

CAPE RIDER WINS 2014 DURBAN-JOHANNESBURG CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE RALLY

Text by Roger Houghton and photographs by Ian Groat

Allan Cuninghame, of the Cape Vintage Motorcycle Club, riding a 1936 Velocette, won the 2014 Durban-Johannesburg classic motorcycle rally which was contested on a demanding, 800km route between Durban and Johannesburg on March 7-8.

He had a total error of 240 seconds at the 17 timed control points on the event which started in Hillcrest and finished at the Turffontein racecourse after an overnight stop in Newcastle.

Allan's father, Stewart, who has been a regular competitor in the DJ Rally for many years and competed in the 2013 event at the age of 92 decided to hang up his helmet for 2014 but was obviously very proud of his son's success.

This annual regularity trial is a commemoration of the annual road race for motorcycles held on public roads between Durban and Johannesburg between 1913 and 1936 when the authorities put a stop to it as being too dangerous. For this reason the competing motorcycles have to be 1936 or earlier models.

Second place, 71 seconds behind Cuninghame was a heroic Gavin Walton (1936 AJS), who had been seriously injured when a car collided with him while he was sitting on his motorcycle sheltering from the rain under a road bridge after the Pre-DJ Rally in February last year. His recovery has been nothing short of amazing.

Ralph Pitchford, who finished second last year on his 1926 Triumph P-Type 500, had to be satisfied with third place this year, with an error of 351 second. Ralph is best known as a very successful co-driver in the Dakar Rally. He again rode with his two brothers, Harold (1926 AJS A5 350) and David (1936 BSA B2 250). Harold finished ninth, but David had to retire with magneto trouble on the first day.

Kevin Robertson (1936 Velocette), who won the event for the sixth time last year when the route went from Johannesburg to Durban over three days, was fourth this time with 424 seconds error.

Riders who made up the remainder of the top 10 among the 65 finishers were: 5, Mike Ward (1935 Velocette), 456 sec.; 6, Kevin Walton (1931 BSA), 458 sec.; 7, Keith Kendall (1935 Velocette), 470 sec.; 8, Rikki Maizey (1936 Norton), 790 sec.; 9, Harold Pitchford (1936 BSA), 896 sec.; 10, Ron Thomsett (1933 BSA), 998 sec.

Interestingly 13 Velocettes entered this year's DJ Rally and 12 finished. Clive Lynn's MSS split its petrol tank halfway and he had to retire.

This year's rally again attracted a sprinkling of international riders including two South Africans who have made their names in global motor sport and now live in the United Kingdom.

They were Alastair Gibson, who was involved in Formula 1 racing for many years, and rode his father's 1936 BMW. He completed the route but was placed well down the rankings. The other motorsport personality, Brian Gush, who is not director of motorsport at Bentley, had mechanical problems with his 1931 BSA on the first day and was forced to retire, but borrowed an OK Supreme to ride on the Saturday.

This year's event, organised on behalf of the Vintage and Veteran Club of SA by Peter Hall, attracted 127 entries but 14 failed to start and 48 failed to finish, which meant just over half the starters qualified as finishers.

The high rate of attrition this year has been attributed in part to the comparatively high average speeds set for these old motorcycles which resulted in many mechanical breakdowns. Some riders also found there were unnecessary gimmicks in the route schedule which was tough on those competitors that do not take part in other regularity rallies during the year.

