

original and best and ever so silly

JANUARY 1986

95p US \$2.75

# bike

**AT LAST!  
THE  
SILLY  
SEASON  
SPECIAL**

**Silly bikes  
silly stories silly pictures**

**(including terrifically  
silly *Moped Mayhem* race reports!)**

## MESSAGGIO DA MILANO

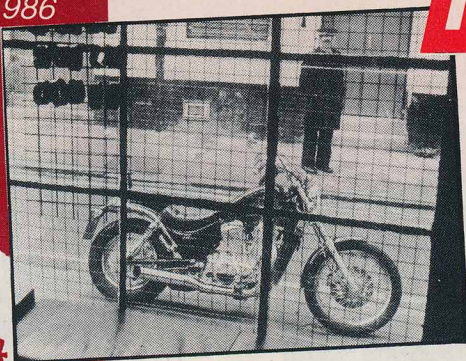
For once, the Italian show was worth going to. New generations of wop screamers, plonkers and chuggers take on the Nips

## KINGMAKERS

How Kel Carruthers and Erv Kanemoto keep pushing those damn Yanks to the top of the pile

## CLONE ZONE

A goodly ogle of the Harris answer to Yamaha's factory Genesis chassis. Stavros Parrish is probably going to race it, too, if he can find time between Truck GPs



## THE 1985 BIKE MAGAZINE AWARDS

Forget Oscars, Humphreys, Grammys and Egberts, as we make prestigious presentations to the fairest — and the foulest — in the land

## BARK AND BITE

Two versions of Frankenstein's monster's dog lurking down in the depths of funny farming territory. A Norton-engined Gilera crosser faces off against the only Honda 400/4 in a Yam DT chassis (fortunately)

## ANYTHING GOES

The bike, you sweet young boys, not the contact pages. Suzuki's cryptopog, the Intruder, goes mincing round leather bars

# ROADTESTS

## THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Suzuki RG500s as Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee. One's the Gamma road bike and the other's a full-blown Skoal Bandits GP tool. Both the same? I don't think so . . .

## ARABIAN NIGHTS

If Paris-Dakar posing pedestals are nicer to look at than ride, why bother getting cold and wet? Dashing desert doobries from Honda, Cagiva and BMW. (We've heard some dodgy excuses for not riding testbikes in winter and leering at photographer's models but this is ridiculous . . .)



## MOPED MAYHEM

Hold the front page an' quite a lot more inside, too, 'cos this is the not-so-awful truth in all its gory detail

## ON-LINE

To be perused at the reader's own risk . . .

## LIFE IN THE PIT LANE

Scotty tells it like it might be

## FOULKES OFF

Still telling tales out of skool

## AGONY COLUMN

Letters pray (Let us pray? geddit? Jesus, I wish the pub was open)

## STAFF BIKES

We don't really believe he bought it

## LAST PAGE

Till next month, anyway

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**Features Ed** — Peter Nielsen  
**Art Ed** — Tommy Campbell  
**Ad/Ed A's't** — Julia Smith  
**Ad Manager** — Sandy Murdoch  
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**Scribblers** — Andy Foulkes, Michael Scott, Colin Schiller, Tony Sleep, Mac McDiarmid  
**Smudgers** — Kel Edge, Matt Parry, Don Morley, Malcolm Bryan, Tony Sleep, Colin Schiller  
**Sketchers** — Anni Axworthy, Paul Sample, Nick Davies

Editorial and advertisement offices: 2 St. John's Place, St. John's Square, London EC1M 4QX; telephone 01-608 1511 (both departments). Telex 32157. Postal subscriptions: UK & Eire £15 a year, Overseas surface mail £16 a year. Airmail Europe £23 a year. Other airmail rates available on request. All from Bike Subscriptions Dept, Competition House, Farndon Road, Market Harborough, Leics. Marketing & Circulation Depts, Bretton Court, Bretton, Peterborough PE3 8DZ; telephone 0733 264666. Published by EMAP National Publications Ltd. Origination by In-Step Ltd, London EC1. Printed by Peterborough Web,



# BARK and BITE

**Tony Sleep investigates why being dogged by poverty, patience and playfulness leads to the breeding of motorcycling mongrels**

**T**he landlord of the King Charles II at Kingsworthy, near Winchester, was obviously not happy. For some reason he greeted the appearance of three mud-spattered, MX-attired yobbos, a lad with an arm in a sling and myself in urbanelly scruffy leather jacket with all the enthusiasm of a VAT inspection. Ensnared precariously in the unheated Nissen hut alleged to be the public bar, *Bike* tried to buy us all some lunch, but the proffered cheque-with-bank-card met with a surly "No sir, I will not."

