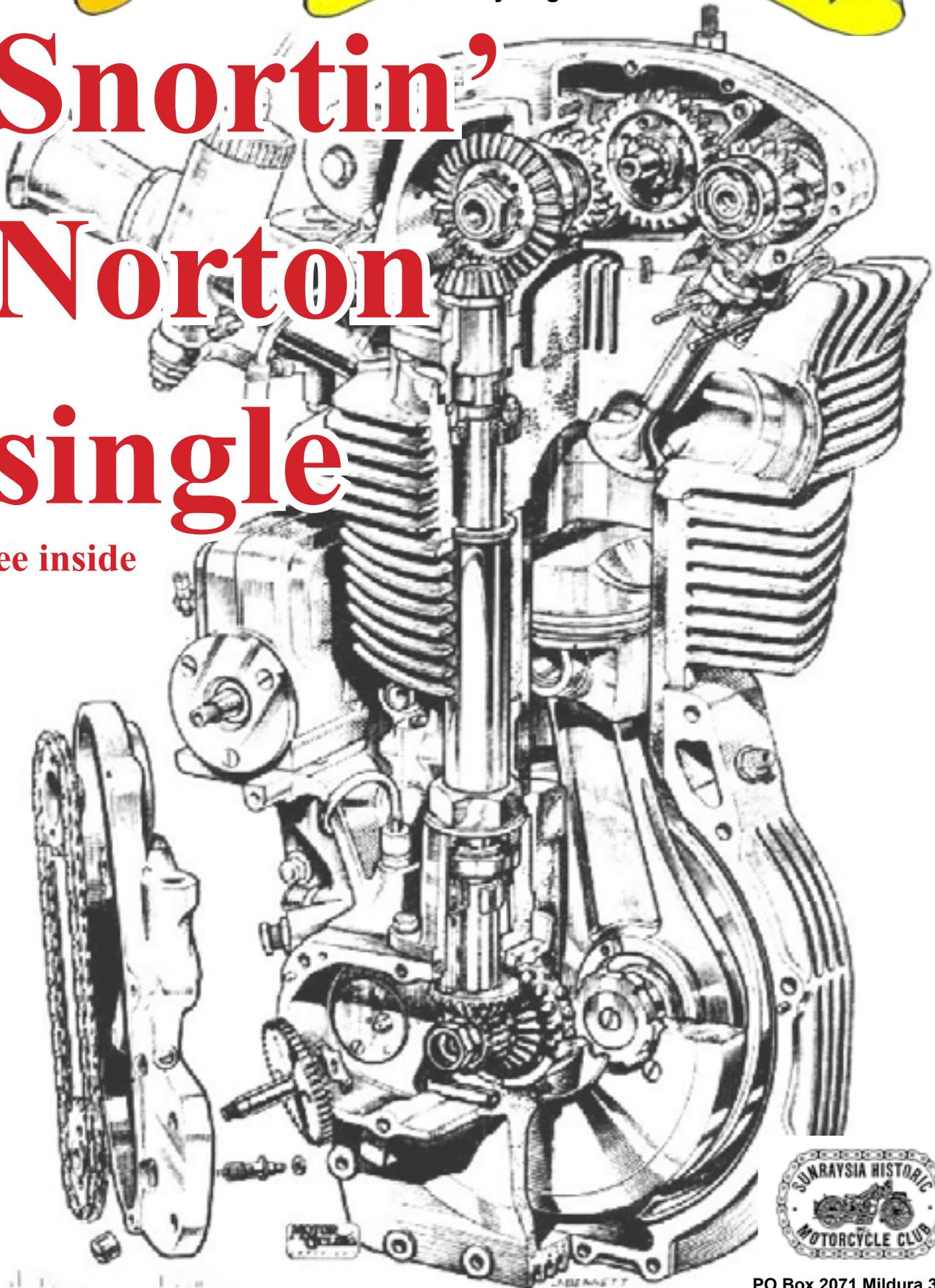


# Bush Chatter

July/August 2017

# Snortin', Norton single

See inside



PO Box 2071 Mildura 3500

# Seeing is believing...five very rare motorcycles in the flesh

By Gary Ilminen

Having spent at least part of the last 41 summers in the saddle of a motorcycle going hither and yon always with an eye out for a chance to ogle unusual, rare or just plain cool motorcycles of all types and ages, I have managed to stumble across a few. In rare moments of clarity, I managed to remember to bring a camera along, though my photographic skills vary somewhat. Of course, dodgy images prove authenticity.

