the day before the event.

That year 2 club members each held a Canadian Championships in their respective classes and a 3rd was runner up to the champion:

John Ranger - Expert  
Randy White - Senior (now called Intermediate)  
Jeff Dulaj - 2nd Junior (now called Novice)

**John and Randy were Yamaha sponsored also at that time.**

Approximately 1982, a new group started to enter the trials scene at W.C.M.C.: children of a present club member, *Dave Thomas Sr.*, *Dave Thomas Jr.* and *Derek Thomas*, with club members *Gerry Hough* (now deceased) and *Gerry Young* carrying on from the 1970's. Later *Ron Gamm* returned and *Greg Gamm* reappeared as a big boy.

Trials continued with the layout and organization shared by an ever shrinking group as W.C.M.C. members increasingly took to road bikes. Entries also shrank from 100+ in the 1970's to typically 30 riders today.

W.C.M.C. trials continues to flourish midway through the lean, mean 90's with 2 events per year, one of which has been a **Canadian Championship for the last 4 years**. W.C.M.C. trials are still one of the best of the season and full of enthusiasm from the riders and club membership who show up in droves to man the sections, score or run the food booth.

Special thanks to:

Clare's Cycle Harley-Davidson..... Sponsor of Trophies  
Hough Family..... Gerry Hough Memorial Award  
Joey's Pizza and other area businesses..... workers draw prizes

Dave Thomas and friend on his  
1954 Golden Anniversary Edition  
74 c.i. Harley Davidson (1958)



Another sport that was taking off at Welland was "Speeeeedway"

## History of Speedway Racing at the Welland County M.C.

By *Stan Bradbury*

Many years ago in Britain, when I was 15, I got interested in motorcycle racing and competed in grass track, moto-cross (scrambles) and a little road racing. When I was 16, I got my first road bike, an English Excelsior Manxman ER11, a 250 cc racer in road trim. After that I had a BSA, several KTT and KTS Velocettes, several 500 cc Ridges and a 500 cc J.A.P., that I raced on the grass tracks. Due to the war, there was not very much gasoline for road riding. Once the war was over, I did lots of grass track racing, then took up speedway racing as it was a profession which, if you were good enough, meant that you got paid a minimum weekly wage, plus all the race points you could win, plus travel expenses, etc. You were signed by a team just like in ice hockey and were transferred either by your team or at your request.

After several years as a "Pro", speedway was dealt a heavy blow by a near bankrupt government who put a massive 33-1/3rd tax on the gross money that the speedway clubs received. This soon put a stop to speedway in Britain and in a few months the 42 clubs went down to 5 and after 7 years as a "Pro", I lost my job. I then took up stock car racing and had very good luck at that until it became a rich man's sport, so my wife and I, plus our two children, moved to Toronto.

We had two more children in Toronto and I got involved with speedway at Dundas near Hamilton where we raced on a well constructed track with a safety fence, starting gate, etc. This was on a farm owned by the original owner of Channel 11 TV in Hamilton, a Mr. *Ken Sobel* and the farm was called **Bar 11 Ranch**. The promoter went out of business and the farm was sold.

We next raced on a track we built on land which is now part of York University. We also raced at various dirt stock car tracks, where we were enthusiastically welcomed. At that time most stock car tracks were being paved and the promoter would say, "Could you still do that on pavement?", so then most of us forgot about speedway.

In 1973, *Bob Fisher Sr.* of Stirling, near Belleville, found a dirt stock car track at Brighton and got several of us to dig out our old J.A.P.'s and have a go. The promoter was quite enthusiastic and paid good money. It was very popular with the crowd of spectators. We also heard of a group down in New York who were interested in Speedway and we started to race in events in New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. *Wes Pierce* of the Welland County M.C. was interested in putting Speedway on as a demonstration class at the dirt track races, but before that happened, *Mike Tams* and I did some demo races at the 1973 CVMG Vintage Rally that was held at the **Welland County MC's track**. This was well received and made *Wes Pierce* even more enthusiastic. From then on, it was more of a problem to find enough riders to ensure a good rider turn out for the demo class. We did get help from our friends in New York. Speedway racing became more popular. More riders got bikes and several other tracks opened up in New York, Ohio, Ontario and Quebec, to name just a few. There were even tracks in British Columbia, Thompson, Manitoba and one in Edmonton, Alberta. With continued growth at Welland, Speedway became a CMA class and held annual National Championships. We also rode at other tracks in Ontario and Quebec.

