



Sunday, Muddy Sunday

DAY DOESN'T DAWN SO MUCH AS DRAG itself into a dank sky. The heavy morning mist the weathermen predicted rattles on the roof like a monsoon. On any Sunday, the chances are it's raining. Somewhere out there lurks a field, criss-crossed by the deep tracks of trailers and vans. That's where it begins — the baptism of the elements and the environment. You hop from toe to toe, trying to keep the freshly washed football socks dry for a few minutes' comfort while they're pressed into the tight confines of thick buckled boots. You struggle with the last strap and stand up in them, sloshing around like a deep sea diver. Those boots cost over forty pounds, and all you do with them is scour them with brambles, gash them with jagged tree roots, and immerse them in water. They take a day and a half to dry out. Then you need to spend a quiet hour rubbing them with saddle soap, or linseed oil or whoever's mother's remedy you choose. Another day to mature, and then be buffed up, and they're ready to be slotted neatly into the special compartment of your DG race bag. It takes about one minute and a half to get the boots on, and then about 30 seconds to get them up to their ankles in mud again. That's where the real insanity of it all takes over. That's why Mr Average motorcyclist looks at you as if you were some kind of nutcase, or doesn't even look at you at all. His gaze passes over, barely registering, as if you were some different kind of breed.

Forget your Hell's Angels and your fringe one-per-centers, you're not even in that league. Alongside Mr Average two wheeler's statistics you're a 0.1-per-center. You really are a radical biker. You're the inheritor of a strange form of masochism and perverse logic where glamour and style counts for nothing, and a pile of mud counts for everything. You might as well shape up, kid. You're an enduro rider, you're beyond the pale. Just splash-splash your way round to the trailer, take hold of that bike you spent all night cleaning, and heave it off into the mudhole. The ordeal is about to begin. You're going to love every minute of it, even when you hate it. But don't tell everyone, you don't want word to get around. There are too many of them already, those minorities. That's why it's getting harder getting a ride. If the secret was more widely known, the whole countryside would be a seething sea of bikes — half of them being ridden, and the other half a mass of scrap CB250s abandoned by their owners who'd finally seen the light. The bottom would fall out of CX500s (again); the BMF rally would have to be cancelled: civilisation as we know it would collapse. No, best keep these lunatic fringes in their place. Their place is an unforgiving landscape, and most often a hostile sky. Even when it looks green and idyllic, it can be cruel and carnivorous to machine and man.

The initiation rights begin. You wheel your bike over to the high priest they call the Scrutineer and he inspects your offering, waving a ritual hand across the spokes. He scribbles a magic sign on the edge of the number plate with a felt tip pen, and nods. You can move on into the inner circle where you scribble your name on a thumb-stained sheet of paper that says everything you do from here on in is your own responsibility.

The bike goes into a pound, roped in a ramshackle circle with scores of others, all the same, and each entirely different. The makes, the specifications, are so similar. The distinction is the fine-fetling — the racer's edge. Not the ultra-tuning of one extra mph, but the thorough preparation of components: each reciprocating part a fragile link in a potential weak chain. Of the thousand-odd individual pieces of a motorcycle, probably not more than a hundred are actually likely to break or be broken in an enduro. But they all need to be checked. You'll need everything to run as perfectly as it was intended in the forthcoming hours, because there are enough other things that can go wrong without adding to uncertainty.

Enduros are currently one of the fastest growing forms of motorcycle sport in Britain — traditionally, they're also one of the oldest. Long before there were proper roads to race on, and proper circuits for scrambles, one of the original two-wheeled tests was a long cross-country lap, usually including a hill-climb, against the clock. The format was very similar to the point-to-point of the horse-riding fraternity, but with the introduction of a primitive mechanical steed, here was a sport for the working man as well as the country squire. The machines then, of course, were standard road-going leviathans — overweight and under powered — and the real challenge was whether they'd last the distance or surmount comparatively minor obstacles. Times, and technology have changed dramatically. As bikes became more advanced and specialised, the old challenges were no longer sufficient to tax the tread of the knobbly tyre.

So cross-country courses became more difficult to match the progress of the machines, and out of this progression came the observed trial, and the moto cross race — special events demanding specific techniques, expertise and engineering.