Marginal photographic skills aside, I have managed to collect images of some very rare and unique machines and even some with their proud owners on hand. Here are the top five rarest motorcycles I've ever seen.

## 1916 Traub

Topping my list for both innovative design and rarity is this Traub. Notice I didn't use the phrase "this example of." That's because it is the only one known to exist. Even the circumstances of its construction are shrouded in mystery, as the exact identity of the designers/builders and date of construction is unclear to this day.

The story goes that it was stolen not long after being completed and



disappeared for nearly five decades. In 1968, or thereabouts, and depending on whose account you consider, it was found either under a porch or bricked up in the wall of a house being renovated, apparently having been placed in hiding soon after it was swiped.

After the find, a Chicago motorcycle shop owner acquired it and restored it, eventually selling it to motorcycle legend, Bud Ekins who eventually sold it to collector Richard Morris. Morris, in turn, sold it to Dale Walksler, creator of the Wheels Through Time (WTT) museum in Mag-

gie Valley, NC. [www.wheelsthroughtime.com/](http://www.wheelsthroughtime.com/) Walksler has restored the Traub to fully functional status and to this day it is operational.

I got to meet Walksler in 2006 at WTT and he explained some of the bike's unusual advanced features, which included a rear brake that used both internal expanding and external contracting band shoes that operated simultaneously, dual foot or hand-operated clutch, dual position neutral in the transmission and a 1,278cc air-cooled side-valve V-twin engine of masterfully precise construction.

**Continued next page**

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[tarrs@ncable.com.au](mailto:tarrs@ncable.com.au)

## CHATTER EDITOR

**GRANT MAYNARD**

[grant.m.maynard@gmail.com](mailto:grant.m.maynard@gmail.com)

• **There are signs...** that winter maybe on the wane. The grass is growing (too bloody fast for my liking), the birds are singing and, at times, the sun is shining warmly. That all augurs well for some great springtime riding weather. Trust you have used the cooler months to get your bikes in fine fettle for a tip-top ride, or two, or three...before the heat hits!! Ah, it's often one thing or another...but there are plenty of upcoming opportunities to get that old banger out on the road, but remember, keep the tin up and the rubber down...



PO Box 2071 Mildura 3500

# Seeing is believing...five very rare motorcycles in the flesh

## 1911 Levis

Levis (LEV-iss) was in production in the U.K. from 1911 to 1939 and not many examples of their product line made it across the pond, let alone intact and fully operational from the company's first year of production.

Minnesotan, Mike Crane did a meticulous restoration on this 1911 model and presented it for the bike show at the British Biker Cooperative (BBC) [www.britishbiker.net/](http://www.britishbiker.net/) Rally in 2011. It was the first 100 year old bike ever shown at the event and truth be told, it started easier than some of the seventies-vintage Nortons and Triumphs on hand.

Crane not only demonstrated its immediate starting ability, he rode it around the show grounds to the delight of all. That's Mike Crane proudly displaying the bike. This model featured a 211cc two-stroke single; Levis was one of the most successful early proponents of two-stroke power in the U.K. By the 1920s, Levis had established a winning record in TT and Grand Prix competition. The company was eventually sold to a manufacturer of air compressors, which subsequently ended motorcycle manufacturing.

## 1931 Coventry Eagle

Another of Mike Crane's superb restorations was this beautiful and very rideable Coventry Eagle shown at the BBC bike show in 2010. The bike was equipped with a 172cc two-stroke Villiers single and metallic chain final drive.

Coventry Eagle also enjoyed substantial racing success in its heyday before WWII, but the war ended the company altogether. I have no information on how many of this brand or model exist today, but I bet the number that are in this "as-new" running condition is very small.

