

Another Year Older & Deeper in Debt

The three bikes we chose represent a small but useful selection of current enduro mounts. Suzuki's PE175 has been arguably the most popular choice in recent years and given good service to clubmen nationwide. The 1982 'X' series with full-floating rear suspension also had steering and engine changes which were received with mixed feelings.

Armstrong CCM's CME-250 was completely new although using the Rotax engine already proven in the Can-Am, with a basic moto cross frame and suspension. An expert-league machine with an equivalent price tag.

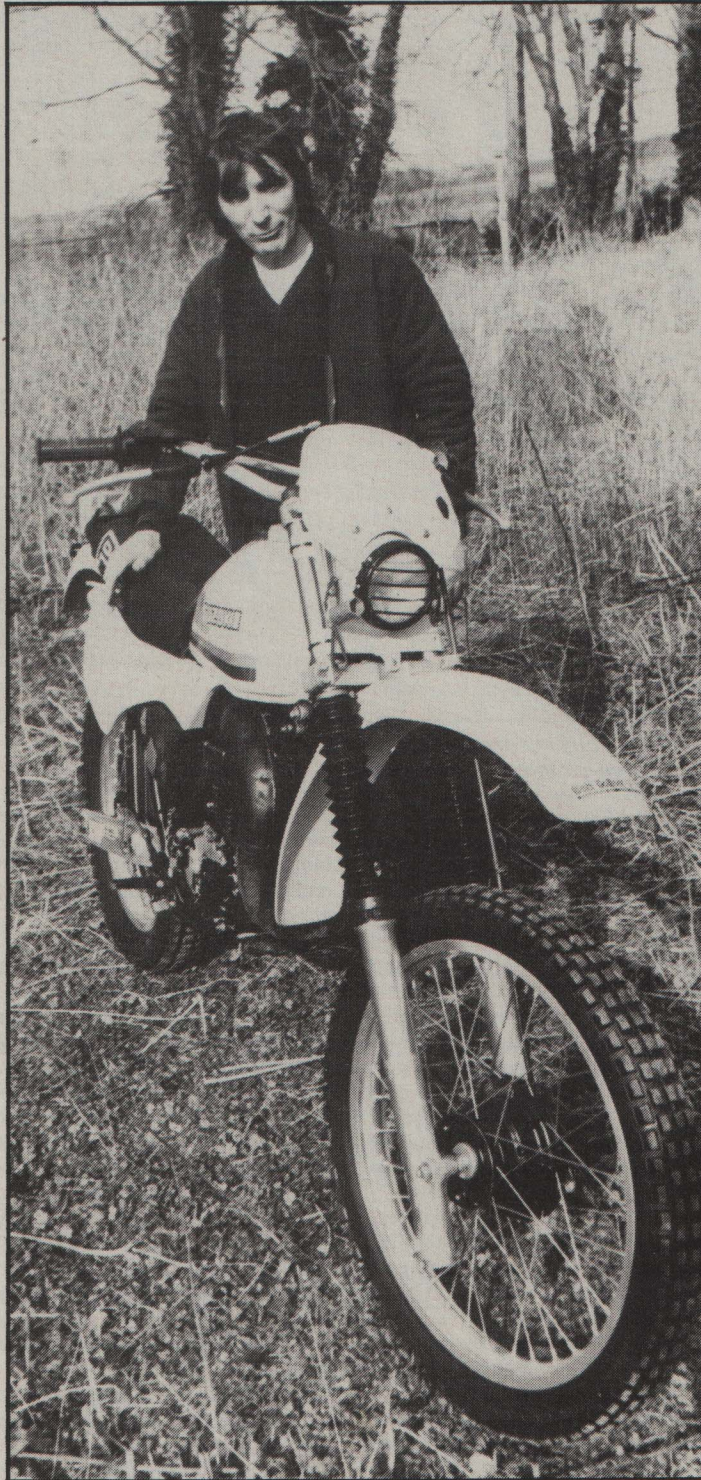
Honda's XR200 won a lot of friends in its original twin-shock version on the basis of its forgiving and gutsy engine. The Pro-link version promised the better handling and competitiveness its predecessor lacked.

SUZUKI PE175

This is Mick's fourth PE175. He bought one of the original 'C' series in 1978, and has followed them through to the present 'X'. A former sidecar motocross passenger, he took to enduros after retiring from international racing after twelve years. He rates as a good centre expert and likes to ride most weekends so long as he can get time to prepare his bike.

His long experience tells in the time he spends in the workshop with the result that the bike is always immaculate. But even though he works as sales manager in a motorcycle shop he has a hard job to find that time.