Lunch, therefore, consisted of as much bitter shandy, crisps and peanuts as could be bought with the fiver I'd filched from the housekeeping that morning. Casting an eye around the near-empty bar, I noticed a couple of half-mad yokels dressed like haystacks snuffling into their beers, sharing a joke with the landlord, most likely at our expense. The landlord knew one of the MX types slightly: "Don't ee go sprayin that gravel all over t' place when ee leave, John".

As we talked a policeman rode past a couple of times on his faired CB200, eyeing the peculiar machines parked in the forecourt, one of which had been thoughtfully stood back-to-the-wall to conceal certain inadequacies in the numberplate and registration departments — ie: none. "Do you get much trouble from the police?" I asked my companions. "Only 'cos we ask for it," says John wryly. But they've all got clean(-ish) licences now, in marked contrast to the LC bandits

Photography Tony Sleep

they'd read about in *Bike* That article upset them — "We spit on their graves: their bikes just aren't quick enough if they keep getting caught," reckons Steve Hillary with a mischievous smile.

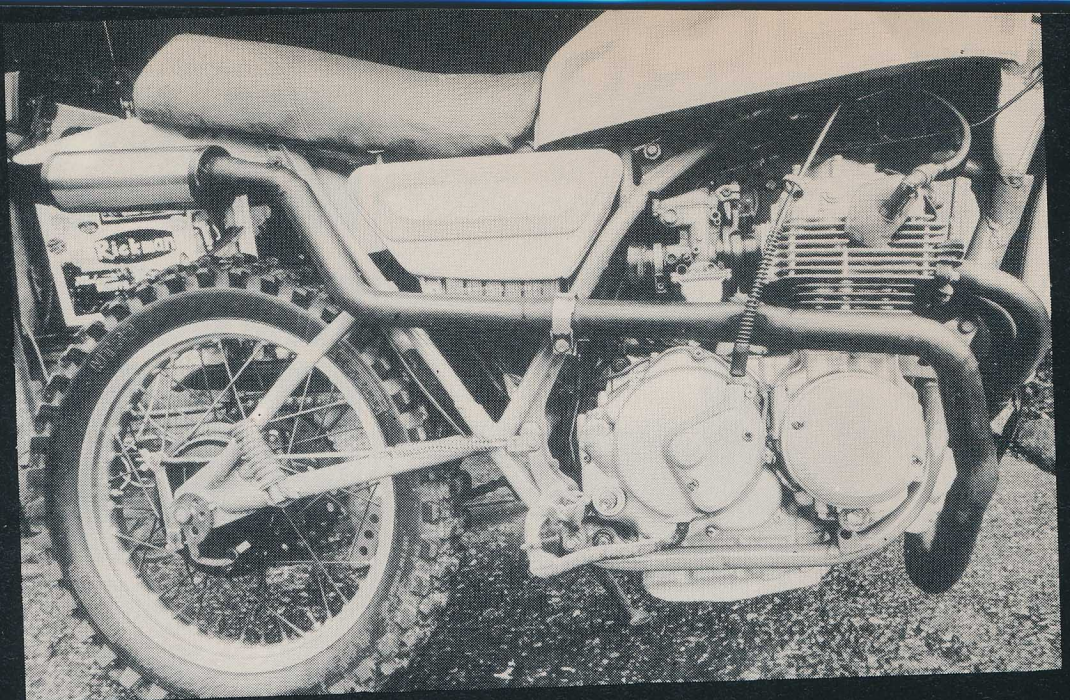
It's easy for townies to forget that biking in the country is very different from the manic excesses of the Marylebone Road in rush-hour.

If the LC boys are an urban street gang, then this lot, Dave Trott, John Piper, Jim Hall and the aforementioned Hillary(-ious) are Hampshire's equivalent to Good Ole Down Home Boys. They live for bikes and spend every penny on them — "Without them we'd go mad" says Piper, so instead of Camaros and Dodge pickups with shotgun racks they run GPzs 900, 1100 and 750 Turbo (in that order). Except Hillary, whose diehard nationalism leaves him astride a near-immaculate '59 Enfield 700 Constellation. He reckons he would have a GPz, but "wanted power, speed, reliability and easy-starting instead". Hmmm.

