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# D I G I T H E R T

# TRAIL BIKE

## M A G A Z I N E

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## Tracks & Trails

Plus

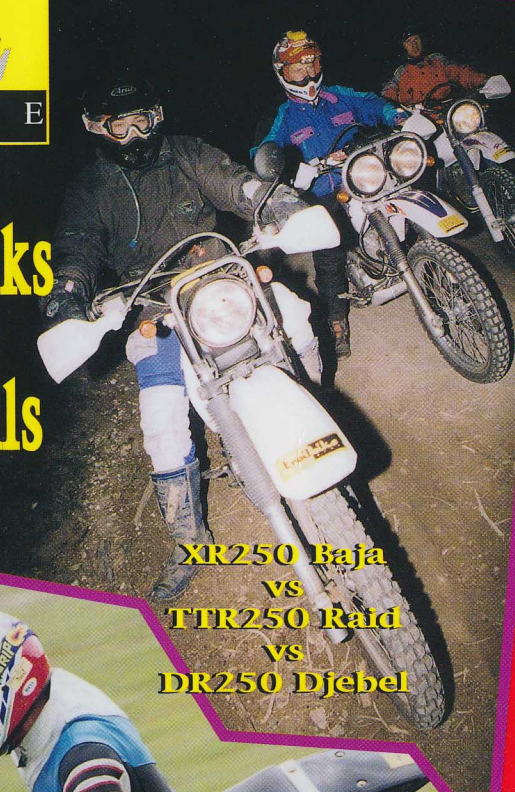
UK Raid

Husaberg FE400E

Trailing Down Under

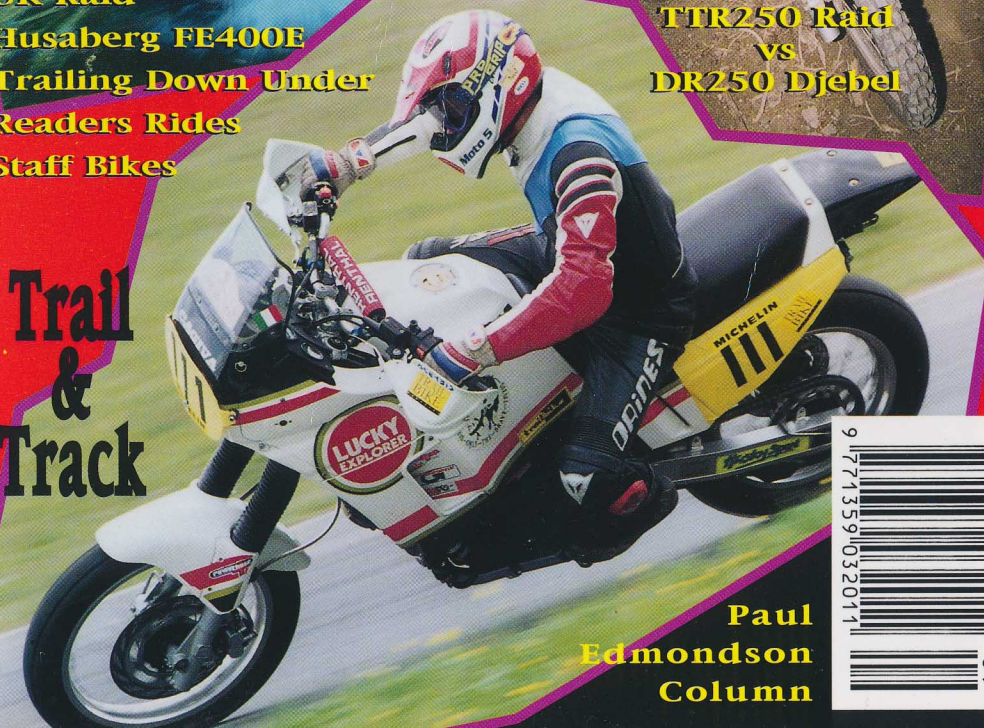
Readers Rides

Staff Bikes



XR250 Baja  
VS  
TTR250 Raid  
VS  
DR250 Djebel

## Trail & Track



Paul  
Edmondson  
Column



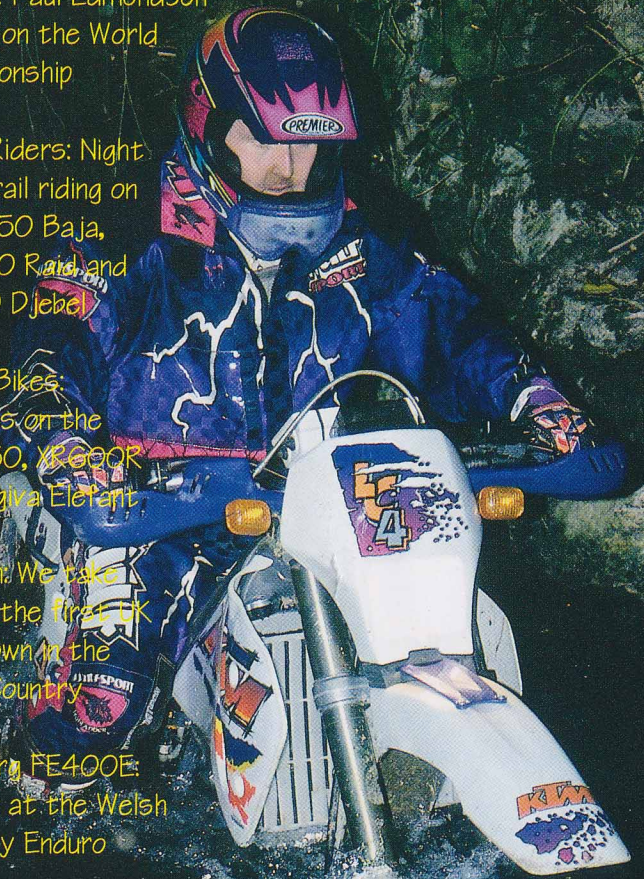


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Plymouth Raid  
begins on P36



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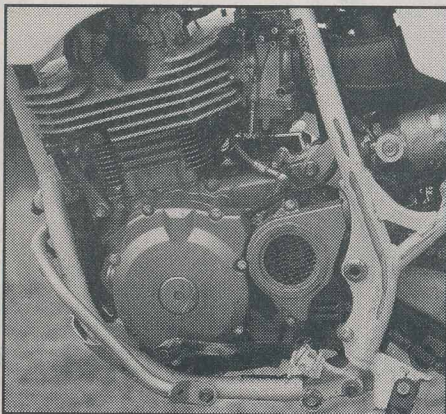
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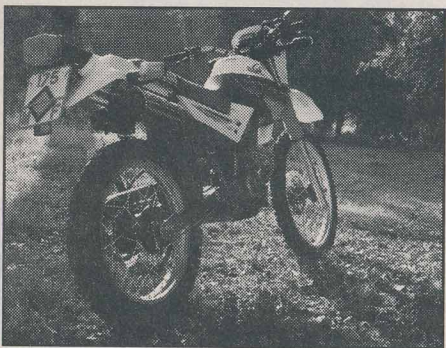
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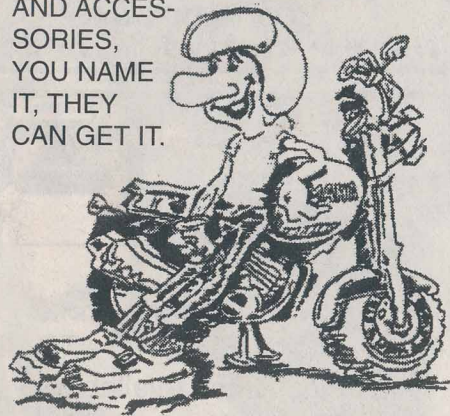


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**F**or three whole weeks this summer, the nation watched transfixed while 11 England players kicked an inflated bladder around a field. The papers were full of Euro 96, the radio played endless songs about it, while both 'The Beeb' and ITV simultaneously broadcast the same event to anybody that naively believed that more channels meant more choice. And even my wife, to whom football ordinarily holds about as much interest as pairing-up socks, and with whom (up until June this year), conversations about footey had begun and ended with the attractions of Gary Lineker's legs, suddenly started discussing the merits of whether 'we should bring on Platt.'

