

The Winged Wheel

CANTERBURY



OWNERS CLUB

Newsletter of
The Canterbury BSA Owners Club Inc.
PO Box 2907 Christchurch 8140
New Zealand.

www.canterburybsaoc.org.nz

ISSUE 284- Jul/Sep 2017

MOVE UP...



to *BSA* POWER in 1967!

Committee 2017-18

President	Ross McLellan	03 359 7036
	Email	adeleandross@xtra.co.nz
Vice President/ Club Captain	Thomas Brown	03 337 1797
Secretary	Mark Leoni	03 322 4900
Treasurer	Ant Ritchie	03 337 2758
Editor	John Proffitt	03 980 3349
	Email	jproffitt48@gmail.com
Committee	Vic Daniel	03 359 9661
Webmaster	Ken Roy	388 4415
	Email	kilroy@ihug.co.nz
CBSAOC Westpac Acct No. : 03 1592 0031015 000 (e.g. for subs payments)		

Contents:-

Presidents Page	page 3
What's on	page 4
Editors blurb	page 5
23rd BSA National Rally 2018	page 6
British Bike Show 25-27 Aug 2017	page 7
All British Day 2017	page 12
Petrol in NZ	page 13
Traub Motorcycle	page 19

Club Members Contact List

Terry	Agnew	354 5099	Didier	Le Guen	021 209 0989
Geoff	Bainbridge	358 9493	Mark	Leoni	322 4900
Ian	Beumelberg	388 4569	Wayne	Leoni	338 2369
Dave	Bishell	03 578 9485	Kim	Macbeth	352 9779
Alan	Bland	342 4134	Ian	McGregor	980 4428
Harry	Brown	942 8621	Char	Macpherson	021 633821
Thomas	Brown	337 1797	Ross	McLellan	359 7036
Paul	Burbery	03 327 6197	Red	Miller	027 2360908
Peter	Burroughs	03 327 5805	Pete	Milner	342 7336
Bruce	Chapman	03 347 4442	James	Nimmo	960 9273
Jens	Christensen	347 1600	Lyn	Nimmo	960 9273
Ross	Church	027 616 6579	Brett	O'Rourke	347 8293
Peter	Clement	03 579 3979	Ray	O'Rourke	352 3375
John	Connolly	358 7555	Graeme	Perry	327 7848
Darren	Crothers	021 686 521	Colin	Pitkethley	021 128 0483
Vic	Daniel	359 9661	John	Proffitt	980 3349
Max	Green	03 313 0520	Dean	Richardson	980 0292
Sean	Green	027 3360171	Anthony	Ritchie	337 2758
Herb	Hart	327 3840	Ken	Roy	388 4415
Ritchie	Hart	359 9606	Craig	Spittal	021 1244903
Geoff	Howat	349 5917	Ted	Tomlinson	
John	Kearns	322 4902	Mark	van der Looy	355 4943
Brendan	Kellerman	04 970 7291	Brian	Ward	355 8209
Reija	Koskinen	021 207 0128	Graeme	Watson	332 2048



Jens' ultra-rare Royal Enfield 'Cycar' 1932 148cc two-stroke.



Brett & Pania let the Bantam free-range for the weekend. Max's B32 kept an eye on things.

President's Page

We are into the warmer riding weather so we can look forward to some good rides.

Thomas is over in Holland at the BSA International Rally, so he should have some good stories to tell us.

The British bike show has been held and from what I have been told it went well.

The National Rally will be held on the 16, 17 and 18th of February next year 2018. We have booked Blue Skies again but this time we have got the "A" Frame like building at the end of the drive which has accommodation for 40 persons, so we are now into all the arrangements that make the rally a success.

Our last run was to the "fossil" cafe at Motunau on the main north road. We picked up some riders at Belfast then onto Waipara junction thru Weka pass which now has a 80 kph limit which makes for a leisurely pace, turned off at Waikari thru Sulphur Springs and Scargill over the main road to the Cafe where they treated us well. Nice weather, good company where we discussed the upcoming Rally. There were about 10 bikes on the ride, traffic back to CHC was moderate, a good trouble-free ride.

