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**THE STORY
OF OUR EPIC
RIDE ON TWO
CX500s**

- XMAS GIFTS FOR BIKERS
- BOL D'OR: THE INSIDE STORY
- SUZUKI X7 ENGINE OVERHAUL
- YAMAHA TRAILING in YORKSHIRE
- KAWASAKI Z650 CUSTOM TEST

Trailing the North

The 'phone rings, and it's Kathy from the office. "John wants to know if you fancy a day's trail riding on the North Yorkshire Moors, as the guest of Yamaha?" Who in their right mind would give up a chance like that? So, a few days later, I was heading north on the M1, bound for the Hackness Grange Hotel near Scarborough.

There, I was joined by the other four journalists who were also invited on the following day's ride, together with Bob Jackson of Mitsui, and Steve Hackett of TAG Public Relations. Over the evening meal, it was explained what was in store for us.

Basically we were there to ride the complete range of Yamaha Trail bikes, the DT100, 125E, 175 and 250, and the XT500. The idea was to prove that their bikes are as good off the road as they claim. Bear in mind that the majority of people who buy trail bikes rarely take them on the dirt.

We were to be guided across the moors by a local trail rider who knew the area like the back of his hand. But, what they didn't tell us was the kind of trails we would be riding. In fact, my only previous experience of trail riding had been along old cart tracks, and trodden paths across fields. I'd never encountered foot deep mud and dense undergrowth.

Anyway, after breakfast the following morning, we were introduced to the bikes in the courtyard. They were immaculate and perfect for photography. Mind you they weren't to stay like that for very long.

Having heard so many things about the DT175, I made sure that it was my first mount. We started up and headed for our first encounter of the day. On the road, I settled down on the 175, getting the feel of the machine and trying, without much success, to relax. Boy, was I tense at the thought of what lie ahead.

We left the road, following our guide, at the bottom of a steep slope that looked quite dry and not too difficult. It's funny that things don't always turn out to be what they seem, isn't it? After the initial forty or fifty yards over packed dirt and a few tree roots, I was suddenly footrest deep in mud and at a complete standstill. Frantic efforts in just about every gear proved useless and I was forced to dismount and push, at the same time using the engine to help.

Having struggled on to solid ground, I made the decision not to ride through the middle of the next patch, but try and ease my way around the edge. That didn't work either, and the bike was soon bogged down with me pushing. It didn't quite last right to the top, but the mud did take up a good proportion of the climb.

What a relief it was to top the climb. It was off with the helmet and a quick walk in the breeze to cool down. I hoped it was only sweat running down my legs! Next



job was to stagger down the slope and help some of the others manhandle their bikes up the hill.

"Is it all like that?" I heard someone ask.

"No," came the reply, "That was the easy bit."

The next five or six hours were spent riding along some of the most difficult trails our guide could find. Turning off the tracks that were obvious, we found ourselves fighting our way through thick undergrowth and deep mud. Over tree roots, over fallen trees, around large rocks and trees, and up and down steep slopes.

One trail through the thicket just ended



in front of me, and I was still travelling a little too fast to stop, so I just ploughed through the bush. Luckily the trail continued on the other side.

The same trail took us along a ridge at the top of a very steep drop, with a barbed wire fence on the left. It's a weird but a very exciting feeling, knowing that either way it could be very painful to fall off, as one of our party found out.

The DT175 served me very well along these trails for the first hour. It had the power to slog up steep slopes, instant throttle control, and was light enough to be able to hold up when riding was tricky.

The coffee stop, which was more than welcomed by everybody, was the first point at which we swapped bikes. I was landed with the DT250. A little bigger and heavier than the 175 but easy to ride.

We tackled the same sort of trails as before, but this time, if you looked hard enough through the trees, it was possible to see some of the most beautiful views in the country. Miles and miles of forest and moorland. Hills, valleys and streams. Wellingborough just doesn't seem the same any more.

Another stop, and another change of machine, this time on to the DT125, the one bike during the day that I didn't really take to, or enjoy. It just didn't seem right somehow, and was put to shame by the little DT100 that shot past me on one steep climb in the mud. It also proved to be the bike that gave me my biggest heart stopper of the day, but that was not really the bike's fault.

Riding along a heavily wooded trail, the front brake lever caught in the overhanging branches of a tree, the bike went sideways, I went sideways, and we both ended up facing the other way.

Yorkshire Moors

Lunch appeared all too quickly. We were having so much fun, but it was back to the hotel and a mammoth pile of sandwiches that only lasted a couple of seconds. Trail riding sure is a hell of a way to build up an appetite.

After the grub it was back to the trails. I found myself riding the DT175 yet again, before changing to the XT500 about half-an-hour later. Now I have to agree that the XT is some bike, but it did prove a little big and heavy for some of the work that we were doing.

Along the more normal trails, the big thumper powered on leaving all the others in its dust screen, and through the mud it proved very tractable, but some of the tighter sections had me stopping and forcing it round any obstructions.

After meeting up with the coffee wagon, there was another change of bikes, and again I landed the DT175. Just coincidence. Honest. Sitting at the top of that hill looking out on miles of countryside, trying to imagine where I'd build my luxury house, everything was like a dream. It was soon to be shattered.

I heard our guide, who I'm sure was

drummed out of the Gestapo for cruelty, say, "That's the way we are going next."

It was straight bloody down, or at least, it looked that way. The only thing good about that next section was the DT175.

We moved off, slowly and one at a time, over the edge. Now it was only 400 yards long, but it was very steep and very muddy. There was no way you could keep your feet on the footrests, so it was into first gear and let the engine overrun, and almost walk down.

All very well until someone falls off right in front of you. Touch the brake and pray was the only hope of stopping, unless you could find a soft enough bush to run into. By the time I arrived at the end of that trail I was shattered, but still willing and thankfully able to carry on.

The final part of the riding was a trip to a local car club's rallycross ground for photography. It was here that I got my first ride on the lovely little DT100. It was quicker than the 125, and much more pleasant to ride. It felt just right.

Yamaha had proved their point about their trail bikes. They can be used off the road and do live up to a very high

standard. Looking at some of the trail bikes offered by the other manufacturers, I wonder if they will venture forth and let us journalists loose on a similar outing.

Before my 212 mile ride home, there was only one thing left to do and that was to cool down. What better way than the hotel swimming pool. Nicely refreshed, and in some dry clothes (everything I had been wearing was soaking wet from sweat) I said my thanks and goodbyes to everyone and headed home.

During my journey home, I thought about the day's riding and decided to list the bikes in my order of preference for the task they tackled. Bearing in mind my previous limited experience of the trail, I came up with the following:

1. DT175; 2. DT250; 3. XT500; 4. DT100; and 5. DT125.

Thank you, Yamaha. I now class myself almost a competent trail rider, although by no means expert. Not yet anyway.

Geoff Carless