I blame the 'meeja' myself. I mean it's their fault that a missed penalty practically brought us to war with Germany for the third time this century. It just takes a few good old-fashioned Xenophobes writing in the press under the presence of (misplaced) patriotism about 'our boys' and suddenly the whole nation is rallying round their sporting war-cry. Imagine then, if you can, the effect of an outside broadcast from the ISDE in Finland this year, or indeed from the MX Des Nations. Both great sporting events, both showing sportsmen riding for their country, and both fea-

turing - dare I say it - dirt bikes. Can you imag-

ine anxious paper editors holding the front page awaiting the outcome of for

instance, day two of the ISDE? Can you

imagine recording artists singing

about the MX Des Nations 'com-

ing home', or even (heaven for-

bid), the BBC and ITV fighting

over the right to broadcast

the event? Hmmm... I think

not. Though of course, I

look forward to the day

when my wife says to me

in earnest over breakfast

'Don't you think that Paul

Edmondson should be using

a plug that's one grade cooler?'

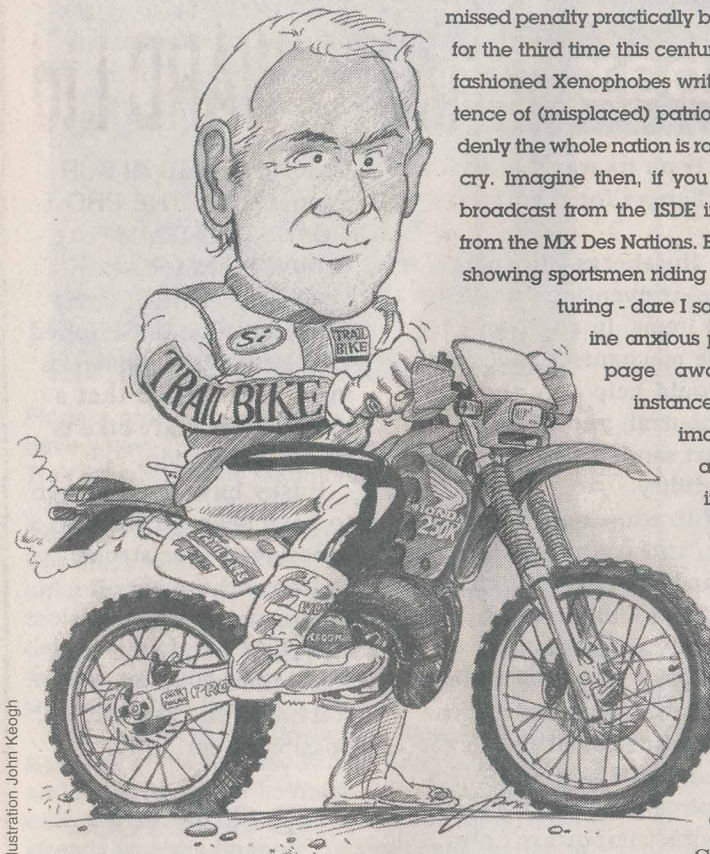


Illustration John Keogh

Si Melber

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## '97 Husabergs smash the £6,000 barrier

The six grand dirt bike is on its way as Husaberg announce some major changes for their range of 1997 machines.

For next year all new Husabergs will sport a set of White Power 'Extreme' conventional forks in place of this year's USD items. In addition a heavier duty gearchange mechanism and modifications to the clutch should help cure the bike's problems with finding neutral, and a lighter crank in the electric start models is designed to give more top-end rev-ability.

A new oil pump and filtration system should help improve reliability, and styling changes particularly around the rear have helped 'lighten' the overall look of next year's bikes which will sport new colours and body graphics.

