

"JUST for the HECK of IT!"



How Miss Winifred Wells, a 22-year-old Australian Girl, Recently Made a 5,500 Miles Double Trans-Continental Motorcycle Journey on a 350 c.c. Royal Enfield "Bullet"

The heroine of an epic ride. Miss Wells, of Shenton Park, Western Australia, on the Royal Enfield which averaged 366 miles per day and 95 m.p.g. in a three-week's journey.

"I DID it just for the heck of it!" With this succinct reply, a petite Australian brunette answered a journalist who wanted to know what prompted her to undertake one of the most arduous and dangerous long-distance rides in the history of motorcycling.

This courageous, 5-ft. 5-in. girl is Miss Winifred Wells, 22-year-old daughter of a furniture manufacturer in Shenton Park, Western Australia, and the journey which she has recently accomplished, a solo ride from Perth to Sydney and back—5,500 miles—in 21 days has been acclaimed as one of the greatest feats in the annals of Australian motorcycling.

The prodigious distance covered, and the short time taken, will impress motorcyclists everywhere, but only those who have had first-hand experience of the exacting conditions prevailing over much of Miss Wells's route will be able fully to appreciate the true merit of this remarkable display of pluck and determination.

To brave, *alone*, the barren, sandy, waterless wastes of the Nullarbor Plains, a sparsely inhabited desert over 1,000 miles wide, is an undertaking that, in itself, would tax the huskiest male and, having done it once, few would care to repeat the dose; yet Winifred Wells made the crossing twice in three weeks.

Off On Boxing Day

Her journey began last Boxing Day, when she set out from Perth at noon, having loaded her privately owned 350 c.c. Royal Enfield "Bullet" with provisions and spare clothing in two pannier bags, a carrier-borne suitcase and a knapsack. In her pocket were £25 which was all that she had allowed herself for the three weeks' holiday she was taking from her job in her father's factory. For the journey she wore riding boots, fawn breeches, a blue sweater, leather jacket and an old tweed cap. It being high summer in Australia, there was no need for waterproofs—on the contrary, most of the journey was done under conditions of scorching heat.

Her first day's run took her to the small town of Southern Cross and on the following morning she began the most gruelling part of her itinerary, the crossing of the Nullarbor Plains. The township of Norseman was reached safely on the evening of the 27th, but the following night found her

MISS WELLS'S ITINERARY

| 1950 | |
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| December 26 | : Left Perth at noon, spent night at Southern Cross. |
| December 27 | : Reached Norseman. |
| December 28 | : Rode 298 miles and camped in bush. |
| December 29 | : Reached Eucla. |
| December 30 | : Reached Ceduna. |
| December 31 | : Reached Port Augusta. |
| 1951 | |
| January 1 | : Reached Adelaide 1.30 p.m. Departed for Melbourne same afternoon. |
| January 2 | : Reached Melbourne. |
| January 3 | : Rested. |
| January 4 | : Left for Sydney. |
| January 5 | : Reached Sydney. |
| January 6 | : Rested. |
| January 7 | : Left Sydney. |
| January 8 | : Arrived Melbourne 8 a.m. |
| January 9 | : Rested. |
| January 10 | : Left Melbourne, 7 a.m., arrived Adelaide 7 p.m. |
| January 11 | : Left Adelaide 1.30 p.m. for Port Augusta. |
| January 12 | : Reached Ceduna. |
| January 13 | : Reached Eucla. |
| January 14 | : Reached Norseman. |
| January 15 | : Reached Southern Cross. |
| January 16 | : Reached Perth 1 p.m. |

out in the blue with human habitation nowhere nearer than at least a hundred miles. She had intended to reach Eucla, but a skid on some loose gravel 27 miles outside Coolgardie had shaken her somewhat and she did not feel fit enough to press on. "So," she explained later, "I used my bike, groundsheet and blanket to rig a shelter in the bush. It was the loneliest hole you ever saw, but I wasn't scared."

On New Year's Day, she rode into Adelaide to be given a great welcome by motorcycling enthusiasts there, led by the Royal Enfield distributor, Mr. George Bolton, and his subsequent letter to Redditch well describes the next stage of the trek on to Sydney and, after only one day's rest, back again to Adelaide.

"After having covered 1,731 miles across arduous desert country in blazing heat, Miss Wells left Adelaide at 5 p.m. for Melbourne and thence on to Sydney, where she arrived at 6.15 p.m. on January 5. She spent a day there seeing the sights and began the return trip on January 7, leaving at 9.30 a.m. and arriving back in Adelaide on January 10,

having had a day's rest in Melbourne. She covered the distance from Melbourne to Adelaide, 462 miles, between 6.30 a.m. and 7.20 p.m. She left us at 3 p.m. on the 11th, carrying our best wishes and prayers that she would get through safely and achieve her desire to complete the journey within 21 days. Our hopes are high that this gallant little soul will win out. When she left Adelaide the temperature was 104.9 degrees and, as she travelled north, so the

thermometer rose, but she succeeded in reaching Port Augusta by 8 p.m., having covered 204 miles.

"On January 12, we received a telegram stating that she had left Port Augusta at 6 a.m. and had arrived safely at Ceduna, a distance of 323 miles due west, at 4 p.m. We await news of further progress.

"The roads through which she is now travelling are merely bush tracks through waterless, sandy wasteland and her very life depends upon her machine.

"I have taken the precaution of phoning the police at Port Augusta, asking them to advise other police along this lonely track to look out for her in case of emergencies.

"Winifred is a very gallant little lady of a most retiring and calm disposition. She takes everything in her stride and is putting up an endurance record never before accomplished by a girl rider in Australia, and one that few males would care to attempt."

The route across Australia traced by Miss Wells, covering an enormous mileage in a remarkably short space of time. Inset is shown the British Isles to give an impression of the comparative distances.

A few days after the receipt of Mr. Bolton's letter, the Royal Enfield factory heard from their Australian representative, Mr. M. L. B. Clarkson, of Sydney, that this great ride had, in fact been completed on schedule. He forwarded to Redditch a copy of a telegram he had received, on January 16, from Carlyle and Co., Ltd., the Perth dealers from whom Miss Wells had bought her machine. It reads:—

"Winifred Wells arrived back in Perth 1 p.m. to-day. Congratulated by Lord Mayor on completing meritorious ride, coast to coast and back, in 21 days. She is fit and well. Royal Enfield 'Bullet' came through without missing a beat, engine running like a watch . . . Carlyle."