But it's what these guys get up to, out in the woods when the Feds ain't looking that's more interesting. The bikes outside aren't the GPzs. Aside from Dave Trott's exceedingly shagged standard DT250 there are two very weird specials, the products of long hours in the lock-up with a welding torch, no money, and a heartfelt desire to pound the shit out of the Hampshire countryside. Having just spent a morning watching them do just that in a disused railway cutting, I've got a pig plop stuck to my trainers (city boy, see) but I'm impressed. The land they ride on belongs to them, or so they reckon as they've ridden there since they were kids. The police occasionally try to chase them off, but the local farmer isn't bothered and they aren't close to houses, so morally they feel entitled even if the laws says otherwise.



... trying hard to die young



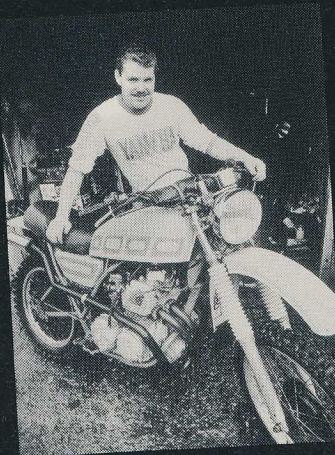
John's DT400/4 exhaust system features more plumbing than the average domestic central heating system

The practice has obviously paid off: both John Piper and Steve Hillary are skilled off-road riders. I watch them repeatedly rush up a leafy, slimy, tree-covered 60-foot Eiger that would have the average clubman making full use of his body armour. Both bikes look far more together on the dirt than sanity predicts. Sure, you can see from the beads of sweat and popping eyeballs that John finds the DT400/4 fairly hard going. But you can also see it works, and there's that lovely restrained yowl from the motor that we all know so well.

The real surprise is Hillary's bitza, for it looks like it'd be more at home on Game for a Laugh or Steptoe and Son. Some of my early unkind remarks caused its maker to note that "it's a good job I'm on probation or I'd 'it' it". Well, I apologise, for on the dirt it works just fine: that revolting Norton lump just donks away at 3rpm and torques its way out of anything, and with only a puny 125 chassis and a school table to lug around it probably gives away about 100lb (and 25bhp) to an XT500.

So why don't these champions test their metal in competition, for example enduros? Bitterly, they point to the £25 entry for Weston this year, then confess they blew it anyway by screwing up on the date. Club events, well maybe, but what class would these bikes be put in, they wonder? Remedial, probably. But can Thatcher's England afford the waste of such talent and skill? Both John and Steve are unemployed, both are experienced mechanics and

partsmen (Hillary does not wish his bike to be considered representative, hah hah) and both are trying to raise the capital — £20,000 — to start a car-and-a-bike garage. (The many venture capitalists who read this magazine can contact them with offers via *Bike* for a very modest commission.) Meanwhile down near Winchester something dark and dangerous is brewing in John Piper's garage. It involves an ex-motocross frame and an ex-methanol/grasstrack single. And he wants to turbo his ZX1100, so the DT400/4 is on offer. Y'all have a nice day now, I need a Seltzer.



## PIPER . . .

John Piper is a quiet, stocky 25 year old. He looks as if he does weight-training, but that might just be because he's built a Honda 400 Four engine into a Yam DT250MX frame. Why? Good question. Blame a cheap Taiwanese battery-

charger left unattended to comprehensively fry a DT250MX in a garage fire, and Dave Trott, who flogged the corpse to John.

Subsequently necrophilia involved the acquisition of the 400/4 engine in a rolling chassis 'just because it was on offer' and a bundle of industrial-quality welding rods. Minor problems like the inability of the monstrous lump to squeeze into the orifice vacated by the Yamaha coke-burner were alleviated by sawing the frame off under the headstock and forward of the footpegs. The same section was then cut from the Honda frame and welded in with some quite clever gussets, hopefully ensuring that the Yamaha chassis stood some chance of holding onto its new bellyful.