Continued next page



# Seeing is believing...five very rare motorcycles in the flesh

## 1938 Crocker

Al Crocker had been with Indian as the company's dealer in Denver, CO and in 1928, became its representative on the west coast in Los Angeles. First moving into the design/build aspect of the business, he fashioned single cylinder racing bikes with Indian engines, but soon moved to OHV engines of his own design. V-twin road bikes soon followed, equipped with 1000cc hemi-head OHV engines, with aluminum engine cases and other chassis components.

Capitalising on lessons learned in racing, Crocker's bikes were lighter and more powerful than the contemporary competition from Indian and Harley-Davidson. What the Crocker had in high performance features it lacked in mass-production economies and support. In all, only about 100 Crockers were built, making them highly prized for their rarity and appreciated for the advanced design.

I saw this 1938 Crocker at the National Motorcycle Museum in Anamosa, Iowa ([www.nationalmcmuseum.org/](http://www.nationalmcmuseum.org/)) in 2005. The classic, sleek design is striking, even today.

## 1971 Rickman Enfield Interceptor

I first saw the Rickman Enfield Interceptor at the fall 2005 running of the Slimey Crud Run in Wisconsin. I also had the opportunity to meet the bike's only owner from new, Mike Engelhart shown here in the saddle. I recalled reading about them somewhere in the past, but because fewer than 200 of them were ever built, putting them in the range of rarity of the Crocker, I didn't anticipate ever seeing one, except in some collection, perhaps.

The U.K.'s Rickman brothers were already renowned for building superb chrome moly steel frames for off-road and road racing machines as well as high end custom bikes in 1971. That year, Royal Enfield abruptly ended operations leaving a shipment of Royal



Enfield Mk II 750 cc Interceptor engines sitting on a wharf in England awaiting shipment to Italy, where Indian Motorcycle [Indian's own original preferred spelling] owner, Floyd Clymer had intended them to be assembled in Indian/Enfield hybrids to be badged as Indian.

Instead, the whole lot was acquired by the Rickman brothers and they built frames for the engines based on a racing frame they had done previously. The result is a striking, purpose-built high performance road machine with superb handling and a strong, if somewhat quirky, powerplant. I say quirky because it has some unusual operating features such as a lever that is used to find neutral because doing so with the shift lever is very difficult and there is no neutral light. It also has a pressurized dry sump lubrication system, but does not require an external oil tank—

the oil tank is built into the engine case.