Next we started to race on 1/2 mile dirt tracks and became known as

Long Track Speedway where, speeds in our class were equal or better than the 750 cc Harleys. We raced at the **1/2 mile events put on by the Welland County MC at the Welland Fairground**. A 1/8th mile track was opened at Paris and one up in Quebec at St. Louis de France near Trois Rivières. However, Welland County MC's Niagara Motorcycle Raceway was where speedway was at it's best and the Welland County MC have put on a CMA-sanctioned Canadian National Speedway Championship for the past several years which have been a huge success. Top riders could go on to race for the North American Championship, usually held in Los Angeles, California. If a rider was successful there, he (or she) could go on to race in the various European rounds and could go on to reach the World Individual Speedway Championship, which is held in various parts of the World.

We have had several female riders who have done very well. One, Jo Anne Shephard (nee Boasman) was the 2nd Div Champion at Welland one year, about 7 or 8 years ago. We have another talented lady, Joanne Edwards, who lives quite close to the Welland County Clubhouse, who also could very well become our next 2nd Div Champ and continue on beyond that level.

Although crowds are not as big as they were a few years ago, Speedway still gets pretty good coverage across the world. There was 139,000 at a World Championship in Poland a few years ago and the many World Finals which were held at Empire Stadium at Wembley, England, held sold out crowds of 92,000.

There is no doubt that the **Welland County MC** and **Wes Pierce** in particular, plus a group of helpers, have made Ontario and Canada a name in Speedway circles known throughout the world. We have had riders visit from all parts of North America and from many of the leading Speedway nations, such as Britain, Sweden, Finland, Poland, Austria, New Zealand, Australia, Yugoslavia, etc., that I can remember. The Welland County MC has also had help from the **Canadian Speedway Racing Association**, a voluntary group of

Speedway minded enthusiasts and from many other helpers too numerous to mention.

Here's wishing the Welland County MC all the best possible success for the club, its motorcycle racing events and motorcycle Speedway racing in particular.

Best Regards, Stan Bradbury, Member W.C.M.C.



Canadian Speedway Racing Team L-R *Fred Legault, Len Dillon, Jim Orosz, Bob Yonov, Ken Sadd, Bo Neilson and Tony Armstrong* on the bike.

International activities swung into gear with the Round Robin Road Rally. This event started at midnight from Welland, Gowanda, Bath, and Springville, N.Y. *Wes Pierce* and American club road captains each took a section of the run. Over 300 riders made the loop and gave our club great exposure. The event went on for a number of years. It was some 300 miles in length and kept the club in the

forefront of road events. The event carried on on a smaller scale throughout the years with Curley Barwell taking over.

In the fall of 1980 a group of members *Ken Kramer, John Dmytrow, Wes Pierce, Don Pacaud*, along with *Jan Harpwood, Audrey Alexandre*, and *Vic Svob* were putting together a booklet on the history of the club. A lot of the information in this booklet came from the work that these people put in at that time (many thanks). The book came out in 1981 to mark our 35th anniversary. To celebrate our 35th anniversary the club decided to sponsor the CMA National Rally to be held at our club grounds. This event was a great success and we received a lot of support from the Retreads. A lot of the organizational and inter-club communication was done by *Lorne Shrum* a member of all three organizations.

In June of 1981 a new event (**The Ride for Sight**) was emerging and was very well supported by the Club. Several members attended The Ride for Sight held at Molson's Park in Barrie.



1985 Leaving on the Ride for Sight. Mel Swart on the left and Curley Barwell on the right.

The first year attending the Ride for Sight we met a person who devoted her life to Motorcycling. *Marla Garber* was invited to come to the Club to watch the races and enjoy all the other events. Marla proved to be a very good friend to many Club members until her passing in June of 1995.



L-R Barry Wells, Marla Garber, Leroy Fibbs and Pete Thompson

The fall of that year brought a new event to the club, the Fishing Trip. This event was held at the Nor'-Lock Lodge in a northern town called Dwight, a few miles outside of Huntsville. This event marked the birth of a new form of motorcycle racing. The 750 cc shuffleboard table drag races. Where did those black marks on the shuffleboard table come from Jimmy "O"? I wonder if John Vukanics saw Jimmy Stokes that weekend. The christening of the Hunky Dori also took place.

One of the favourite club events was the annual early March migration to Daytona. Club members have been attending since the early 50's when Ed and Marilyn Given went down for their Honeymoon.



In 1982 we had approximately 21 members staying at the same Hotel (Last year for that location). With so many members in attendance parking was at a premium and one night Wes could only find one place left to park - on the diving board.



