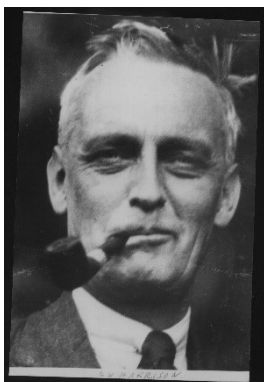


Horace Washington Harrison

An Australian Automobile Pioneer

Norm Darwin ©



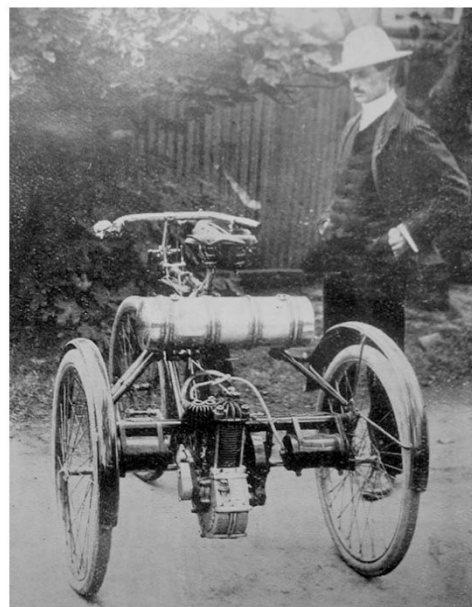
H W Harrison

Recording 50 years achievement in the automotive industry, Horace (Horrie) Harrison began his motoring career with Tarrant Motors,¹ then in 1905 joined the Vacuum Oil Company as the assistant to Chief Executive, Harry Comforth, he was within two years appointed the Victorian Manager.² This early period of automobile development had attracted the young athlete and cyclist and he soon took possession of an imported Ariel tricycle powered by a De Dion engine. Some confusion exists over the dates the trike was acquired. Horace in 1909 suggested he was one of Victoria's first motorists, pioneering the "petrol motor" and travelling "thousands" of miles on the Ariel.³

Some newspaper reports have suggested the trike was obtained in the 1896-1897 period however in 1921 he said he owned the "De Dion engine contraption in 1900-1901"⁴ The earlier date was perhaps related to the landing of an Ariel (formally Dunlop) trike in Melbourne in April 1897.⁵ Leon Mitchel suggests the Harrison trike image is of an Ariel from the period 1897-1898, making it one of the earliest imported vehicles.⁶

Horace Harrison was born in East Melbourne on 28 November 1878 to Ernst and Laura (nee Armstrong) Harrison, the eldest of three boys he attended a private school and was then privately tutored. Aged 14 he joined a grain company and at 18 formed his own farm and produce export business before joining Tarrant Motors. The time then spent in the oil business placed Horace in touch with many of the motoring pioneers and it was not surprising to read his contributions in *The Age* and *Leader* newspapers as their Motoring Editor. On the 5 January 1902 Horace married Violet Parker from Tasmania and the couple had three daughters, Dorothea, Adela and Agnes.⁷

In 1912 the editor of *The Australian Motorist* was killed in an accident and the proprietor's family approached Horace to take over the role as honorary editor. Within a short time, the position with Vacuum Oil was relinquished and Horace became both editor and managing director (1913).⁸ Horace was to become associated with a number of motoring organizations, Secretary of the Motor traders Association, later the Federal Council of Australian Motor Traders which formed to deal with motor problems which affected all of Australia.⁹ Other organizations were, National Roads Association, Victorian Chamber of Automotive Industries and Motor Omnibus Proprietors' Association.¹⁰ In consideration of Horace's work on the use of fuels for motor vehicles in Australia he was admitted in 1924 to the Institute of Automobile Engineers as an honorary member.¹¹



H W Harrison and trike c1900

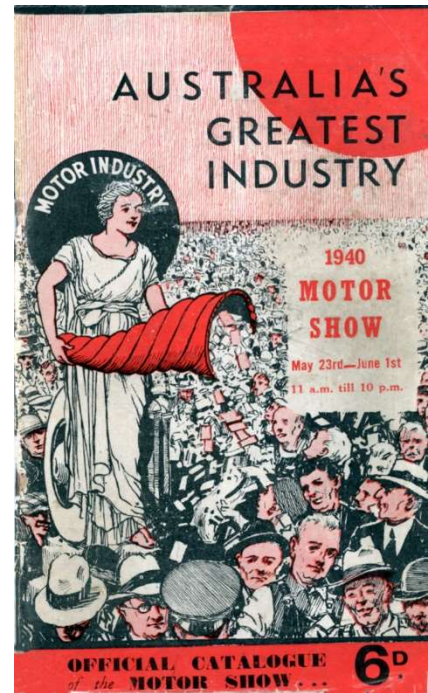
From 1914 under the auspices of the Good Roads Association of Victoria and the RACV, a quarterly magazine, The Motor World was published by The Australian Motorist and edited by Horace. The journal was short lived, ending on August 1918.