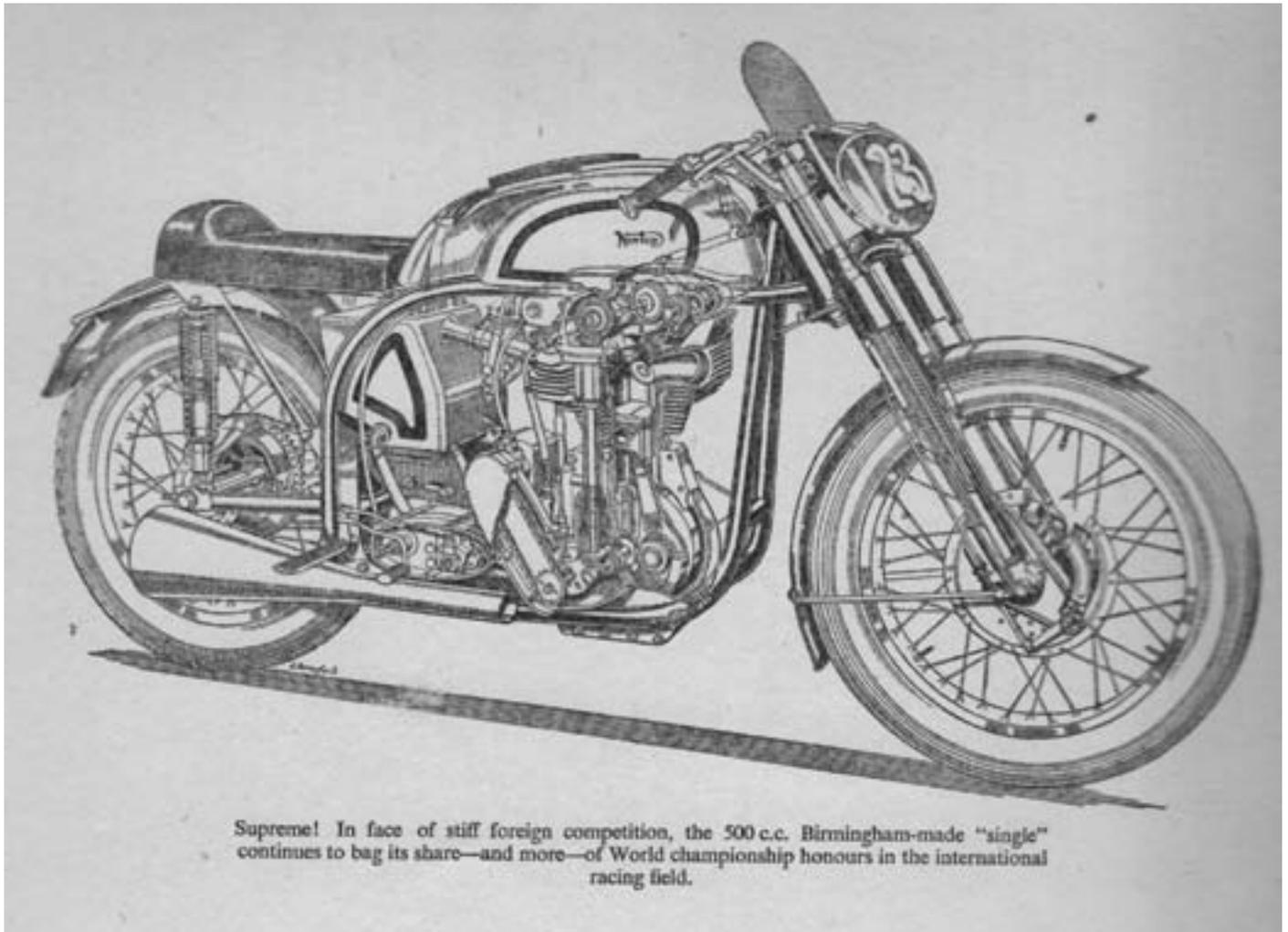
The Rickman included Borrani rims, Ceriani forks, dual Girling shocks, Lockheed disc brakes on drilled discs front and rear, a fiberglass tank/seat/tail section unit, and both clip-on and standard-rise handlebars. For more, visit our story: Rickman Enfield Interceptor.

There are some others that probably could be included in this grouping such as a 2002 Ghezzi-Brian Moto-Guzzi, and some contemporary one-off customs by Arlen Ness and land speed record bikes like the Gyronaut X-1, but those are in a little different category.

I hope you've had the opportunity to do an up-close and personal with some rare or significant machines, be they new or old.



# For the Snortin' Norton fans...



Supreme! In face of stiff foreign competition, the 500 c.c. Birmingham-made "single" continues to bag its share—and more—of World championship honours in the international racing field.

The Norton Manx or Manx Norton is a British racing motorcycle that was made from 1947 to 1962 by Norton Motors Ltd. A Norton had contested every Isle of Man TT race from the inaugural 1907 event through into the 1970s, a feat unrivalled by any other manufacturer, and the development and honing of the Manx racing motorcycle was another step in this racing achievement.

New Manx Nortons, built to various specifications are still available to buy new, from various suppliers around the world. These suit different categories and definitions of Classic Motorcycle Racing and Historic Motorcycle Racing in different countries around the world.

Norton's first use of the name 'Manx' was applied to the 'Manx Grand Prix' model available from 1936-1940, a special racing version of their 'International' roadster, with telescopic forks and a plunger rear suspension, magnesium for the crankcases and cambox, and no provision for lighting. Just after WW2, the 'Grand Prix' was

dropped, and Norton named their 1947 racing model the 'Manx'. It was a lightly redesigned prewar racing Norton International, an overhead cam single-cylinder machine available as a 350cc or 500cc. The Norton factory race bikes under team manager Joe Craig were experimental models, and a version was available to buy from the factory in Bracebridge Street – to selected customers. Fitted with the McCandless brothers Featherbed frame for 1950, the Manx gained a new lease of racing life as a racing machine, the new frame giving the fine steering necessary for high speed navigation of some very fast racing circuits of the time.