Just on a serious note we still have members who have not paid their subs yet. It makes it easier for the treasurer if they are paid on time. Look forward to seeing you at the next club night,

Rgds Ross



CANTERBURY BSA CLUB

9th October	Club Night & Committee Meeting	Papanui Club
15th October	Russ Short Memorial Run	Bush Inn carpark
13th November	Club Night & Committee Meeting	Papanui Club
19th November	Club Run	Bush Inn carpark
11th December	Club Night & Committee Meeting	Papanui Club
17th December	Club Run	Bush Inn carpark
8th January	Club Night & Committee Meeting	Papanui Club
21st January	Club Run	Bush Inn carpark

CLUB NIGHTS

Held on the second Monday of each month. Venue is Matches Sports Bar, Papanui Club, Sawyers Arms Road, Christchurch
Club nights commence at 7.30pm unless otherwise advised
Check "The Press" (Motorcycles column) Saturday prior to meeting.

CLUB RUNS

Held on the third Sunday of each month unless otherwise advised
Depart from Bush Inn Centre Carpark (opp Westpac), Upper Riccarton
Summer months meet 10.00am Depart by 10.30am
Winter months meet 10.30am Depart by 11.00am
Check "The Press" (Motorcycles column in *Motoring* section) Saturday prior to run.
You don't need a BSA to come on a run.
Should the run be cancelled for any reason, it will be held the following Sunday.
The run destination may be changed at the start if weather conditions are not suitable or circumstances change.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Held on the second Monday of each month at 7pm at Matches Sports Bar, Papanui Club, Sawyers Arms Road, Christchurch
Committee members & phone numbers listed inside front cover



Ken's Triumph T150 makeover won Best Custom at the Show. Tasty.



Mint BSA Spitfire and BSA Goldstar, both from Ritchie's stable.

C A E S
CANTERBURY AUTO ELECTRIC SERVICE Ltd

PAUL BOLLAND

email paul.bolland@caesltd.com
www.caesltd.com

159-161 Waterloo Rd
Hornby, P.O.Box 31-055
Christchurch, 8444.

Ph. +64 +3 3669600
Fax. +64 +3 3655219
Mob. 027 227 6082

0800 CAESLTD
0800 223758

WIPERS
Ph. (643) 366 9600
Christchurch, New Zealand

0508 WIPERS
0508 947377

AFFORDABLE TYRES

Penzoil

**New and Used Tyres all sizes - 4 x 4 for all Cars and Trucks
4 x 4 Motor Bike Tyres**

**Tyre Fitting - Puncture Repairs - Wheel Balancing
Mag Wheels - Alloy Wheels**

**AFFORDABLE TYRES
82 MOWBRAY STREET
Phone (03) 365 4040**

From the Editor

While compiling this newsletter, I realised the next issue will be in early January 2018. That means we should be saying 'Season's Greetings' here, but crikey, let's just say have a great summer riding your bikes!

The British Bike Show, held on 26-27 August, was again a credit to the organisers who work hard to make the event happen. Special thanks too to all the club members and other owners who made their machines available for display. Let's hope this wasn't the final show.

As you'll read on page 6, the 23rd BSA National Rally will be held at Blue Skies, Kaiapoi on Friday 16 Feb to Sunday 18 Feb 2018. As soon as entry forms are finalised they'll be made available on the club website or posted out as required. We'll keep you informed.

Welcome to new club members Red Miller, Sean Green, Craig Spittal and Char Macpherson. Good to have you on board.

Thanks to contributors for this issue: Bruce C, Thomas B and Jens C.

Also, thanks go to Mark L, Paul B, Peter B, Vic D, Max G, Jim N, Herb H and Ritchie H for displaying their bikes at the MacLeans Island Swap Meet & Display on the 7 & 8th Oct, and generally making it happen.

The club magazine can be downloaded from a link on the Home page on the club website - www.canterburybsaoc.org.nz
See 'Here is the latest magazine, and the previous magazine'.