In 1912, together with Harry James, he organized a display of new motor vehicles for dealers under the RACV banner. An international motor show was then started for the chamber and RACV in 1925.¹² He continued to run the motor show for many years.

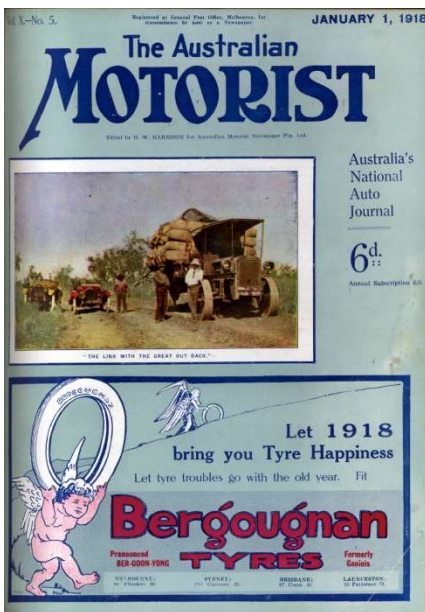
In 1927 the Herald newspaper recognized the show's paid tribute to the show's organizer; "Although the big enterprise was conducted by members of the Chapter of Automotive Industries it is well known that his was the guiding hand..... He is a man characterized by efficiencies and untiring energy in which geniality is by no means his least endowment."¹³

Under his authorship a number of separate publications were published by the chamber, these included *Transport: a survey of world's railway deficits and road traffic*, *Let's think Highways*, *20 Tons of Gold*, *Some strange things about transport*, *It costs less now*, *Little Journeys into the realms of Transport* and most inappropriately titled, *Nxxxxx in the Wood Pile!*

Horace Harrison passed away at Epworth Hospital after an illness of three weeks, at this time he held Victoria's oldest car license and he was still Managing Editor of *The Australian Motorist*, one of Australia's oldest automobile magazines, but sadly one that only lasted a further four years.



Melbourne Motor Show program 1940



The Australian Motorist Dec 1905- 56



The Motor World Mar 1914 - Aug 1918

Special thanks to Jane Dubsky (Harrison family) and Helen Stitt

An enigma

The Australian Motorist was first published in December 1905 and issues after 1912 all carry the words “Founded 1906” on the title page. It was reported as follows; “We have received a copy of the first issue of *The Australian Motorist* by Road and Sea, a 21-page monthly magazine.”¹⁴

However, issues sighted and dated from September 1917 carry a volume number commencing at XXX (30) indicating that volume 1 was in 1907. Every public library catalogue checked commences at Vol. 1 No 1 in September 1907 and ends July 1956.

How does the founding date and newspaper report reconcile with the volume numbers? A request to public libraries holding very early issues has drawn a blank due to lock downs, no one can look at the first issue to see if something with a different title pre-dated *The Australian Motorist*, although the newspaper report appears to rule this out. Unless I can find a private copy, I will have to wait.

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- ¹ Men behind the work, *The Age* (Melbourne), 3 May 1939, p17.
 - ² Obituary Mr. H. Harrison, *The Age*, 14 August 1952, p2.
 - ³ *The Australian Motorist*, 20 September 1909, p5.
 - ⁴ Harry Gordon, Who drove the first car in Australia? *The Australian Motorist*, April 1921, p309.
 - ⁵ The first motor tricycle landed in Australia, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 march 1898, p6.
 - ⁶ Leon Mitchel, Early tricycles, *Serpolette's Tricycle*, <http://earlymotor.com/serpolettes-tricycle/> December 2012.
 - ⁷ Ancestry tree developed by granddaughter J Dubsy.
 - ⁸ Harrison, Horace Washington, *Who's Who in Australia*, 1927, p675; A Record of Achievement, *Automotive Industry News*, 1940, p30.
 - ⁹ Show Organiser, *Herald* (Melbourne), 16 May 1927, p12.
 - ¹⁰ A Record of Achievement, *Automotive Industry News*, 1940, p30.
 - ¹¹ Men behind the work, p17.
 - ¹² Susan Priestley, *The Crown of the Road*, RACV 1983, p46.
 - ¹³ Show Organiser, p12.
 - ¹⁴ The Australian Motorist, *The Maitland Daily Mercury*, 20 December 1905, p7.