Shuffleboard Table Drag Races. L-R Barry Wells, Jim Orosz and Sy



The Daytona Singers Live! Singing "Cry Cry Baby"

1984 was a turning point for the Club. The lease was coming due on the track the next year. Although Wes had done a terrific job of running the races as "WELLAND COUNTY SPEEDWAY", the Club felt it was time to take the races back over and the lease was not renewed. In 1986 the Club started running the races under the name of "NIAGARA MOTORCYCLE RACEWAY". We started out running six races per year and have now moved up to eight races per year. We start around mid June and run into August. Putting on these races is a tremendous amount of work. Track preparation, sign in, lap scoring, parking, food booth, corner marshals, etc. every week. Although our Club is very busy, we still find time to attend other events such as the Ride for Sight, Sudbury Rally, CVMG Rally, Peacemakers Lost Weekend and the Sex Run, just to name a few.

1986 found the Club upgrading the facilities once again. Construction of a new Food Booth began the day of the Poki-Barbi-Dan and continued the next day. (Not a good Plan)



April 1986, Building the new Food Booth. Terry Sharp "Sharpie" in the hole laying block. Jim Bodner Sr. in the foreground.

In August 1986 the Club celebrated 40 years of Motorcycling fun and excitement. *Jim Stokes* organized the 40th Anniversary and it was a tremendous event.



40th Anniversary August 22, 23 and 24, 1986



Vic Svob (left) "Skyhawks" shirt (centre) Jim Cseh (right)

The Club fishing Trip has now been moved to the week before Labour Day. The location of this event has changed several times moving from northern Ontario to western Pennsylvania and now being held in Geneva on the Lake, Ohio. *Jim Stokes* was the originator of the Fishing Trip and ran it until recently. *Ray Fournier, Rene Landry* and *Al Fair* currently run the event.



In the "Old Days" they rode "Indians", now they just play "Indians". L-R Jim Stokes, Pat Gauvreau and Mark at The Eagle Rock Motel. I believe there was some sort of a "Hot Tub" in the back of that pick-up truck shown in the background. Check story with *Greg Gamm* or *Jeff Orosz*. Late 80's Fishing Trip, Tionesta, Pennsylvania.

Another favourite event of the club is the Mystery Tour. This event started in 1986 and has visited many locations such as Dundurn Castle in Hamilton, The Agricultural Museum in Milton, Port Dover, and various locations in western N.Y. The event was started by *Al Fair* and taken over by *Paul Travis*. After the untimely passing of Paul, the name was changed to the Paul Travis Memorial Mystery Tour. The event is now run by *Ron Turnbull* and as anyone who has ever gone riding with Ron will tell you he can find some nice roads.



1987 Mystery Tour. L-R Paul Travis, Jim & Dianne Ewart, Tom Blanchard, Sue Putman, Rene Landry, Al Fair, "Newf" (Terry White)

One of the older and more prominent events is the "**POKI-BARBIDAN**" Poker Run, Barbecue and Dance. This event is our first run of the season and is held on the last weekend in April. This event was dreamed up by *Wes Pierce* and *Randy White* late one night over a few refreshments. The event usually draws around 400 people out to enjoy a large steak, cooked to perfection and a live band in the evening.



The Cooking Staff for the Poki-Barbi-Dan. Rudy Gondocs, Mike O'Sullivan, John Vukanics, Ritz Rainville and "Sy" (Frank Getin).

The most bizarre event that the club runs is our annual Skeet Shoot. It was originated back around 1981 by Barry Wells. The event started out normal, however, when Billy Hamilton and Jim Orosz got involved, it took a weird slant. They decided to raise some money by selling a handcrafted knife at the Poki-Barbi-Dan and use the money to purchase a used motorcycle. Normal enough so far. Then they work on it and get it running in tip top shape. Not strange you say. The whole purpose of this is so we can BLAST it to bits with shotguns as the highlight of our Skeet Shoot.



## Road WARRIOR IV

Jimmy "O" with the "KILL"

Over the years the Club has had a lot of fun, however the Club's main purpose is to promote the sport of motorcycling. The club operates with approximately one hundred members, with many members being involved with the Club for more than thirty years.



George Bosak 16 years old



George Bosak in 1968

The Good Old Days

by George Bosak

The Skyhawks MC began to grow in 1946. When I joined in 1947, I seem to recall about 15 - 18 members. Those were great times to ride a bike.

