

GARTON'S

by Harry Dunn
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This is a true story, accurate down to the smallest detail, believe it or not

**The old house at Seven Williams Street
Stands quiet and sedate,
It's home to Susan Ruffin Lawyers now,
But it hasn't changed a lot
Since I rode through it, way back in Fifty-eight;
But, you can't ride through a house,
I just heard some doubter say:
Well, yes you bloody can, although it wasn't done to plan,
And now, five and fifty later, I recall that crazy ride,
As if it happened yester-day.**

**The house at Number Seven
Was occupied by folks named Garton,
Way back in Fifty-eight
They were middle-aged or elderly, I think,
Honest, true and straight,
The kind of folks that wouldn't spit
Or smoke, or fart in church,
And never touched a drink.**

**Back in Nineteen Fifty-eight,
When I was just sixteen,
Inverloch was not the epicentre
Of the entertainment scene,
Apart from Christmas hollies,
So lads like me bought motor-bikes,
That's how *we* got our small-town kicks
And our Mid-Fifties teenage jollies.**

**The Kenny Meeks, the Alan Clokes,
The Filsells and the Stewarts
And several other blokes;
We were well below the legal age,
Me and my young mates,**

**With old and noisy motor-bikes, all without exception
Entirely free of Number Plates
And that costly registration.**

**Around that time, a movie
The Wild One was its name,
Starring Marlon Brando
Enjoyed its hour of fame;
Mister Brando was The Wild One
On a Triumph motor-bike
And the girls all fell in love with him,
Tho' they seldom met his like.
So young lads around the world, even here in Inverloch
Tried to get the Brando look,
Because he was 'Mister Cool'
In the years before he stacked on weight,
Lost his hair, and played the fool.**

**I had my own crash-helmet,
An old skid-lid that didn't fit,
A pair of racing goggles
And a single leather mitt.
I wore tight black jeans with stovepipe legs
Around my skinny shanks
And a single leather boot
Worn same side as leather mitt;
When viewed from a fair distance,
I looked a bit like Marlon Brando, according to the books
The only thing I most surely didn't have -
Was his Hollywood good looks.**

**I rode an ageing Douglas,
A three-fifty cube flat twin,
Low-slung and rather heavy, solid as a rock,
But ugly as a mud brick fence,
Or a recent mortal sin,
And the low-slung flat-twin engine had a rather nasty knock.**

A friend of mine, named Stewart -

**Known to all as Jock,
Called 'round home, one day
And suggested we swap bikes,
For a run around the block.**

**Jock rode a nifty Jawa Twin
From the old Czechoslovakia,
With twin-coil and mag ignition
That made its spark-plugs even sparkier;
its frame was painted red, its tyres painted white
An oily smokey two-stroke,
Rather small and rather light,
With no baffles in the muffler,
It made a lot of noise:
Jock's bright red Jawa Twin
Was much envied by the boys.**

**We each took a passing look at each other's motor-bike
And Jock gave no instruction
On the matter of controls,
That's brakes and clutch and gears, throttle and the like,
Gear-lever on the lower deck;
And these were all the wrong way round,
On Jock Stewart's bright red Jawa
Unless you happened to be Czech.**

**So off I rode at break-neck speed
Like any normal rider, using his own whip
On some-one else's steed;
By the time I reached the place
Where High and Williams intersect
I was running out of gears and road
And trying to find brakes
Some retardation to effect.**

**Alas, in youthful panic,
I forgot which side was which
And the action sequence following
Was nothing short of manic;**

With both eyes now tightly closed
I just hung on tight and prayed
Shooting straight across that road,
Thank God there was no traffic;
Then across a narrow foot-bridge
Bursting through a garden gate,
Like a man on urgent mission,
And not prepared to wait,
Straight up the garden path, ripping through the roses,
And that Jawa, revving fast, was full of pep
We reached the point where path and building meet
And we struck the wooden step
With front wheel and flying feet
Throwing me, with legs and arms out-stretched
High into the air, six feet up at least,
But somehow still attached to handle-bars
On that raging, roaring beast.
We burst through Garton's closed front door
And headed down their hall-way,
Which had nice red carpet on the floor.

The noise was quite horrendous,
With the throttle jammed wide open
That tinny two-stroke motor,
Produced high-speed revolutions,
With sound-effects tremendous
In that narrowest of halls
With sparks and smoke and un-burned fuel
Bouncing off old Garton's walls.

The Gartons - they'd been dining,
It was lunch-time, I recall,
By the time I reached their dining-room,
By way of entrance hall,
There wasn't any sign of them,
No sign of life at all.
And when I jabbed the shiny button
That I thought would kill the motor
The Jawa's high-pitched horn

Added one more strident sound
To the racket from that rotor.
Only then, from somewhere out the back,
Where they'd escaped with native cunning
Did I hear an anguished scream
And the sound of people running.
The room was filled with oily smoke,
The motor now just idling,
The situation still critical, but stable,
I found my lost composure -
I saw two plates of food, half-eaten, on the table
Two dining-chairs were lying, abandoned on the floor
I decided to retreat, while I was thankfully still able
My work in here was clearly done
And I would push my luck no more.

I couldn't turn the Jawa 'round,
In that smoke-filled dining-room
So I wheeled it up the passage,
Backwards, in the gloom.
I closed the door behind me,
As gently as I could,
Noting as I passed, those tyre-marks in the wood,
Then down the garden path, out through the garden gate
Which wore a massive tyre-shaped bruise
Caused, perhaps, by some uninvited visitor of late,
And sticking to a rose-bush
Half-way down the path
Was a ripped-off piece of denim, quite a largish scrap
Torn, no doubt, from the stove-pipe jeans
Of some uncouth young bokie chap.

I rejoined the owner of that bike
He was waiting, was young Jock
When I arrived back home.
Jock asked me how I went, on my ride around the block,
I said I'd called at Garton's to show them my new bike
But apparently they were out the back
And didn't hear me knock !