The main differences between the full floater and previous PEs are both engine characteristics



The owner's fourth PE175 so he must like them! Brake problems on Mick's new 'X' model were compensated by superior handling.

and handling. The motor has been detuned to give less horsepower but a broader spread of power making it easier for the average rider to handle. It took Mick, someone who likes to race an engine, some time to get used to this and for the first month or so he had second thoughts about his choice of bike.

What convinced him about the 'X', however, was the handling. While he enjoyed racing previous PEs he was generally bugged by their handling quirks. The bikes were short and hard to slide, tending to tuck in at the front end, and while the front forks were always good, the rear twin shock units tended to give up the ghost under hard pressure.

Mick actually wrote off one of his PEs in a high speed pitch-off when the back kicked up over no more than a six-inch step during an event.

The X is radically different; it's longer with a shallower head angle. It still turns fast but can be controlled in a slide more like the European bikes with which Mick is generally competing in his class. Once he learnt that the bike would handle better than he expected, Mick found he could ride it faster in the end, and thus he and his PE made friends.

The bike handles so well, in fact, that he was encouraged to ride it in the local club motocross series in 1982, where he was competing against theoretically much faster 250s and even 500s. He did a lot of overtaking by flashing his lights and beeping his horn but out of a seven round series, he finished third overall in his class.

Mick did a lot of enduros during 1982 with good results in Southern and SE Centre combine events. His biggest disappointment, however was failing to finish the Natterjack, the local British Championship round.

That was the result of one big bugbear on the X - the brakes. Suzuki put bigger brakes on the X and somehow they also seemed to have opened up the gap in the drums that suck in water and muck. With a high proportion of

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wet sand events in his calendar, Mick ended up with virtually use-less brakes after little more than a lap. This has now been cured by fitting rubber 'O' rings around the brake hub itself.

Other than that the bike has emerged remarkably unscathed from its heavy use. The speedo was broken in a practice accident when he lent the bike to a friend. The remote reservoir for the rear shock came off its mounting which he explains by his habit of using it as a grab rail when stuck in bogs. It now has a more solid bracket.

The front mudguard got broken, the handlebars bent (the standard ones always do) but incredibly the large rear light – basically a road bike unit tacked onto the rear mudguard – has never been touched or even cracked, and the stoplight still works!

Mick reckons he's got good value out of his PE and we worked out a rough costing. It is rough but gives a good idea of running expenses.

It doesn't include tyres, as the bike is still on the original trial tyres (obligatory in most southern events on army land) and doesn't include the massive cost of petrol for transporting the bike, or the accessory cost of tools, chain sprays, clothing etc.

PE175 X	1250 miles
Petrol (enduros)	£85.00
Oil mix	£26.25
Petrol (scrambles)	£23.80
Oil mix	£7.35
Gearbox oil	£25.00
Spare:	
1 set fork seals	£3.00
2 sets rings	£8.20
	per pair
2 replacement chain & sprocket sets	£30.00
	per pair
1 front m/guard	£17.00
1 pair h/bars	£9.00
3 sets brake shoes	
(2 back/1 front)	£7.00
	per set
Depreciation on bike (approx)	£350.00
Total	£713.80

ARMSTRONG CME 250

Mick Jenkins took a big step going from a modified Yamaha DT175 to a full-blown experts mount like the Armstrong. He's not an expert by his own admission, and only just holds his own in the clubman class. But he rides for enjoyment and he enjoys riding the bike. It was expensive and there's inevit-



Mechanically the Armstrong has proved faultless for its owner. There have been no massive bills and it has been ultra-reliable.

ably a large depreciation on the initial value of the machine – the rules of these things meaning that every secondhand enduro bike ends up costing about the same.

Mick is quite content about that; he doesn't want to sell it and he'll probably keep it another year. The bike has done the highest mileage of our three examples mainly because does a lot of trail riding. He's only done three events but in the meantime has covered most of Hampshire and Sussex off-road, so the bike has had a lot of use.

Because it's barely been raced, Mick hasn't given it the detailed preparation or replacement of things like sprockets, wheel bearings, brake shoes etc all of which are now due, so there's an additional cost not taken into account.

However, on the running gear he has used, the Armstrong has shown up pretty well. It has had no disastrous bills and proved extremely reliable. He replaced a ring after 500 miles, but the gap was well within the manufacturer's

tolerances then and there were virtually no signs of wear. The motor still sounds extremely crisp and runs well considering it's had almost no adjustment to carburation etc.