For reasons of the 'because it was there' variety, an LC350 shock was installed at the rear. A little judicious jacking has resulted in a bum that sits a couple of inches higher than the standard DT250. Add some Suzuki lights, leave the gearing, as it happens to work out with the Honda countershaft sprocket and OE Yamaha item at the back to give 85mph in top at the red line. Whack on a pair of 'happen to be available' Sandcross tyres and the result is a highly original trail bike and a couple of problems.

John says he was apprehensive about the difficulty of making up an exhaust, but in the end he managed fine with bits of the original, a box of bends, a bit of a Ford four-branch, and, er, a lot more welding rods. The result looks good and he reckons the extra length gives

# BARK and BITE

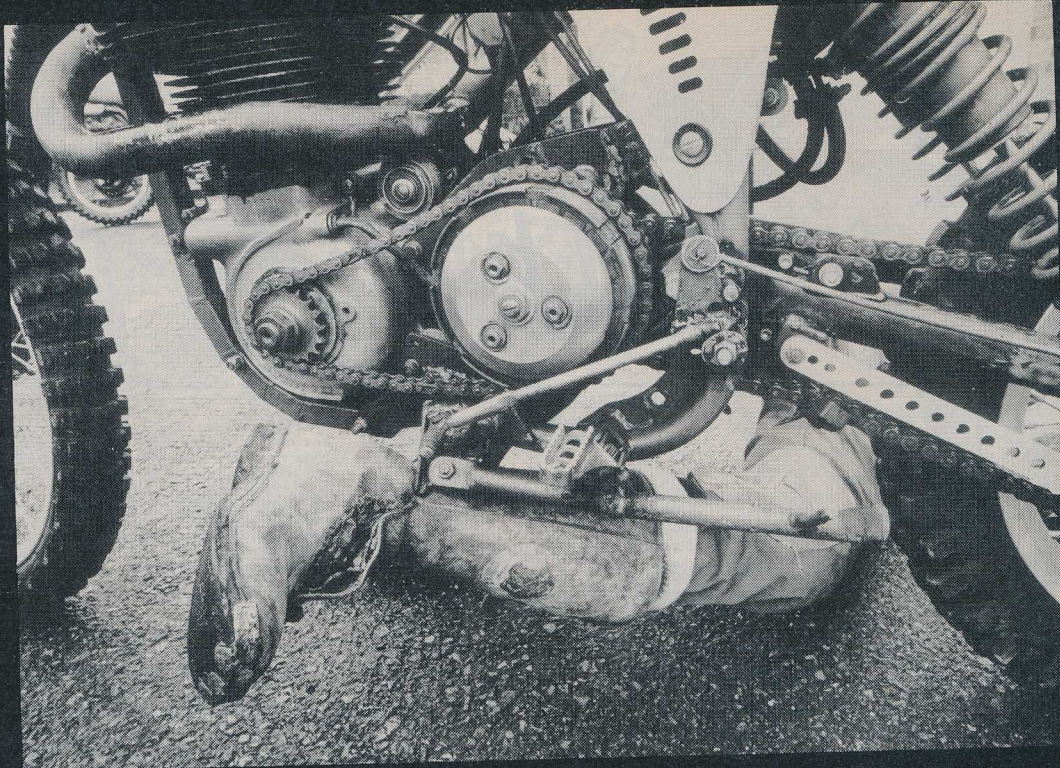
the motor more power at low revs, something the 400/4 has never been famous for.

The other problem was that there was only just enough room for the carbs once the frame tubes had been ribbled a bit. An air box or cleaner was totally out of the question, which left the jetting far too lean. Solution: bits of fireguard from an old paraffin heater stuck in the carb throats to cut down the airflow, and John has enough gauze left over to build at least another 20 DT400/4s should the mood take him. Ask him 'Isn't it heavy?' or 'Isn't it a bit peaky?' and he just shrugs. It cost £150 total and he's very fond of the bike, especially on the road during the winter while the ZX1100 is under wraps in the garage and he's struggling to keep up the payments on the beast. Off-road, the bike is compromised a little by lack of ground clearance and its peaky porkiness. Then again, there are at least half a dozen production trail bikes that cost much, much more and are a whole lot dafter.