Regards, John

Please note:

Summer times now apply to our monthly runs
Meet at the Bush Inn car park 10.00 am for a 10.30 am departure
check the Press or the Website;
www.canterburybsaoc.org.nz



23rd BSA National Rally 2018

Friday 16 Feb to Sunday 18 Feb 2018

At Blue Skies Centre

12 Williams Street, Kaiapoi

(20 mins north of central Christchurch)

**This excellent venue has been booked and as further details come to hand our website will be updated and you will be contacted by email.
Hope you can join us for the rally.**



181 Wairiri Road
Glentunnel

Ph: 03 318 7924

Txt: 021 0881 5414

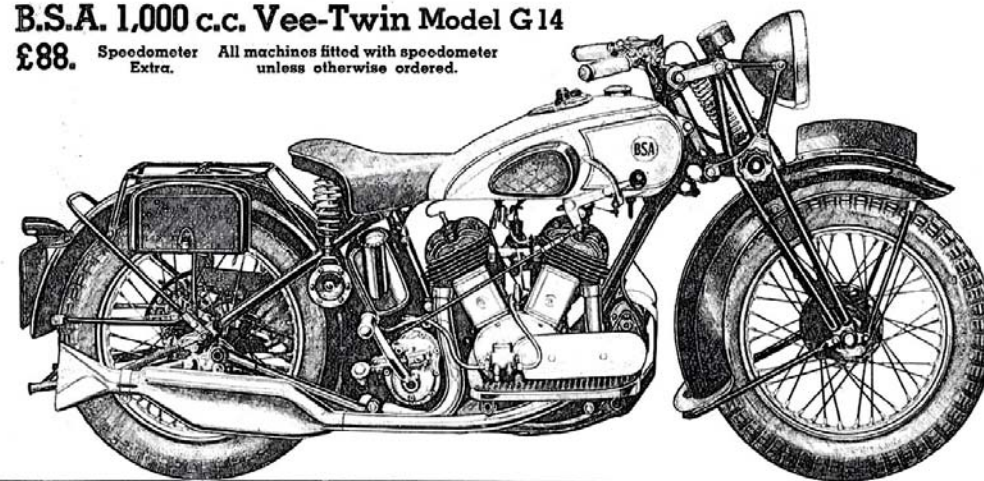
Email: pitlanemotorcycles@xtra.co.nz

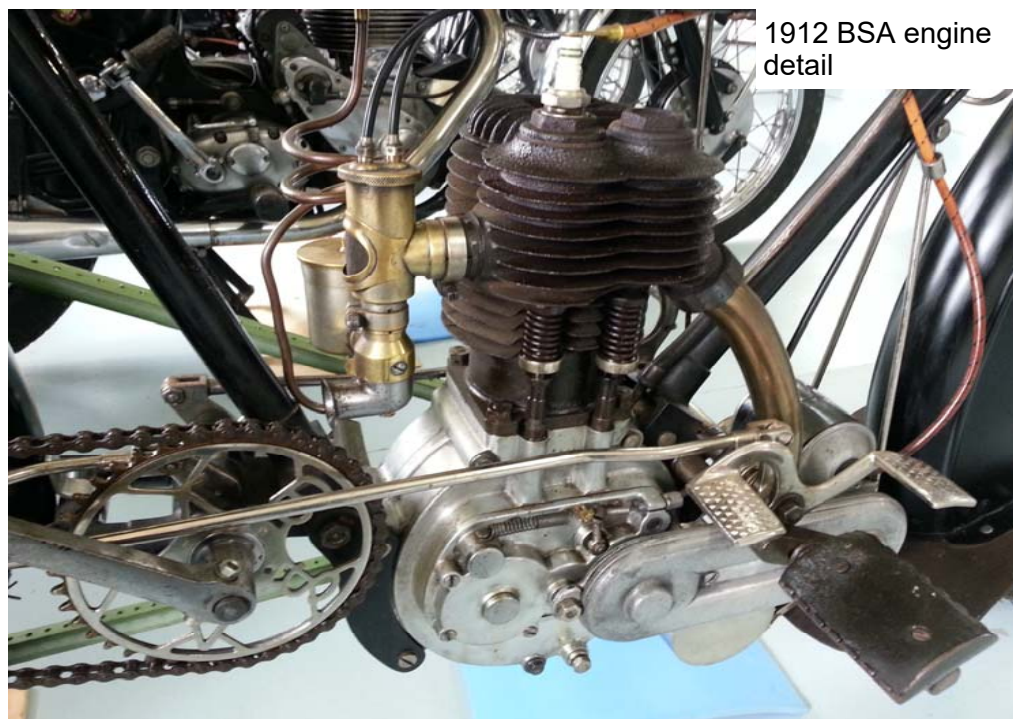
Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 9am – 3pm