That the humble enduro, the literal grass-roots of off-road riding, is enjoying a revival is partly the result of the popularity of the ubiquitous trail bike, and partly the spiralling cost of specialist racing. It is the classic repository of the enthusiast, where the bike he rides to work five days a week can still be ridden in a competitive event at the weekend.

He may not be in with a chance of winning on his XL125, even with the indicators and mirrors taken off, but he'll still come back with a mud-stained grin and all the aches and pains of a world champion.

At club level, where bikes like Yamaha's DT175 rule the roost, the enduro is still the cheapest, and most convenient form of motorcycle sport — as well as one of the most enjoyable. It terms of value for money in actual racing hours in the saddle, it is unbeatable. With few modifications, virtually any current trail bike will go round any enduro course at adequate speed. The rest is up to the rider. The problem comes after a season or so, when the rider has got more experience and becomes increasingly frustrated at being blown off by KTMs and PE Suzukis — the purpose-built enduro racers. That's when he faces a crisis which could well turn his enduro riding from being one of the cheapest, to one of the most expensive forms of motorcycle sport.

Moving up to a proper enduro bike puts him in a different league, not only as far as the competition, but also on costs. For while the actual purchase price of a new bike may be as much as twice that of a trail bike, the real expense over one year could be trebled. For a start he'll no longer have a convenient form of day-to-day transport. While enduro bikes are nominally road legal, they're neither pleasant nor practical in traffic use. Using them for commuting will wear out the bike and the rider.

So he'll need a car and trailer or an old van to transport his expensive toy to meets, plus he'll need to tax and insure it for all those miles he isn't doing.

While racing, his machine will return a heavier fuel consumption, require more expensive oils, and more regular maintenance and replacement of parts, all of which will be more costly than standard items.

A racing motorcycle has that ultimate obsolescence factor in that it is built to such critical specifications, unless it is maintained in prime state, it is next to useless.

It is built for lightness and performance — requirements that dictate a fragile and unforgiving nature. The saving of as much as a hundred pounds weight can mean cycle and chassis components that are liable to crack and bend. The gaining of another ten to fifteen horsepower could mean a motor prone to flying apart.

It must be serviced and checked religiously. All parts are designed to be dismantled and rebuilt before each event, and the fine tolerances allowed demand this attention to detail.

It's no good throwing a bucket of water over it and chucking it in the shed between enduros. It'll need about three evenings after work and an understanding girlfriend. Most of Saturday will be spent dashing around trying to find someone who stocks the spares.

Without that time and attention, your expensive investment can be turned rapidly into a heap of junk that won't even make the start line, let alone finish the event.

Even with it, it's going to burn a huge hole in your wallet. The economics of running a high performance enduro bike are so horrific that most owners prefer to ignore it until they get nasty letters from their bank manager.

They're also universally ignored by ecstatic road tests of such bikes which harrangue off-road freaks and insist that they must buy a KTM or an SWM if they're not to be a dummy.

They all look very impressive, and perform as such when new. But after a season's racing, they can be a total liability. For the sake of common sense, we took a long term view . . .

There are a whole range of purpose-built enduro bikes, from something like PE175 Suzuki, to a 400 KTM, with a price scale of £1,000 to £1,600 when new.

The larger proportion of sales are in the lower bracket, so we took a bike worth £1,200.

We assume that the lucky owner has already been riding, and therefore has most of his accessories, like clothing, boots, helmet etc. We also assume that he has some way of transporting the bike: we don't even include that in our calculations because of the likely variations in cost.

But just taking the bike and rider alone, the

economics look like this: He'll probably do 10 enduros during the year. This is a reasonable figure for the average club member who doesn't want to travel more than a hundred miles for an event.

Staying in his own region, he'll have to battle for entries, and may not get as many rides as he'd like. If he goes further afield, his costs, like an overnight stay, for example, will be increased. If our man does ten local events however, he'll average about 800 racing miles, assuming he finishes each time. If he doesn't finish, the chances are it will be because of a breakdown, and another costly bill.

We have assumed the best. He does 800 trouble free miles. The bike will consume something like 27 gallons of premium grade petrol, and nearly a gallon of oil.

During that time the bike is likely to eat two back tyres and one front on wear alone. Likely tear damage through flints, rocks, etc, could be extra.

At least three chains will be converted to useless ornaments over that mileage off-road, and if a large proportion of events are in sand, the destruction rate could be higher.