The Second World War ended 2 years before and civilian cycles were just being made available again. Up to this time, we were riding older Harley, Indians, and a wide assortment of English bikes - Norton, B.S.A., Royal Enfield, Triumph, Ariel, Vincent, A.J.S., etc.

Gas was 25 cents an imperial gallon, ownerships and drivers license \$1.00 each, 3 month beginners 50 cents (renewable), front plates were necessary, helmets and insurance were not required. Roads were narrow, traffic was light. Most bikers had a courtesy code - always acknowledge a fellow biker with a friendly wave and stop and offer help to a breakdown.

When I joined, the club would meet on Wednesday nights at Blanchards Corners (a service station restaurant about 1 mile west of Port Colborne on Hwy. # 3). I believe it was the following year, the

Tait brothers offered their barn in Sherkston for club meetings.

We had an excellent dedicated membership and were involved in club rides, hare & hounds, rides to various events, races, Hillclimbs, parties, Christmas parades, etc. The club kept growing as some of us drifted away, trading in our cycles for baby buggies and washing machines. Ah yes, the fun 50's were the best years to be a cycle rider.

### *Audrey Alexandre 50 Years and still Riding a Harley*

It was August 5, 1946 when my first motorcycle arrived. I was 17 years old and still had to finish Grade 13 at school. The motorcycle was a 1942 "Harley 45", an old army machine which had been fixed up and I was on top of the world!!!

Audrey



1946 Audrey Alexandre with her Sister on her first Bike  
*Congratulations on 50 Years of Riding a Harley*



## *A Honeymoon to Remember Feb. 12, 1950*



Ed and Marilyn Given were married on Feb. 11, 1950 and left for Daytona the next day on their 1946 Harley with sidecar. Because it was their honeymoon Marilyn decided she did not want to be seen in the paratrooper suit that Ed had purchased for the trip. Since Ed knew if he wore his, it might have caused problems, so he left his home too. (They FROZE.) The highlight of the trip was the races held on the beach in Daytona. Billy Mathews, a mechanic from Gullivers (a Motorcycle shop in Hamilton) won the race that year on a Norton. The trip home was a little more eventful. The motor that had been rebuilt by a local shop just before the trip, blew up in Georgia. Ed asked where the nearest Harley dealer was and a man said, "Billy Joe had a motorcycle", and proceeded to call everyone he knew until he found Billy Joe. When Billy Joe was located he gave three choices: Savanna, Atlanta or Columbia, SC. Columbia was the choice and for a \$15.00 truck ride, Ed and Marilyn were at the shop in the morning. The shop owner ordered the two mechanics to work on the bike until it was ready. During their time at the bike shop, Marilyn met a lady who had come in to buy her son, Buddy, a new bike. They got talking and Marilyn told the lady of their problem. The lady said if she was not going away they could have stayed at her place. Later that day the phone rang in the shop and it was for Marilyn. The lady said Buddy would be down for them at five. When they got to the house it was dark and there were two armed guards at the gates. Ed and Marilyn wondered where they were. They proceeded to find out they were at the Wardens house of the South Carolina Womens Prison. They were treated like royalty. The shop called the next day and the bike was ready. A complete rebuild including parts and labour for \$51.00, not a bad deal.

## Listing of Annual Club Events

Poki-Barbi-Dan.....	Last Weekend in April
Spring Trials .....	Second Weekend in May
Lime Run.....	3rd Sunday in July
Paul Travis Memorial Mystery Tour.....	2nd Sunday in August
Club Fishing Trip (Guests Welcome)..	Weekend Before Labour Day
Help a Child Smile.....	Sunday of the Labour Day Weekend
National Championship Trials.....	2nd Sunday in September
World Championship Hare & Hound.....	3rd Sunday in September
Annual Awards Banquet (Guests Welcome).....	1st Sat. in November

### **Flat Track & Speedway Racing Every Saturday Night Starting in Mid June and Running Until Early August**

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On behalf of the WCMC I would like to thank all the people who came to help us celebrate our 50th anniversary.

## Dedication

As I started digging into the Club's history, I realized how lucky the newer members, myself included, are that the senior members had the foresight to purchase property and start building the facility that we have today. I would also like to thank all the present Club members for putting in the long hours required to run the events, maintain the facility and continuing to expand. With that being said I would like to dedicate this booklet to the past and present Club members.

Al Fair  
Vice President

For information on future Club events call (905)-734-7058 or write to Welland County M. C. 603 Netherby Rd., RR # 4 Welland, Ontario, Canada L3B 5N7