**FOR ALL YOUR MOTORCYCLE TYRES AND
ROLLING CHASSIS NEEDS. FREE FREIGHT
AVAILABLE C/A.**

B.S.A. 1,000 c.c. Vee-Twin Model G14

£88. Speedometer Extra. All machines fitted with speedometer unless otherwise ordered.





1912 BSA engine detail



Best 2-Stroke in Show.
Kim's Scott Squirrel



British Bike Show, 25-27 Aug 2017

Woolston Club

This was touted as the final show but let's hope it wasn't, after the organisers agreed to meet up again in a year's time to see whether there's an appetite for another show in 2019. It certainly gets a bit harder to organise each time, with an increasing number of bike owners not riding and requiring their machines to be delivered to the venue. I must say though that our club members all managed to get their own bikes to and from the show. A huge thank you to all of you who displayed a bike (or multiple bikes in several cases) (Sean, Max, Ritchie, Jim, Quintin, Peter, Jens, Mark, Brett, Ant and Iain). It doesn't happen without your help. I'd also like to give a special mention to Ant, who seemed to be everywhere over the weekend, Paul and Ritchie, who also stepped in as a judge at short notice.

Our BSA Club featured rather well in the prizegiving on the Sunday afternoon, before the show wound up. Best BSA went to Sean for the magnificent 1929 Sloper. Max would be equally proud of that one. Oldest Bike went to Quintin for the immaculate 1912 BSA 500 single. Kim got the Best 2-Stroke award for his stand-out Scott Squirrel and Ken cornered the Best Custom award for the excellent Trident he's turned out for Mark (formerly Ant's bike). In a nod to bright red paintwork, I picked up the Organisers' Choice for the BSA A75. Well done guys.





Sean and his 1929 Sloper 500.
Best BSA in the Show. Superb



While the majority of the components on the bike are handmade, it is the “off-the-shelf” parts that have enabled Walksler to determine an approximate date of 1916 for the Traub. Equipped as it is with a Schebler carburetor, a Bosch magneto, a Troxel Jumbo seat and period wheel rims, the bike’s creator left some concrete clues behind as to the age of the machine.

The rest of the bike is unique. For example, a close inspection of the rear brake reveals a dual-acting system with a single cam responsible for pushing an internal set of expanding shoes, while pulling an external set of contracting shoes. As far as Dale knows, this single-cam/twin-brake system has never been used on any other American motorcycle.

Stepping around the left side of the bike, the careful observer will notice two clutch levers. There is a conventional foot-operated mechanism, and also a hand lever that sits alongside the fuel tank on the left-hand side. The lever gate for the shifter is also unique, operating what could have been the first three-speed gearbox on an American motorcycle. Even more, the tranny also features two separate neutral positions, which are marked on the shift mechanism with a zero. These are found between first and second gear, and between second and third gear.

Power is provided by a beautifully crafted 78ci V-twin engine with a 4in stroke and a 3 7/16in bore, yielding an engine capacity of 1,278cc, which was large for the time. The majority of big displacement motorcycle engines from the Traub’s era were around 1,000cc (61ci). Using a side-valve arrangement, the top of the cylinders feature a gas primer valve, although Dale notes this is not really an unusual feature. What is unusual, however, is the adjustable crankcase breather and the engine fasteners, which are unique to the Traub and whoever built it.



Found in 1968, the Traub was bought in 1972 by Bud Ekins, famous as Steve McQueen's stuntman. Ekins later sold the Traub to collector Richard Morris, who then sold it to Walksler in the mid-1990s. The Traub is now one of the "crown jewels" in Walksler's collection of 240 classic American motorcycles. And believe it or not, it actually gets ridden on a fairly regular basis: Dale has even had the engine apart to cure a knocking noise that turned out to be a worn out connecting rod bushing.

