



# RACING BICYCLES

100 YEARS OF STEEL

images  
Publishing

DAVID  
RAPLEY

Photography by  
Susie Latham



# Introduction

## The Cycles of Cycling

Like everything in life, the popularity of cycling as a mode of transport or social leisure activity, moves in cycles. Initially it belonged to the domain of the wealthy, but eventually it became apparent that this plaything offered a simple and efficient way of travelling for the general population – if it could be made in sufficient quantities and cheaply enough. The industrial revolution perfected mass production and in the late 1800s it applied to the bicycle in dramatic fashion. Now the working class could travel easily beyond walking distance, far more economically and conveniently than by horse, and with a freedom of direction not offered by the railroad track. Most importantly it was probably the first time women could have independent means of personal transport. It has been said that the bicycle had more effect on the liberation of women than anything else.

By the 1930s, with the increase of personal wealth and the development of motorised transport, the car gradually eroded the bicycle's popularity as the primary means of transport. However, it would take another 30 years before the working class completely abandoned the bicycle for the car. As the bicycle slowly diminished in terms of consumer appeal, so did the fashion for using it at all, judging by the Australian experience. During the mid-1960s, the majority of the adult population had virtually given up cycling. Children still rode to school and used them until they were old enough to drive a car. This decline was delayed in countries with shorter travelling distances and better public transport systems, but to a greater or lesser extent it happened in Europe and North America.

The big manufacturers, not wishing to lose their market, fought back. For example, Peugeot introduced a new range under the slogan of 'The Freedom Machine' in 1970, attempting to lure the young and active back into cycling. In Australia, as in other countries, they successfully worked to establish and revive their market. The company assembled knocked down bikes in their own Melbourne factory and sought out a new network of dealerships. At this time Australia still had a traditional small bike shop in every town and suburb, struggling to survive and serving principally the teenage and children's market. Some shops were still making their own frames but mostly were assembling bikes from bought-in parts, augmented with cheap, fully assembled Asian import models.

c.1910

Model	Road
Country of manufacture	Australia
Condition	Original
Frame no.	1199
Frame size	H21 1/2 x L22 1/4 inches
Colour	Black
Lugs	Generic
Fork ends	—
Wheels	Hubs: BSA Rims: Westwood Spokes: front 32, rear 40 BSA
Crank	—
Chain wheel	BSA 48T
Pedals	BSA
Gears	Fixed 75-inch
Brakes	—
Head stem	Australia
Bars	Kelly
Saddle	Unknown



Credit: State Library of South Australia, PIC 2803/3143



## Bullock

Owner **Cliff Mitchell**

John Bullock was a champion cyclist before 1900, and having been apprenticed to Taylor's Cycles, Adelaide, he was well placed to start his own brand. This he did with considerable success, becoming a significant South Australian maker, both in volume and quality. The racing 'Arrow' model was extremely popular and Bullock, with an obvious eye to publicity, made sure that three times US Sprint Champion, Willie Spencer, and double Austral winner, Frank Corry, were mounted on Arrows whenever they visited South Australia.

It is said that Bullock cycles won every event of significance in that state during the first decades of the century, with local stars Billie Griggs, Archie White, Frank Mariner and Bill Dale riding a Bullock. Production ceased in 1939. This machine from around 1910 is a magnificent, original fixed-wheel racer.

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1912

Model	Track
Country of manufacture	Australia
Condition	As last raced
Frame no.	—
Frame size	H20 1/2 x L22 3/4 inches
Colour	Black
Lugs	Generic
Fork ends	BSA
Wheels	Hubs: F&S front, BSA rear Rims: Wood clincher Spokes: front 32, rear 40
Crank	BSA Racing
Chain wheel	BSA 24T
Pedals	BSA
Gears	Fixed 67-inch
Brakes	—
Head stem	Unknown
Bars	Unknown
Saddle	Unknown



## Ixion

Owner **Warren Meade**

A rare surviving dedicated track racer from the early period of racing bicycles, there is evidence of an original green paint but the black has been there since its racing days. Built from track parts from the post-1908 BSA catalogue, it features a cast chain stay bridge, and therefore has a shorter wheelbase. The hubs, bottom bracket and fork crown are the narrowest in the BSA range, designed to place pedal cranks closer together and allow the rider to lean further over the machine on unbanked tracks before the pedals strike the ground – and hurl the unfortunate rider off the bike! The wooden rims, also with much of their original paint intact, give us a clear idea of what a track bike of the period really looked like.

Finding this bike demonstrates the value of following leads. The owner found it after seeing a *Trading Post* advertisement: 'Bikes, shedful, approx. 50, \$200. Must take the lot'. The Ixion, as might be expected, was the very last one to be seen, right at the back of the shed!