## HILLARY . . .

**P**sycho-billy, that's what I'm into. One look at Steve Hillary's bike, let alone his haircut, lets you know he speaks the truth. No normal human would take a 1984 Gilera 125cc MXer, heave out the blown engine, stuff in a pre-unit Norton 500 twin from a 1955 pre-swing arm roadster,



*Arghhh! The naked primary drive, the brake pedal, the owner's brain in his boot . . .*

then find a Burman box that had already been liberated from its original Ariel home to do duty in some nutter's VW-powered combo. Via the sad remains of an early Norton clutch operating in the hostile environment of Hillary's left boot, mud, water and a totally exposed (and seriously misaligned) primary drive the hapless gearbox transmits the olde English grunt to the approximately-round back wheel which dangles at the end of the now upside-down ("it's supposed to be bent, really . . .") original Gilera swing arm. Well, it's better than trying to get the chain to cross from left to right, I s'pose.

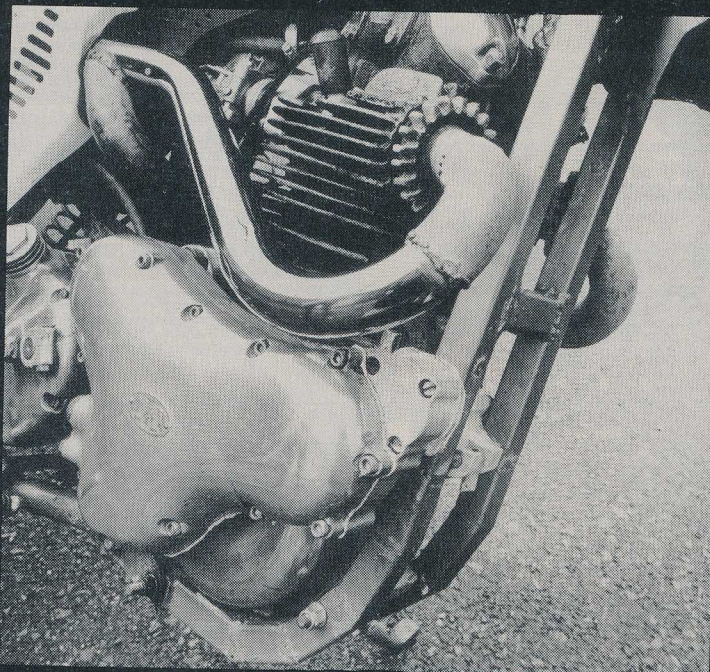
Hillary readily admits he hasn't put together his ultimate

bike. With some disappointment he confesses that the 700 Constellation motor he tried to fit was just too big, tending to hit the front wheel. The trick Acerbis plastic tank and seat, Tomaselli levers and sidepull throttle are mere frippery by comparison. He's made a conscious decision to avoid the use of any Jap bits, and it shows, though the 'cush-drive' gear-linkage once inhabited a 400/4 (yes, John Piper's 400/4). Eccentricities such as Norton's inability to build an oil-pump that didn't allow the sump to fill with lube once the engine had stopped are no deterrent to special-builders of Hillary's ingenuity: he's fitted the tap from a brewer's syphon kit in the oil line from

the Tiger Cub oil tank. Just the job if you fancy a pint of heavy out on the trail.

Even if power isn't a problem, one might wonder if the colossal weight of the Norton/Burman bits might not embarrass the Gilera chassis somewhat, especially since our hero had dispensed with the front downtube in order to get the engine in. It quickly became apparent that the frame was about as rigid as Denis Thatcher's thingy, so a school table was acquired ("Don't say which school or we'll be in trouble . . ."). Modified by sophisticated application of violence, it is now the frame of said table which forms a box-section double downtube bolted and welded in place, though the welding is so bad it looks like Yamaha must have done it. Results? Well, the engine doesn't whip around like an ox's goolies anymore.

There are endless delectables which show Steve's patient dedication to detail. Like the 'total loss' 12V electrics, the K2F magneto that is '100 per cent reliable unless it sees water', the lack of any tappet adjusters as the pushrods he fitted are too long, the cunning folding rear brake lever that used to swop the cogs on the Gilera lump, the trick Supertrapp exhaust off a speedway bike now welded to a B40 pipe, the screw-adjuster to try and stop the gearbox from moving around. One could go on, but good taste forbids it. The result is a bike that is utterly unique and a testament to the vision of one man: Alfred E. Neuman. ■



*Note, er, interesting double cradle canteen table legs*