Ask him about the components inside the engine, and he'll tell you with great enthusiasm that "everything inside the engine is just magnificent. The pistons are handmade, and they have gap-less cast iron rings. The engineering and machining are simply years ahead of their time." During the reassembly process, the only parts Dale had to fabricate were the base gaskets. The bike doesn't use any other gasket anywhere in the engine, as it is so perfectly machined. This is one significant indicator that this was not a mass-production machine.



Disclaimer

The Canterbury BSA Owners' Club Inc. and its Officers will not accept any responsibility for any accident, damage or loss incurred by any persons on any Club organised event or ride. We advise that all members, riders, passengers and people attending any Club organised outing or event must obey the road rules at all times and ride with the utmost care and attention, riding to the conditions at the time. Motorcycles should be registered for NZ and have a current WOF label. Insurance is the responsibility of the Owner. We advise that all members hold their own insurance.



ALAN BLAND

Phone 03 342 4134

Importers and Distributors of British Motorcycle Parts,
Dunlop Tyres, Morris Oils, Amal Carbs and Parts,
Tri Spark Ignitions, Agents for Andover Norton

189 Ryans Road, Yaldhurst • blands@xtra.co.nz

Dunlop TT100 and K70 tyres
Always in stock





Jim's BSA Starfire 250. Never a common machine in NZ. Even less so now.



Quintin's 1912 BSA. Oldest bike in Show.

Traub Motorcycle

Found hidden in a bricked-up wall in a Chicago suburb 40 years ago, the 1916 Traub motorcycle is still a mystery today.

Pulled from its dark, secretive hiding place of 50 years, this Traub is the only example ever found. Since its discovery, the Traub has provoked more questions than it has provided answers. But one thing is for sure; this is a unique, one-of-a-kind classic American motorcycle. And with all attempts to reveal its true identity leading only to frustrating dead ends, at this time we have to be content with the hard facts that have been collected by its current owner, Dale Walksler.

As the man who owns the world famous [Wheels Through Time classic motorcycle museum in Maggie Valley, N.C.](#), Walksler has been riding, working on and collecting rare and classic American motorcycles for nearly 40 years. And in all his years around American classics, he has never seen anything quite like the Traub.



But as I have explained, in order to meet the BSO, oil companies are relying on ethanol-blended petrol, rather than biodiesel, which – annoyingly – is readily compatible with diesel engines of any age. To sell enough, they'll have to blend more than a mere 3% by the time the mandate reaches its zenith in 2012. Hence we have a dilemma, given half the fleet are not compatible with blends above that.

Be vigilant

In its submission on the Biofuel Bill, the AA said “it is unacceptable for the Government to potentially compromise the operability of the national vehicle fleet in this way, and to risk imposing such high repair costs on motorists.”

Mike Noon, AA's General Manager of Motoring affairs, says the solution is quite simple. “One of our minimum conditions for the introduction of biofuels was that consumers have a choice between biofuel blends and mineral fuels. We want oil companies to be required to supply an unblended fuel for incompatible vehicles.”

Under the original target of 3.4%, the oil companies would have had to blend ethanol in all petrol grades – probably at the maximum 10% – just to meet the target. It is hoped now, under the reduced 2.5% mandate, that they will keep one grade unblended for incompatible vehicles. Since the bulk of petrol sales are 91 octane, we probably should expect it to be retailed up to E10, in order to maximise biofuel sales, leaving 95 or 98 octane for us enthusiasts.

Jack Hindess, President of the NZ Federation of Motoring Clubs says “classic car owners have to be vigilant regarding the blends of fuels they use, and pressure oil companies to continue to make neat petrol available nationwide for use by heritage vehicles.”