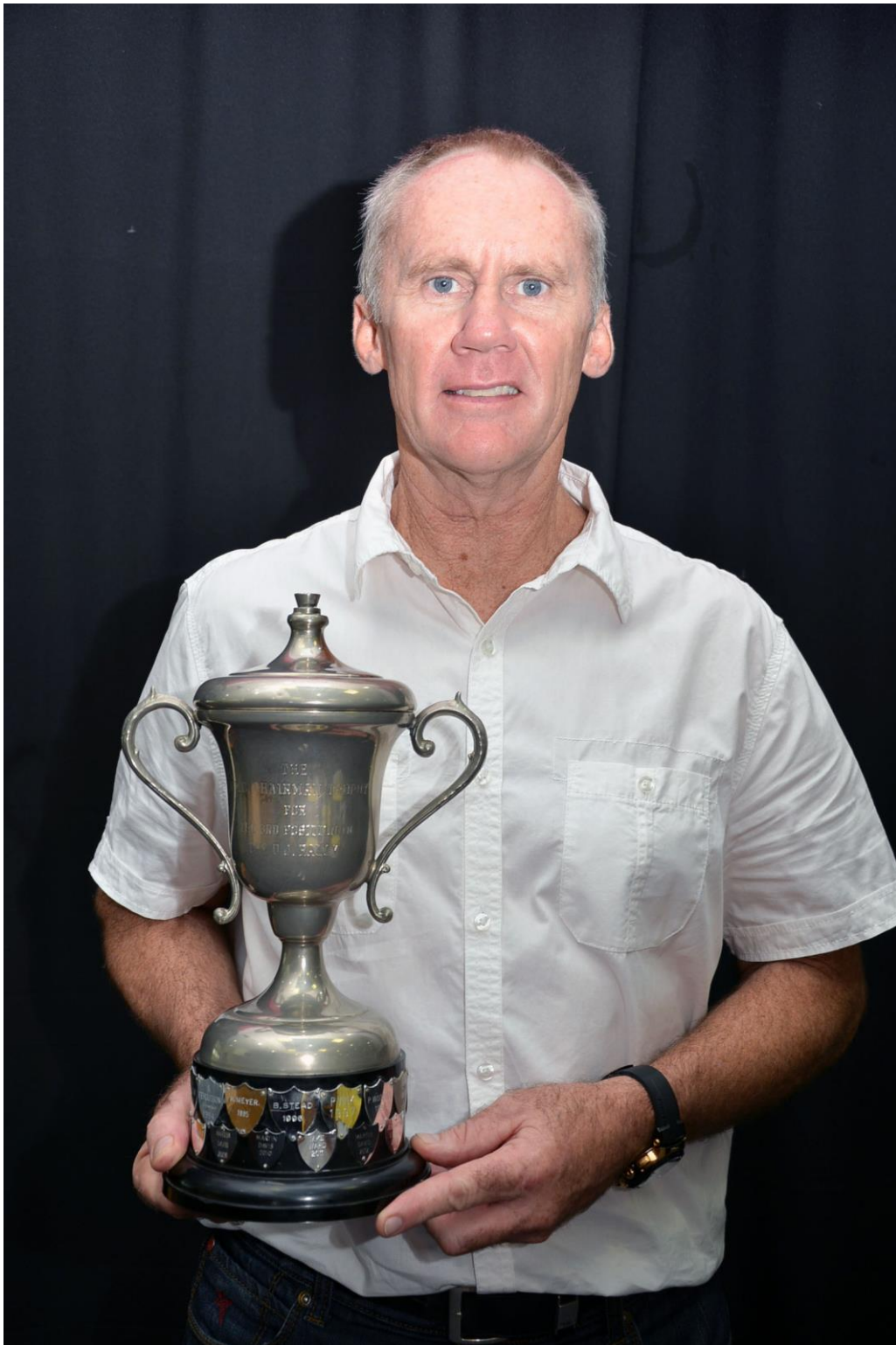
Photographs on the following pages.



This year's outright DJ Run winner was Allan Cuninghame riding a 1936 Norton.



Gavin Walton took home second place silverware on his 1936 AJS and was applauded by an appreciative audience at the prize giving considering he rode with a huge leg Brace all the way from Durban following a road accident last year.



Ralph Pitchford placed third in this year's DJ riding a 1926 Triumph.



John Thornton, on a 1936 Velocette, was the first rider to reach the finish of the 2014 DJ Rally at the Turffontein racecourse. He said the roads used for the ride up from Durban were in poor condition and tough on the riders of elderly motorcycles.



Kevin Walton (43), Ron Tomsett (45) and Gavin Walton (44), who is still unable to walk properly after being involved in a major accident last year, wait for the clock to tick away the seconds before checking in at the final control of the 2014 DJ Rally.



Des Burton suffered a big disappointment when he had to retire his 1936 Velocette with a serious puncture just a few kilometres short of the final control of the 2014 DJ Rally. However, he was awarded the cup for showing the Spirit of the DJ.