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1955

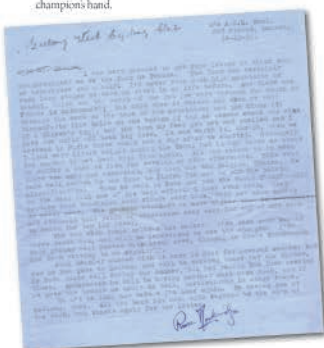


## Russell Mockridge

During the 1955 season, Russell Mockridge was recognised in Europe as a world-class specialist track sprinter. He had beaten the best, won two Olympic gold medals in one day, and is the only man in history to have won the professional/amateur Paris Grand Prix double. But he sought credibility as a road rider and to do this he reasoned he had to be able to finish the Tour de France, something no Australian had done since 1931.

With fellow Australian John Beasley, Russell secured a place in the undermanned Luxembourg team for the 1955 Tour de France; they were only there to make up numbers and were not even included in team tactics. He suffered a bad pre-race crash and was cleared to compete only two hours before the start. He and Beasley had a bout of food poisoning from the previous evening, something that would cause Beasley to pull out during the third stage, leaving Russell to ride the Tour solo.

After the Col du Galbier he was in 47th place. Noted journalist and two-time winner of the Tour, André Ledocq, wrote in the French press, 'I did not have much time for sprinters until this' Tour but if Mockridge finishes, I will shake his hand as warmly as I shake the winner's. Severe breathing problems caused Tour doctor Pierre Dumax to order a chest x-ray for Mockridge mid-race, which diagnosed acute bronchitis. Mockridge continued his solo ride in spite of this, finishing in 67th place. The survival rate was less than 50 per cent that year. As promised, Ledocq warmly shook the champion's hand.



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c.1962

Model	Road
Country of manufacture	Italy
Condition	Restored
Frame no.	6712
Frame size	H57 x L57 cm
Colour	Red/blue/white
Lugs	Frejus
Fork ends	Campagnolo
Wheels	Akuts: Campagnolo Rims: Campagnolo Spokes: front 36, rear 36
Crank	Campagnolo
Chain wheel	Campagnolo 51/47
Axle	Campagnolo
Gears	Campagnolo GS 10-speed
Brakes	Campagnolo
Head stem	Mikreino
Bars	Mikreino
Saddle	Brooks B17



Peter Pantoni relies on V&E eggs for Vignar, Euron and Sade-Building.



## Frejus/Hillman

Owner David Rapley

Famous rider, fascinating frame.

When Peter Pantoni arrived in Victoria to further his racing career, he was already the fastest man in Western Australia and a member of the Malvern Star sponsored team. It was to prove a successful move. Peter was Australian Pursuit Champion 1959, 1960 and 1961. He scored back-to-back San Tours and three Mercury Tours of Tasmania, as well as being a very accomplished Six Day rider. Between the Russell Mockridge and Harry Waddell eras, it could well be argued that he was the best road rider in the country. Interestingly, he did manage to beat Mockridge in the 1958 Mercury Tour by three seconds, and with Jim Taylor and George Goodwin, was possibly the only rider capable of riding successfully off scratch with Mockridge. Pantoni was next sponsored by Kevin Thompson Cycles in New South Wales, and finally by Hillman. In 1979 he made a successful comeback in the West Australian Veterans event.

Hillman Cycles were one of the largest suppliers to Melbourne's racing fraternity. Experiencing problems supplying enough racing frames, they made the then unusual move of importing unbadged frames from the famous Italian company, Frejus. This maker's frames are easily identified by their peculiar design features – even the two holes for the Frejus badge are there. This particular frame was painted in Hillman livery for their newly sponsored rider, Peter Pantoni. He returned to Western Australia in the late 1960s, and the frame, with his name on the top bar, went into the second-hand race frame stock.



It was acquired in 1967 by Peter Hempenstall, who raced it extensively with the Montallice and Footscray clubs in Melbourne. It then passed to David Rourke in the late 1980s. In 2008, it was returned to the specifications of Pantoni's day. Pantoni was contacted, remembered the bike but not the fine details. Hempenstall recalled red paint and simple box lacing and luckily when speaking with Jim Taylor at the inaugural Mockridge Memorial ride, without hesitation Taylor replied red, white and blue. Thanks to Kern Dickie's brushwork, so it is today.



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1996

Model	Costruita nel Reparto Corsi Road
Country of manufacture	Italy
Condition	Original/As last raced
Frame no.	1399
Frame size	H54.5 x L54.5 cm
Colour	Celeste
Lugs	-
Fork ends	Campagnolo
Features	All titanium axes and bolts; Columbus Genus tubing; Maive Helium 26/28 and Campagnolo Shimano 12
Wheels	Campagnolo Record
Corks	Campagnolo Record
Chain wheel	Shimano
Andrils	Campagnolo 16-speed
Gears	Campagnolo Record
Brakes	Cinelli Grammo
Head stem	Critium
Bars	Regal
Saddle	-