- This article originally appeared in the August 2008 issue of NZ Classic Car

Thanks to Mark Stockdale, Phil Ryan and Glen Colvin for their valuable assistance compiling this article. JP#



Chris Hay

New Zealand Business Manager

DDI: +64 3 423 9731

Mobile: +64 21 2882 414

Office: +64 3 376 4028

Fax: +64 3 376 4029

Email: chris@aerofast.co.nz

Head Office

2 Shivas Place, Bromley,
Christchurch 8062, New Zealand
PO Box 19902, Christchurch 8241, NZ

Website: www.aerofast.co.nz

Barry Varcoe
Mob: 0274 33 22 52
barry@britasafety.co.nz

Ph: 03 344 2256
591 Halswell Junction Rd
PO Box 16 864
Christchurch 8441
New Zealand

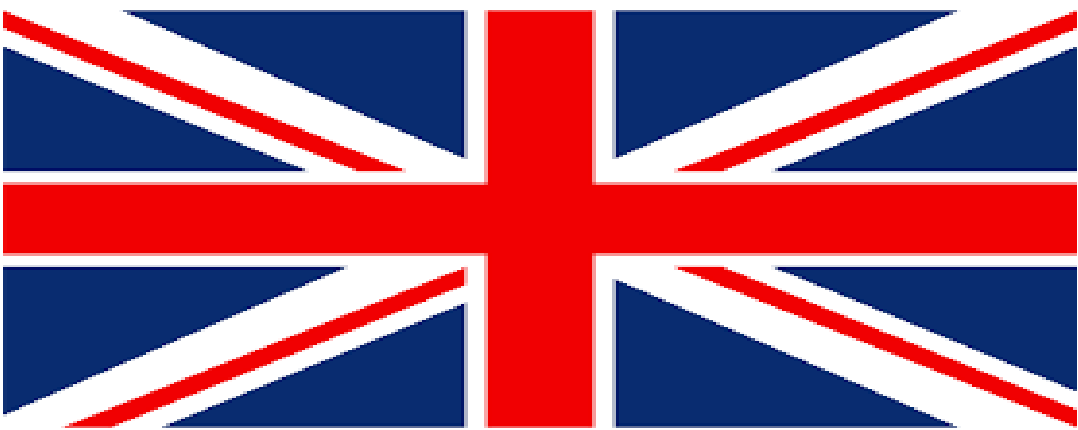
www.britasafety.com

**POLE ELECTROPLATERS
&
PAINT STRIPPING LTD**

**INDUSTRIAL HARD CHROME & DECORATIVE CHROME
ELECTROLESS NICKEL**

JASON RAWIRI

PH/FAX 03 366-0183 80 MOWBRAY STREET
PO BOX 20142 CHRISTCHURCH
EMAIL POLE_ELECT@XTRA.CO.NZ



2017 ALL BRITISH DAY

The 2017 Canterbury All British Day will be held on **Sunday 29th October**.

The start point will be our Vintage Car Club grounds at McLeans Island, where vehicles will need to assemble between 9.30 and 10.30 am. Soon after 10.30 all vehicles will depart on a scenic run which will take participants to a country domain.

A mix of long and medium runs will be provided to cater for everyone.

The entry fee will be \$10.00 per vehicle, with all proceeds once again going to the Van Asch Deaf Education Centre.

Bring a picnic lunch, or food may be purchased along the route.

The event is open to British vehicles of all ages (veteran to modern) and all types - mopeds, motorcycles, cars and trucks.

IF IT'S BRITISH AND CAN BE MADE ROADWORTHY, PLAN TO BRING IT!

Organiser: Colin Hey, Phone 359-8737



like E3, the higher the risk of phase separation when it is added to a tank contaminated by water. If that occurs, straight water can be drawn into the engine, causing a 'no start' situation."

In two-stroke engines, the potential for damage is even greater, as any water introduced by ethanol will cause the essential lubricating oil in the air/fuel mix to separate before it reaches the engine components.

EECA also recommends that ethanol blends not be stored for long periods, making it even less compatible with classic cars, which tend to go weeks if not months between fills.

Gull concedes that its Force 10 is "better suited to newer vehicles", while Mobil cautions owners of pre-1986 (i.e. carb-fed) cars to consult the vehicle manufacture before using an ethanol blend.

To help you find out, the Motor Industry Association have compiled a list of NZ-new cars' suitability for ethanol, published on the AA website. Not all older cars are incompatible however, but then again, not all late model cars are suitable either. For example, Nissan won't endorse any ethanol blend in models built before 2004, whereas Mercedes-Benz say E10 can be used in all models built after 1985.

