

Speedway Fatality

RECORD HOLDER KILLED

Henry Rennie's Last Ride

The Cessnock Speedway, which during the short period it has been in existence, has gained an enviable reputation for safety and has won high encomiums from experts, was the scene of a tragical occurrence at the Club Carnival on Wednesday night, resulting in the death of a brilliant rider, H. Rennie, of Muswellbrook, who on the previous Saturday night established the track record, standing start, of 2.18 for two miles.

On Wednesday night Rennie's luck seemed to be out from the beginning. The star item on the programme was a special challenge match race, two miles, from a rolling start, between Rennie, the record holder (I.O.M. Douglas) and L. Melville, of Gunnsyah, winner of the Maitland £100 Derby (8 Harley). In the toss-up Rennie lost and Melville chose inside position.

When the two men came on to the mark they were loudly cheered. Mr. Cameron, the starter, addressing them, said, "Remember you're cobbers; win or lose, let the best man win". It being a rolling start it was necessary for the two competitors to ride a lap, and Mr. Cameron asked them to endeavor to be on even terms crossing the line at the completion of the preliminary lap, from which the rolling start counted.

Both men evidently were determined to endeavor to loyally observe those conditions, but Rennie's luck was still out, for at the actual start Melville, had the advantage, his back tyre being level with Rennie's front tyre. Melville got well in the lead and put up a remarkable performance, with Rennie in hot pursuit.

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Melville continued in the lead and in the last lap it was apparent that, but for accident, he was certain to win. Rennie, however, riding with dare-devil recklessness, went flat out, and rearing the turn into the straight, the crash came.

Rennie ran out wide, striking the fence with terrific force. His machine hurtled in the air, his head struck the fence, and he received fatal injuries. A panel of the fence was smashed and the machine completely wrecked.

The hospital ambulance car and members of the ambulance class were upon the scene immediately. The injured rider was placed in the car and taken to the hospital, but had passed away before the institution was reached. A couple more events of the Motor Handicap were run, and at 10 minutes past 10, when the men were on the mark to start in the third semi-final the megaphone steward announced, "The carnival has been declared off. Rennie's dead".

This announcement was made immediately a message was received from the hospital. It was a sorrowful crowd that wended its way out of the gates, and right throughout the town since there have been general expressions of regret at the sad occurrence and sympathy with the fine young sportsman's relatives. His father and other members of the family and other friends had come specially from Muswellbrook to see him ride. Very deep sympathy is felt for them.

As showing the great performance that was put up by both these young riders—Rennie was only 19—it may be pointed out that Rennie's track record, from a standing start, was 2.18. From a rolling start Melville on Wednesday night carved out the two miles in 2.14. The rolling start record for the track is held by Cecil Brown, the American rider, namely 2.12½, but that was established in daylight. Riding under electric light Melville got within a second and a half of Brown's daylight record. Motoring experts agree that at the time the crash occurred

record. Motoring experts agree that at the time the crash occurred Rennie must have been riding at a pace of about 70 miles an hour. His was a great performance, but unfortunately ended tragically.

The District Coroner, Mr. Geo. Brown, visited the hospital and after viewing the body gave an order for removal to the deceased's father's home. The nursing staff of the hospital gave most creditable and sympathetic assistance in making the necessary preparations and the body was conveyed as soon as possible to Muswellbrook by the hospital ambulance car.

The funeral was arranged to take place this afternoon, and is being attended by the directors of the Speedway, who, it is needless to say, are deeply grieved over the sad happening. An inquest will be held at the Cessnock Court House next Wednesday morning.

The deceased was the second son of Mr. J. H. Rennie, manager of Rennie Motor and Engineering Co., Muswellbrook. He was born at Newcastle and had resided at Muswellbrook about 12 years. He was a fearless rider of great promise, a young man who had earned the highest respect of all who knew him.