## Bianchi

Owner Peter Hemenstall

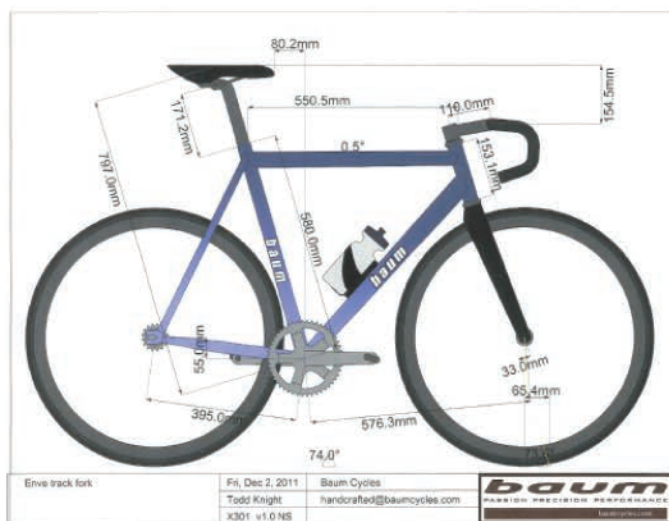
Bianchi supplied frames for their own and other suitable teams from a separate department known as 'Costruita nel Reparto Corsi'. The owner of this bike heard on the grapevine that 12 new Bianchi special racing frames were on the market. Apparently they were built for a major team that had withdrawn from the Tour de France and did not take delivery of the order. Calls were made and he located them – only one was left and by some miracle, the right frame for his size; the deal was done.

When the Bianchi arrived it proved to be exactly as described and was built up with the best of every Italian part, except for the pedals. It was ridden in the 1996 Melbourne to Warrumbool for a finish and ended in 13th place the following year, as well as other open races. It has only ever been raced – never used for training – and is in nearly new condition today: a factory-built team racer, one owner, and ready to go. It doesn't get much better than that to end a century of steel racers.



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FRAMING THE FUTURE



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## Baum Cycles

Owner Darren Baum

Judging by the number of orders flowing through Darren Baum's factory in Geelong, Victoria in early 2012, there is a still a healthy future for the metal bike frame. Currently his material of choice is titanium, which can be coupled with carbon fibre and other exotic materials, according to the customer's requirements. He also has tubing and lug sets to hand, should a traditional frame be desired, and he welcomes such orders – frames are very much a collaboration between the customer and the maker's expertise.

The first thing one encounters at the factory is a purpose-built 'fit' machine, devised to ensure that when ridden statically by the customer, it can be easily adjusted to maximise comfort and delivery of power. The resulting dimensions are the first step in producing the optimum individual frame – a far cry from when Cecil Walker ran a tape over your author, and had him sit on a bike he just happened to have handy – not that the great champion's estimates weren't adequate, and one could be forgiven for wondering what might have been, if life had taken him in another direction.

Baum offers a full range of competition and fair touring designs and all production is specific to the individual customer. When the author visited Baum's workshop, a fair balance of local and overseas orders was evident and a new training bike for 2012 Tour de France winner Cadel Evans was in final assembly. Evans is a strong supporter of the brand and clearly the interchange between these two current leaders of the game means Baum Cycles influences the latest trends and is fully aware of international developments in racing technology.

Apart from the production of raw material, frames are made completely in house, from design to paintwork, which is rare for a small production specialist in this day and age. The value of this is obviously complete quality control and exact compliance with the original order. Much of this work is done on their own purpose-built equipment in a factory where layout and working practices allow for fluctuations in demand to be catered for with little effect on delivery times. The attention to detail and finish is extremely impressive – the classic frame-builders and painters of the past would be proud of their offspring. The metal racing bicycle frame has progressed from black iron through Reynolds and Colombo alloy steels to titanium and is still alive with a bright future. And fortunately this story is not unique – there are specialists like Baum to be found worldwide, worthily carrying on the tradition of the steel racer.

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Features leading brands from the past hundred years, including:

Ace • Bates • Bianchi • Bullock • Cecil Walker • Cinelli  
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 Olmo • Paris • Perkins • Peugeot • Raleigh • Rambler  
 Raphael Geminiani • Rob Special • Rossmore  
 Super Elliot • Tom Wallace • Vitus

**Racing Bicycles**  
**100 Years of Steel**  
 by David Rapley

*Racing Bicycles: 100 Years of Steel* depicts racing bikes from the turn of the 20th century to the modern era, and features spectacular photography of racing machines from the Tour de France, the Olympics and World Championships, as well as bikes for everyday use.

The breathtaking new compilation gathers a hand-picked selection of bicycles from Europe and Australia, and documents developments in technology and

style over the past century. Racing bikes integrate form and function and the results are often surprisingly elegant, as well as practical, whether for cycling in competition or for pleasure.

The racing bikes contained in this book range from unused models to well-ridden but lovingly restored machines – from early 20th-century models made entirely from steel to the latest in carbon-fibre and titanium technology.

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For publicity information contact **Merry Lovell**: merry@imagespublishing.com +61 3 9561 5544

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