Now I don't know about you, but if multi-billion-dollar oil companies and auto manufacturers, with all the research and development expertise in the world, warn me not to put a certain fuel in the tank of my old car – I'm gonna listen!

Jack Biddle says "it's about minimising risk. Ethanol could corrode the fuel lines and carburettor body in older cars, which were never designed with biofuels in mind. Ethanol's affinity to water is further exacerbated by older cars which have the potential to absorb or generate moisture because they don't have sealed fuel filler caps and plastic tanks like modern cars."

Such damage could cost \$800 to repair, although there is no guarantee that replacement components will be ethanol-compatible either. Oh, and by the way – neither the oil companies nor Government are liable for fuel system failures resulting from biofuel use.

from Brazilian sugarcane.

All biofuels have a slightly lower energy content than mineral fuels, particularly ethanol, which is 30% less efficient. So, at a 10% blend, that equals a 3% reduction in performance, meaning you'll consume slightly more to travel the same distance. At least that's the theory – a test by the AA using the same car on an identical route produced no discernible difference between Gull's 'Force 10' and a conventional 98 grade.

Despite the lower energy content of biofuels, there are performance benefits – biodiesel improves lubrication while ethanol boosts octane ratings. That's why, when Gull moved to sell E10, it did away with 95 octane and replaced it with 98 octane Force 10. At a 10 percent ethanol blend in the old 95 mineral fuel, it boosted octane by nearly 3 points without having to import a special high-octane fuel like BP and Mobil do.

Compatibility with your vehicle

So what do all these figures signify? E3, E10, 2.5%? What does any of this mean for classic car or 'bike owners? What you really want to know is, 'can I use this stuff in my classic?'. Well, the short answer is, no.

According to AA Technical Advice Manager Jack Biddle, vehicles fitted with carburettors are "highly unlikely to be able to use E3 or E10." That's an estimated 378,400 incompatible cars, or 14% of the fleet.

As for the rest, a Government commissioned study by Transport Engineering & Research NZ suggests that up to half the fleet (over one million cars) are not compatible with ethanol blends above 3%. This is largely because Japanese manufacturers won't endorse the use of blends above E3 in their domestic models – which arrive here as used-imports.

At a 10% blend (E10), potentially 1.7 million vehicles are at risk, not including recreational boats or planes, which even the Energy Efficiency & Conservation Authority advises not to use ethanol blends. That's because ethanol is anhydrous, meaning it can separate from the fuel if it's tainted with water.

According to Jack Biddle, "the lower the percentage of ethanol in the fuel,

Petrol in New Zealand

Recently, I was discussing the problem of trying to coax a classic bike into life with stale fuel in the tank with my friendly WOF tester, and during the conversation he mentioned that most of our petrol now contains a percentage of ethanol (as high as 15% maybe). This came as a surprise to me because I'd certainly not been aware of anything in the media or seen any advertising by the fuel companies. Nor had I experienced any issues with tank lining chemicals, fuel hoses or other rubber seals as might be expected. Still, this needed to be explored a bit, so I did a quick Google search (as you do) and decided that either the fuel companies were keeping very quiet or I'd have to ask some folk in the industry.

I usually fill the tanks at Challenge, dating back to the days when their petrol came from a refinery in Singapore and was generally acknowledged to be a better product than that of their competitors. That is no longer the case but old loyalties die hard and also, they hold the SuperGold card fuel discount franchise! So, I contacted Glen Colvin (Challenge Fuel SI Territory Manager) who kindly passed my query on to Phil Ryan (Farmlands Fuel National Commercial Manager). Phil responded:

'91 in New Zealand is all the same stuff, no matter what station you go to. They all have to meet minimum octane requirements for obvious reasons. It is pretty much just straight up petrol. Where it differs is 95/98. Gull for example uses ethanol to boost the octane of there 98, which is a biofuel but does not work with every engine. Also, it doesn't have the same energy in it as standard petrol, resulting in less fuel economy compared to other fuels. BP on the other hand has 98 which is a more refined version of 91 (to put it simply) and it has a few additives such as toluene, and others (not exactly sure). Most people prefer BP 98 for higher performance cars, but BP fuel comes at a premium compared to other places such as Gull.'

