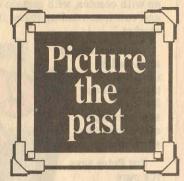
## Pedal-pushing heroes of post-war Geelong



**EELONG** Amateur Cycling Club's \_strong membership in the postwar years reflected the important role the humble bike played in daily

According to veteran cyclist Jack Griffin pictured fourth from right in this 1946 photograph), cycling champions were household names and youngsters dreamt of emulating the feats of Russell Mockridge or Eddie Smith.

"When they knocked off work at Ford's, hundreds of riders would be racing each other into Geelong," Jack said.

"Everyone rode bikes. Petrol was scarce because of rationing and cars were too

expensive anyway."

Bicycle retail and repair shops were more common than car yards today and Jack recalls almost a dozen in the central city area. Bike sellers included Elsworthy's, Bernie Diamond, Malvern Star, Fred Foster, Mick Hede, Homecraft Cycles, Gene Cowley, Athol Eagle, Gerald Tate, George De Grandi and Bill Pilgrim.

Bill Hehir of Belair Cycles and Radford Star were prominent retailers in Geelong

Jack said the picture was taken in



quarters. In the background is the Elephant and Castle Hotel, which has changed little over the decades.

About half the club's 40-odd members were about to set off on a weekly race down the Bellarine Peninsula.

Two weeks later, a new member entered his first race, astonishing old-timers with his speed, strength and endurance.

The rookie cyclist was the legendary Russell Mockridge - considered the world's best until tragically killed in a road McKillop St, outside the club's head-race in 1958. Although Mockridge won his

first race with the club — starting off the generous mark of 12 minutes - his time was unrecorded.

Usually the timekeeper and club president Alex McPherson would follow the backmarkers by car until three-quarters of the race was run, then drive around the field to be back at the finishing point to time the placegetters.

"By the time the timekeeper got back, Mockridge was well and truly finished," Tack said.

"His co-marker Tom Ivory realised

Mockridge was holding back. Tom told him he was not compelled to stay with him, so Mockridge said 'thank you' and off he

"He would have won by a greater margin if he hadn't been concerned about doing the right thing."

Jack regarded Mockridge and the recently-deceased Sir Hubert Opperman as cycling freaks.

"Blokes like Opperman and Mockridge usually come along only once in a lifetime."

Other great Australian cyclists of the era

included Billy Guyatt and Jack Hoobi well as Alf Strom and Roger Arnold were Australian cycling's most success ambassadors in the late 1940s, domina six-day events in Europe.

Now 72, and still racing at veteran le Jack first competed at Wangaratta in 1

The same year he rode from Wangar to Melbourne - 233 kilometres - in hours, 55 minutes. "Including stops," Tack.

Now, he's about to join the cyc promotion circuit. And what a circuit

With another ex-serviceman, Doughty from Wollongong, Jack head on July 3 on his third ride aro Australia.

The ride has been sponsored by Department of Veterans Affairs w wants Jack and Eric to spread the mes among older Australians that it's "N Too Late".

"We'll be telling people that although they're 75 or 80 the best years of their l could still be ahead.

"That instead of sitting around in G waiting room, they should get out exercise."

After leaving the Geelong-Hawth football match at Kardinia Park, Jack Eric will ride anti-clockwise around country, aiming at covering about 1000 a week, arriving home in mid-October

In the meantime, lack urges any for athletes or cyclists who feel they need e exercise to consider cycling.

"It doesn't put as much strain on joints as running, but it's a great car vascular activity," he said.

The Geelong Veteran Cycling ( stages a weekly race over a circui Paraparap.

- BERNIE SLATTI