

## **Eyes and Crowle Story.**

*(courtesy of the Vintage and Veteran Motorcycle Club of SA)*

In early 1906 William Crowle and Robert Eyes established the motor firm Eyes & Crowle, Limited. They began in Adelaide, South Australia, and were "Sole Agents" for many makes of motorcars and motorcycles over time. Mr Crowle had much experience in this area as he had "mastered all the details of the business" by working in and managing motor and electrical organisations in America, England and Europe prior to setting up business in Adelaide. The firm initially started selling bicycles and motor cycles, but over time the motor car section of the business grew until it became their major operation as well as looking after the servicing of motor vehicles and selling related accessories.

In 1908 the company went public and a new garage was opened across the country in Sydney. The next few years proved to be very expansive for the firm. They opened new businesses in country S.A., in places such as Burra, Mount Gambier, and Cowell. By 1911 the acre-sized main property at 75-79 Pirie St. Adelaide employed 50 people and sold, on average, 100 cars a year. Even though the company was selling many more different makes of cars compared to motorcycles, the average annual sales of Triumph motor cycles (100 per annum) were about the same as the total motor car sales.

The Advertiser called the company "one of the largest, as well as one of the most efficiently equipped, motor garages and motor works in the Commonwealth" in an article which also claimed that, population-based, "South Australia has long had the reputation of possessing more motor vehicles than any other country in the world." The bulk of the company's business became selling motor cars, and some of their selection of "The World's Best Cars" they sold included Buick, De Dion Bouton, F.I.A.T., Minerva, Crossley, Clement, Darracq, Sunbeam, Delage, F.N., Sizaire et Naudin, Maudslay, Itala, K.R.I.T., Durant, Rugby, Belsize, Packard, Hupmobile, Cardillac, Bean, as well as "Commer" Motor Lorries. Eyes & Crowle sold a much smaller variety of motorcycles.

Unfortunately, times and fortunes change. Several factors combined to influence Eyes & Crowle's eventual demise. Eyes & Crowle lost the agency for Buick, a brand that is still going today. By the late 1920s the business was starting to wind down. Maybe their future would have been different if they had retained Buick or picked up the Ford agency which had belonged to Duncan & Fraser. Anyway, in February 1930, Eyes & Crowle's managing director Mr H. W. Reid left to head Autocars Ltd in Adelaide. Shortly after that move, Autocars Ltd took over the selling of Rugby-Durant vehicles from Eyes & Crowle as well as the selling of Nash cars and Federal trucks. By May 1st 1930 the centrally located and well know premises of Eyes & Crowle had been taken over by the 'Lewis' firm and was being used as a parking station and servicing centre. The remaining stock of second hand vehicles were sold off at bargain prices. Today, the original Eyes & Crowle building is opposite a Subway business.