

On any Sunday

Editor Peter Kelly treks north to discover why trials riding appeals to a special section of the "normal" human race.

TRIALS types must be the mildest-mannered, most easy-going people in the world when they're at home during the week: they do enough swearing and cursing on a Sunday to last them a month!

All over Britain, riders from schoolboys to old codgers delight in getting themselves plastered with mud, cut to pieces, shaken and bruised. They make themselves breathless, cough up blood, shiver and shake, get covered in slime, and fume in sleet and gale-force winds as they wait in huge queues about to enter sections which they know will be impossible, and will probably wreck their bikes, before they start! In fact, as a form of masochism, it's the cruel limit! The plain fact is, though, that trials have been steadily expanding for several years. There's an ever-increasing crowd of youngsters, brought up on off-road bikes from the first Italjet or Tecnomoto they first clapped eyes on, who just can't wait to get into the sport.

Many of these youngsters go on to motocross, where "cadets" of six years old and upwards take part, and go right through their childhood and youth on off-road bikes. Some, like Graham Noyce, emerge as real champions.

Maybe not quite so many make trials bikes their scene — but the beauty of trials is that you can still enjoy it in your fifties and sixties if you feel fit enough — or are still stupid enough!

One wet and windy day in December I visited a straight-forward club championship final in a huge quarry among the hills and mills of Rossendale, Lancs. — up in clogland not far from where I was born.

For the solos, the trial was a mixture of glutinous mud and rocks, steep climbs and descents and near-impossible turns. Even the going between sections was bad enough to sink some of the bikes to their rear hubs.

Sidecars had it just as tough in their own way, their passengers hanging on by leather straps for grim death!

Walking close enough to the sections to take photographs sucked the boots from my feet faster than a packet of Trebor mints! So for the bikes it was "bloody impossible" — and lots of the lads said so.

At such a trial, there's always a legion of non-riding "experts" on hand to tell the



Left: Time for sandwiches? Quite a few riders find themselves taking a quick break like this. Note how concerned the spectators look.

Above: Suddenly the same rider has a burst of energy to resume his conquest of the rocks.

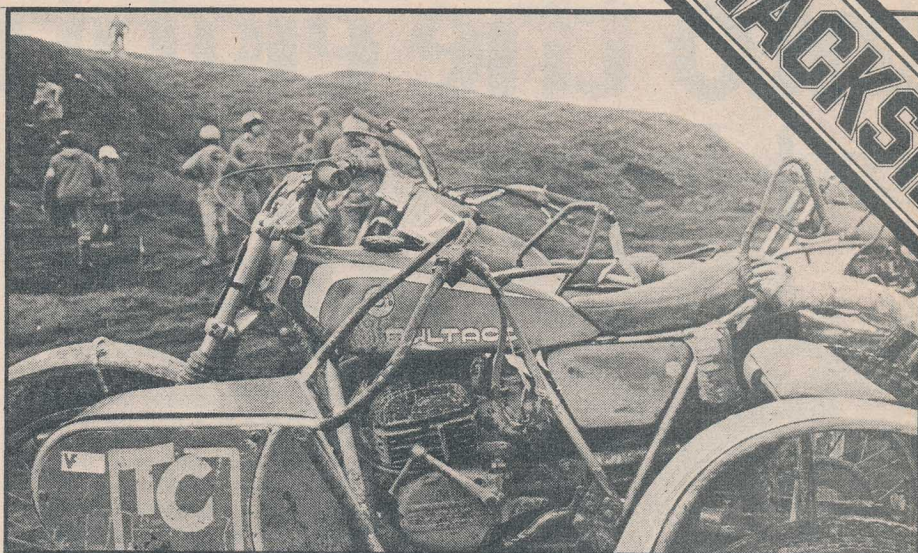
struggling riders where they're going wrong. "Gi't more PAIN, lad!" is a common contribution when the poor sod in the saddle is already half-dead with fatigue. Observers, another hardy breed, just sit it out in all weathers, collecting rheumatics all over, flasks at the ready (and they don't all contain tea or coffee!), anoraks or, in some severe poverty cases, plastic sheeting keeping the worst of the weather off, ball-points failing to make a proper impression on sodden paper and sodden everything else. "We like 'em to clean or stop, either way," said one charitable soul. "Tha' can count better in fives and noughts!"

Modern trials bikes have been developed to such a pitch that making sections hard enough for the best bunch of riders is no easy task — and it often means making them impossible for the rest. Even schoolboys are capable of the most amazing feats of control and balance nowadays — enough to make many a hardened enthusiast pick up his bike under his arm and storm off in disgust!

Schoolboy trials cater for virtually any boy or girl who's strong enough to hold-up a mini-bike. There have even been crying fits when they've cut their knees! A popular junior model is the Yamaha TY80 — a trials bike in every respect except physical size — and it's available for around £400.

Youths between 14 and 16 — or earlier if they're big enough — can go on to a 125cc or 175cc bike which, in dimensions, is almost the same as a full-blown 250 or 350. Yamaha, Montesa, Bultaco and some other firms market trial bikes in this category, which would probably cost around £700 to £800.

A "mansized" machine of 250cc, 310cc or 350cc, from firms like Beamish Suzuki, Montesa, Bultaco or Yamaha, costs around



Another rider rescues his fallen iron horse. Below: A happy crew, a sound ship and rock to crash it over.

Three wheels on my wagon. Sidecars have a loyal but small following.

£1,000. Even Britain's own CCM firm produces a banger for this class.

An absolute beginner contemplating trials should never waste his money on a new bike. Get something second-hand and cheap to learn on. If you're not an expert, you can destroy a new machine in six months flat.

And don't take up trials if you're the type to give up easily. It takes a long, long time to develop the skills required, and it might take months before you "clean" anything, except your bike, that is — and you'll get plenty of practice at that!