The last Bracebridge Street (the original home of Norton) Manx Nortons were sold in 1963. Even though Norton had pulled out of International Grand Prix racing in 1954, the Manx had become the backbone of privateer racing. The Classic Motorcycle Racing movement from the 1970s onwards has seen relatively large numbers of Manxs return to the track, and a flour-

ishing supply of parts and services has appeared all around the world to nourish this demand.

## Memberships now overdue!

Sunraysia Historical Motorcycle Club 2017 - 2018 membership fees are now due.

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Regards,  
Graeme Brown  
Treasurer SHMC  
0490 139 558

# Did you know?



The Ariel Square Four, as first manufactured, employed an overhead camshaft. This is the 1932 600cc OHC model, new features of which embraced a redesigned cylinder head, and an instrument panel insert on the fuel tank's top face.

## But wait, there's more...

The Square Four is a motorcycle produced by Ariel between 1931 and 1959, designed by Edward Turner, who devised the Square Four engine in 1928. At this time he was looking for work, showing drawings of his engine design to motorcycle manufacturers. The early engine with "two transverse crankshafts" was essentially a pair of 'across frame' OHC parallel twins joined by their geared central flywheels, with a four-cylinder block (or Monobloc) and single head. The idea for the engine was rejected by BSA, but adopted by Ariel. Thus it became the Ariel Square Four.

In 1966 Phil Vincent wrote in *Motor Cycle*: "Alas, in 1959 the Square Four went out of production, a victim of the modern trend towards small, high-revving modern

power units. The demand had tailed off a bit, and with reduced output, the price would have had to be hoisted excessively high. At the time it was approaching £350 – out of reach of all but a few of the potential buyers."

A further development was the Healey 1000/4 based on an updated Square Four, produced between 1971 and 1977.

Model	Years produced	Production
4F-500	1931–1932	927
4F-600	1932–1940	2,674
4G-1000	1936–1948	4,288
Mk I	1949–1953	3,922
Mk II	1953–1958	3,828
All Models	1931–1958	15,639

## Wanted to Sell

• NORTON Model 7 Dominator crankshaft and conrods. Fully reconditioned. Complete Norton Dominator gearbox minus clutch. Serial #GB8 2418. Will listen to realistic offers. Call Adam on 5023 0977.

• 1987 Harley Sportster XLH 883 DLX. \$7000. Red plate eligible. Ring Danny Curran 0418 303 964.

• 1984 Suzuki GSX250S. Reg 4386H. \$2000 ono. Roger Moser 0428 413 323. See RIGHT.

• 1962 (approx) Yamaha YDS 2 or 3 250 road bike. Almost complete. Make a good restoration project. \$1500 ono. Again, ring Trev on 0439 654 539 for details.



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### Regular Club Runs

- **Monthly meeting rides leave from Hudaks on 15<sup>th</sup> Street opposite Centro at 10am. The run finishes at the Mildura Scout Hall in 12th Street, Mildura.**
- **The mid-month ride leaves from Hudaks on 15<sup>th</sup> Street opposite Centro at 10am on the second Sunday of the month. Turn up with a full tank. Many more events listed on our website at [www.shmc.org.au](http://www.shmc.org.au)**

## Upcoming events

- **24/09/2017** Monthly club meeting
- **24/09/2017** Club monthly meeting, Bay to Birdwood
- **08/10/2017** Mid monthly ride
- **29/10/2017** Monthly club meeting
- **12/11/2017** Mid monthly ride...**more details on our website at [www.shmc.org.au](http://www.shmc.org.au).**

# This is a good deal...

Graham Burton-Clay at Sunraysia Bearings, 34 Orange Avenue, Mildura, telephone 5023 4337, is offering all SHMC members trade prices on a wide range of items including those featured below... All you have to do is flash your membership card to get one of the best deals going around. The Sunraysia Bearings team have 50 years experience in the industry, and the business is locally owned and operated by people that live and work in our community. Thanks Graham! Let's support the bloke who supports us. The good stuff!