One of Mick's major problems with the bike has been its height. Because he's a little short in the leg compared to the average motocross rider, he found the seat height a bit awkward to say the least. He's compensated for this by lowering the forks in the yokes and fitting handlebar clamp extensions to bring the bars further back and within reach. At the rear, he's got the single shock Ohlins on its softest setting for both springing and damping, so he can sit back into it.

All the Armstrong enduro bikes were prepared and modified by Essex dealer Dave Raynor. He put on lights, added a rear frame loop for strength and support to the mudguard, and fitted a main-stand. He also fitted a chainguard and these last two items have been the major headache.

Like anything that hasn't been designed with the bike, such accessories are inevitably an after-thought. The chainguard, which was basically a plastic-runner type as used first on Montesa trials bikes, just couldn't cope with the suspension movement. It broke loose of its mountings and smashed into the gearbox sprocket guard pulling it out of its threads. They had to be re-tapped. The main-stand is just aft of the frame cradle and the angle through which it has to pivot makes pulling the weight of the bike onto the stand a real hassle. The spring clip that held it up also failed to handle the suspension with the result that it's now suspended by bungee cords.

Mick has geared the bike down, although he does a lot of road work, to make the power of the machine more manageable in tighter going and the six-speed gearbox copes well.

Mechanically, the bike has been faultless and only little details have let it down. Often they are fiddly things like bolts that are different sizes and need to be mated with nuts in awkward places. The things that would get a more regular competitor hot under the collar if he spent more time preparing the bike but Mick shrugs them off. He loves the bike and doesn't regret his choice.

CME 250	1500 miles
Petrol	£102.00
Oil mix	£30.00
Gearbox oil	£25.00
Chain	£16.50
Sprocket	£12.00
Piston ring	£9.00
Depreciation	£710.00
Total	£919.50

HONDA XR200

It's difficult to find a lot to say about the XR200. It just seems to run and run. Allan bought it to go trail riding and to try his hand at the odd event. His enthusiasm for enduros was boosted when he finished tenth in the clubman class in his first event on the bike although he admits he may have been lucky and subsequent outings have proved harder. He did try several other machines before choosing the XR and is absolutely convinced he made the right choice.

He hasn't had a lot of enduro experience although he's a long-term road bike rider but finds the machine suits him to a tee and enables him to gain experience and enjoyment. It doesn't have any vices other than being reluctant to start after it's lain on its side – say, a crash.

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The bike also suits Allan because he doesn't get a lot of time to maintain or prepare it. He works for himself as a design engineer and is often committed 6½ days a week. On his odd after-

noon off, he just wants to put petrol in the bike and ride it! The Honda has coped with this extremely well, and despite spending a large part of its resting life coated in mud, sand and various other environmental hazards, still bounces back.

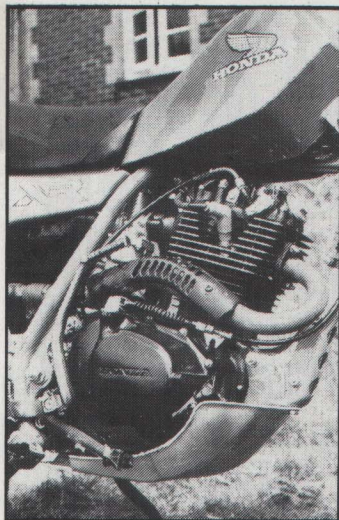
Brakes, wheel bearings and most fittings seem resilient so far. Only the sprockets take a fair amount of wear but largely due to riding in sand events. Despite a good few crashes, including knocking himself out, Allan has failed

to damage the bike.

All he's done is fit a new chain and sprocket set, and change the oils regularly so it's been by far the cheapest to run of the three bikes here. That's not a completely fair comparison of course but we do know of two other XR200s which, during the same period, have been raced regularly including the notorious Natterjack. They've both given satisfactory service. The XR200 continues to prove itself an ideal clubman's mount with an added bonus when

it comes to selling – being such a mild-mannered machine it's not a bad trail bike which gives it five or ten times the potential market of a usual enduro bike.

Honda XR200	1200 miles
Petrol	£34.00
Oil	£17.00
Sprockets	£30.00
Chain	£16.50
Depreciation	£350.00
Total	£447.50



Far left: The XR engine seems to go on for ever and ever...

Main picture: Allan is convinced he made the right choice with the Honda. It survives and performs with minimum maintenance and holds its value!

Below: Emerging 12 months after in remarkably good nick the PE scores heavily for owner Mick.

Below Left: Cheapest of the trio to run is the Honda (far left) – according to our examples.