Phil also referred me to an article by Mark Stockdale (AA PetrolWatch Spokesperson) in the Winter 2012 AA Directions magazine and another article in Wheel Torque (Issue 2, October 2008), the newsletter of The Federation of Motoring Clubs (FOMC).

I subsequently contacted Mark, who responded with:

‘Hi John. I can confirm that no petrol sold in the South Island contains ethanol. In fact the article you refer to was originally published 5 years ago in the Winter 2012 AA Directions magazine (the date on the website is wrong due to a computer bug). So since then Mobil have stopped selling ethanol-blends, leaving only Gull (who don’t operate in the SI). You are right to be suspicious of your mechanics advice – legally the maximum amount of ethanol that can be blended is 10%, and incidentally Gull only sell it in their 98 grade, but that doesn’t affect you unless your BSAs travel to the NI – but you are right to be wary of ethanol blends in classic vehicles; the fuel systems in older vehicles are not compatible with ethanol.

To that end, here is a link to an article I also prepared for the Federation of Motoring Clubs back in 2008 when ethanol was first introduced: http://www.fomc.org.nz/wheeltorque208-low_res.pdf (FYI the biofuel mandate referred to was repealed so the concerns never materialised but that doesn’t stop Gull selling it voluntarily).’

So there you have it. Had the Biofuels Sales Obligation Bill come into effect back in 2008, life would have been much tougher for classic car and bike owners. It’s worth reprinting Mark’s original article on the subject:

Biofuels and classic vehicles

BY MARK STOCKDALE, FOMC SECRETARY

So, what’s this fuss about biofuels that you’ve heard about? What are they? What difference do they make? Should you even care?

Well, yes you should – because they could affect the performance of your pride and joy. Let me explain why.

You may be aware that the Government recently passed a Bill requiring oil companies to sell a percentage of retail fuels as renewable, or bio-fuels. The so-called Biofuels Sales Obligation means all oil companies –

BP, Caltex, Gull, Mobil and Shell – have no choice but to comply. Although the sales target itself is small, it could lead them to blend a percentage of biofuels in all petrol you buy.

The Biofuels Sales Obligation

When the Bill was originally drafted, it proposed a graduated sales target that would reach 3.4% by 2012, meaning that much of all fuel sold must be biofuel. But 3.4% doesn’t mean no more than 3.4% of the stuff you put in your tank will be renewable fuel. Far from it. For a start, most oil companies are initially concentrating on introducing ethanol into petrol. And since half of all fuel sold is diesel, that means twice as much will need to be sold in petrol just to meet the target.

There was little opposition to the Government’s plans – why would there be, when the idea of a clean, green, renewable fuel is the holy grail of transport? But many of the submitters expressed concerns about the level of the obligation, which in turn could lead to imports of less sustainable biofuels. Both of these matters were addressed in the final Bill, which, in addition to specifying strict sustainability standards, recommended a lower BSO starting at 0.5% in the first year, rising to 2.5% by 2012.

What are biofuels?

There are two types of biofuels:

- Bioethanol – blended with petrol. Mostly sourced from sugarcane and corn, can be derived from whey in NZ. Retail blends will range from 3% (E3) to 10% (E10);
- Biodiesel – blended with diesel. Most common feedstock is palm oil, but in NZ could again be sourced from a by-product of agriculture, namely tallow. Not permitted to be retailed in blends above 5% (B5).

New Zealand has plentiful feedstocks of tallow – almost enough to meet the BSO – although much of it is committed for export to China for soap manufacture. Alas, the poor performance of tallow-based biodiesel in cold temperatures is one reason why oil companies are devoting their energies to introducing bioethanol instead.

Although the BSO only came into effect in October, Gull has been selling a 10% ethanol blend at most of its 35¹⁵ North Island outlets for a year, supplied by Fonterra from whey. And in August Mobil commenced retailing both E3 (91) and E10 (98) blends at several Wellington stations, sourced