Likewise at least one set of gearbox and rear sprocket will be worn to a Meccano-like cog. The price of these replacement items can be as high as £14 for a gearbox sprocket, and £45 for a final drive one. By the manufacturer's own recommendations, the machine will require one new piston, together with associated gaskets, clips, as well as three sets of piston rings.

At least one oil-foam element air filter will have to be replaced to ensure the mixture is effectively disinfected.

Even with regular lubrication, the chances are at least two cables, probably the throttle and the clutch, will need to be replaced, and it's no good bodging these up with any odd lengths you happened to have lying around. When you're on your own fifty miles from civilisation, such penny-pinching takes on a new perspective.

Then of course, a certain amount of things are going to get bent, cracked and broken. We can assume at the very least a mudguard, a pair of handlebars, and maybe two levers.

That would be a very light, and lucky season for the rider, but he still wouldn't get away without £200 of replacement spares from standard parts alone — leaving aside tyres, chains etc. Evidence indicates the average may be higher still, whence things like speedo heads, rims, exhaust pipes start taking knocks.

The real destruction factor in an enduro is that you tend to ride on despite a bike falling to pieces underneath you — thus compounding the damage. Unlike a short moto cross race, or a trial, where you tend to drop out and pull in — you have to press on, beyond the point of common sense, and simple repair. You can do in £200 worth, not in a season, but in one day!

But we're assuming the best. Our man has a trouble free, and relatively crunch free year.

Although he hardly rides the bike on the road, he still has to tax and insure it, and maintain it in road-legal spec for the regulations of the event.

Then there are his entry fees, and club memberships, which can amount to about £50.

Assuming he does have his own riding apparel, and does not have to equip himself from head to toe in £160 worth of new gear, the wear and general tear is liable to use up about £70 of its value, so that has to be taken into consideration.

Even if he has his own tools, and maybe a reasonably equipped workshop (which he'll need anyway if he's not going to pay through the nose for a dealer's services) he'll spent about £30 on extra gubbins for his particular bike. Most riders carry their tools with them in a long event, and many get lost on the way. The clear up after an enduro would keep Halfords supplied for a month.

Then there are the incidentals. Those things you take no account of at the time, but if you start totting up, amount to a mountain: little cans of chain lube, WD40, duct tape, tyre pressure gauges, plastic ties and straps — things that have a habit of disappearing after they've been used once.

If our man doesn't make his own numbers out of black PVC tape, for example, he'll spend something like £8 on stick-on numbers. It all adds up to around £70 on 'bits & pieces' alone.

The final shock comes when, after a full season, he wants to sell his bike. Even if he trades it in for a new one (which will be more expensive anyway), he'll be lucky to get more than £600 for it — that's half the purchase price.

Second hand competition machines are dead ducks. Nobody wants them, and there are an awful lot about.

If he can't sell it, he'll have to press on and

continued on page 91



ing for fresh ways of proving that riding a motorcycle isn't akin to signing your death warrant.

Another sign of the apathy that any bikers' movement — be it AMADL, the BMF, MAG, United Bikers or whatever — has to contend with is the list of job vacancies carried on the front page of the same newsletter. At that time AMADL was seeking a treasurer, a press officer, a newsletter editor, a road safety officer, a social secretary, more local liaison officers and a bunch of assistants to back up the work of the main committee members! If you can help, contact Bob at 73 Gladstone Avenue, London N22 6JY.

But at least AMADL has area reps like Chiefly down in Hastings, East Sussex, who optimistically lists his territory as 'The World'! And there's people like Robert Berwick in Southampton who, according to Bob, has almost single-handedly led the town council to take on a big programme of road repairs. 'He just kept sending them Road Hazard Report Forms when he came across dangerous sections on his way to work, and now I've got a letter from the Southampton council saying that they're taking the necessary action.'

And then there's Bob Ruggles himself. He's a jovial sort of guy, the owner of an R80 BMW and a 400/4 Honda, that you wouldn't take for the kind of person willing to devote hours of his spare time poring through the nitty-gritty of documents like *Road Accidents Great Britain 1978*, a volume that acts as a kind of Bible to anyone concerned with highway safety. Its 49 detailed tables reveal sobering information, such as the fact that in 1978 more than a fifth (21.5 per cent, to be exact) of all powered two-wheelers registered on the road was involved in a prang causing injury or death.