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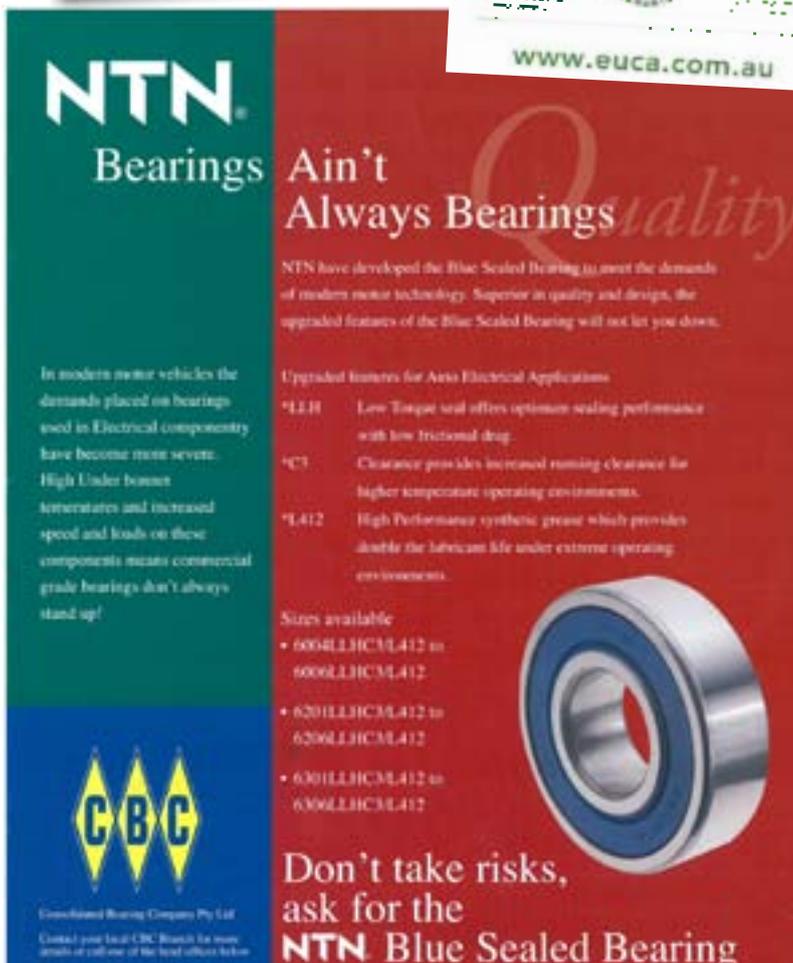
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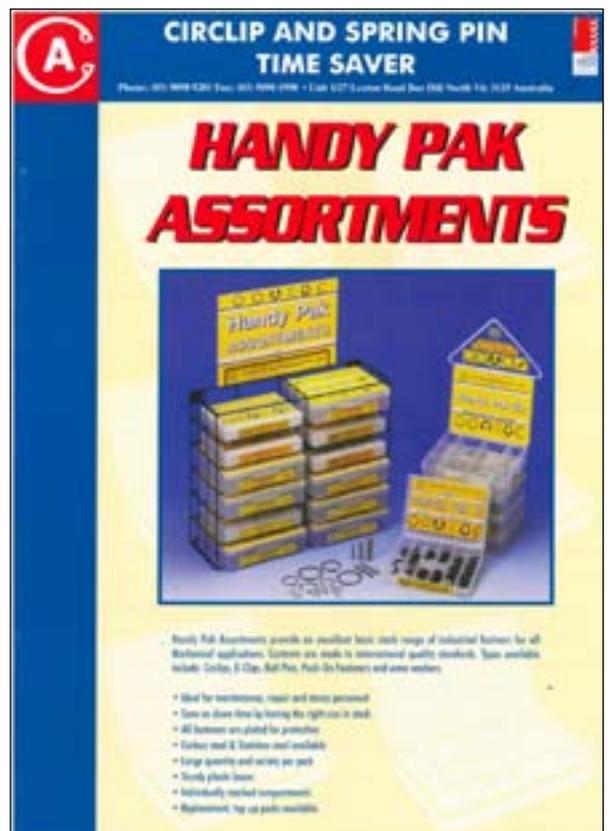
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