To illustrate this in an even more macabre way, imagine yourself and your four closest motorcycling friends. This year one of you will suffer on your bike, ranging from minor injury to death, if the 1978 trend continued. That, of course, is if the government statistics are correct, which Bob Ruggles doubts.

'Everything points to their mileage figure in particular being way out,' he says. 'You've only got to look at the sort of motorcycle mileages listed in *Glass's Guide* to see that 3,000 a year is a ridiculous suggestion. I've talked to dealers about mileages, and they'd love to be able to get hold of two-year-old bikes with just 6,000 or 7,000 on the clock!'

The preliminary analysis of AMADL's first mileage petitions indicates that the annual average covered by such a lowly group as 50cc riders was close to 5,500, while the 250cc riders checked gave an average of 8,483, and owners of machines of over 751cc were turning an average of close to 12,000 miles.

Even if AMADL's survey isn't accepted by the Department of Transport it seems sure to cast doubt on the 'official' mileages and prompt searching discussion on just how the government figures are arrived at. After all, says, Bob, if Government figures are to be believed, even bicycle riders cover two-thirds of the mileage recorded each year by the elusive figure, your average British motorcyclist.

MIKE NICKS

continued from page 68

do another season on his old bike, with the prospect of increasing bills for maintenance as more serious components begin to show signs of age.

So far our man's season of enduros has cost him £1,254, and leaves him with a machine worth half what he paid for it.

That's a cost of £125 per event, or £1.50 per racing mile, not including the transport and other costs of getting there. And all that is based on a conservative estimate of damage and repair. Experience indicates that the most expensive machines are no less, and perhaps even more prone to serious problems.

KTM's, the pride of the professional enduro rider, for example, are well known for requiring meticulous setting-up even after normal pre-delivery inspection.

Of four new KTMs being run-in during our IT425 test session, all needed carburation adjustment before they would run properly. Previous models needed to have brake linings rivetted onto the shoes to prevent them breaking from the bonding.

The owner of another new 400 KTM had his petrol tank split through vibration on the frame, and a 175 rider had his swinging arm come loose in its first event.

A batch of Maicos arrived with the wrong size clutch plates, causing excessive slip. A 360 Montesa was delivered with the chain rubbing on the rear suspension unit.

As competition machines, enduro bikes have no manufacturer's guarantee, it is up to the owner to assess any immediate problems and seek satisfaction from the dealer. Most are enthusiasts themselves and will be reasonable and realistic if there are genuine manufacturing faults. But when so much is up to the rider in preparation, and in a naturally destructive sport, consumer protection legislation has little comfort. The only sensible advice, before you rush out and buy your expensive enduro toy, is take a long serious look at what it's really going to cost you.

You'll find enough frustration in the events without crying over the bike as well.

All you wanted to know about enduros but were afraid to ask . . .

An enduro is a long distance cross-country event, suitable for a variety of types of motorcycle, and including a wide range of different terrain in a complete lap which may be tackled anything from four to twenty times depending on length. The average one-day type enduro is around eighty miles in total length, and may take about five hours to complete. A rider's result is decided upon time elapsed from a fixed starting point, the number of laps completed, and the time taken to negotiate a special test which may be part of the course. Machines should be road legal, and proper production enduro bikes are favourite, but many currently popular events have classes for trials bikes and trail bikes. Awards are given on the basis of gold, silver or bronze medals, based on the proportion of riders finishing within a fixed time set by the overall winner. Enduros are organised by motorcycle clubs belonging to the Auto Cycle Union, and riders will need to be a club member, and hold an ACU licence for competition. For the address of your local club contact the ACU, 31 Belgrave Square, London SW1.

Enduro cost breakdown . . . One season's racing.*

Bike: £1,200 new retail price	
Mileage: 800. Events: 10	
Loss over 1 year on resale value	£600
27 gallons petrol	£34
1 gallon two stroke oil	£10
Tyres	£40
Chains	£30
Tax and Insurance	£120
Entry fees/club membership	£50
Clothing (proportion of cost)	£70
Tools	£30
Incidentals	£70
Stock spares for model	£200
	Total £1,254.00

*It can be done cheaper — it can also be a lot more expensive!