The changes will mean that next year's electric start Husabergs will cost over six grand for the first time, with on the road prices of £6013 for the FE400, £6080 for the FE501 and £6215 for the FE600. For the complete lowdown on next year's range of bikes contact importers Colin Hill on 0181 660 3728.

### KTM & HUSKY FOLLOW SUIT...

Bavanar, the new importers for KTM have revealed that an electric start, four stroke trail bike is on its way for 1997. The 400EGS and 620EGS models will come with an electric start

next year and are expected to be available in the UK by February. Prices have yet to be announced but the electric start is expected to add about £250 to the price of the bike taking them to approx £5850 for the 400 and £5950 for the 620.

Husqvarna may also announce a new range of electric start four stroke enduro bikes for next year. Though the factory are remaining tight-lipped about any such move, an insider confirmed that a new electric start bike is under evaluation.

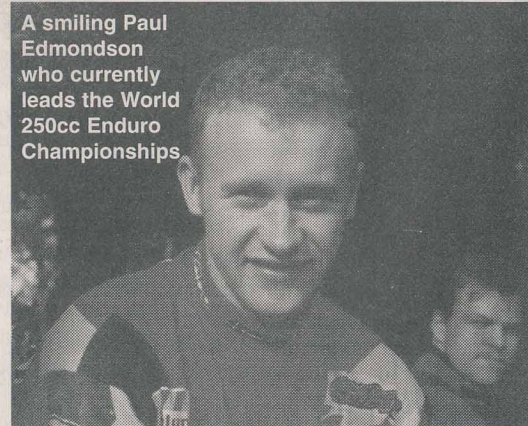
Husky have been known to have been working on a redesigned four stroke engine with a new oil pump, counterbalancer and right hand side kick-start, though an electric start machine remains a possibility for 1997.

### AND CCM TOO...

British bike builder CCM have confirmed that they will build an electric start trail/enduro bike using the tried and tested Rotax thumper, a version of which they will use to contest the 1997 Dakar.

## EDMONDSON TOPS THE WORLD

A smiling Paul Edmondson who currently leads the World 250cc Enduro Championships



Fingers crossed, by 1 September the world may have a new 250cc enduro champion in the form of Trail Bike Magazine columnist Paul Edmondson.

At the time of going to press, Edmondson was leading the world standings after a superb ride in Kosica, Slovakia to clinch back first place after an unlucky ride in Italy the month before. Edmondson took victory in Slovakia with a superb win on both days while his main rivals Sala and Watts could only manage fifth and sixth respectively. Fourth place went to British rider Rob Sartin.

Edmondson then followed his Slovakian win with a victory at the two day British Championship enduro at Rhayader in Wales and currently leads both the British and World Championships, having already won the Spanish Championship earlier in the year.

With just the final World Championship round remaining which takes place in Germany on the weekend of August 31/1 September, Edmondson leads second placed rider Sala by 14 points, while in third place, Australian Shane Watts - who broke two of his fingers after hitting a tree at Rhayader - is trailing 27 points behind sala.

### Witley 200

The organisers of the Witley long distance trial have confirmed that this year's event will be staged over two days on the weekend of 19 & 20 October. Primarily aimed at trail bikes, the Witley uses a number of green lanes in Surrey, Sussex and Hants with riders covering approximately 100 miles each day. Open to both solos and sidecars, more details from Mrs M Shaw on 01483 769464 (between 7-9pm).

### Up Pampera

Gas Gas have announced that a new 370cc version of their superb Pampera trail bike will be available shortly. The new bike which uses the larger engine from their championship winning trials machine, is unchanged from the smaller capacity bike and is expected to cost roughly the same. Details from John Shirt on 01298 72354.

### Hafren's Happening

Regs are available for this year's Hafren Rally which takes place on Sunday 29 Sept, by sending an SAE to secretary John Edmunds at Brodawel, Llanbister, Powys, LD1 6TH. Once again TrailBike Magazine will be there to support and compete in the event, and will again be awarding the TrailBike Magazine trophy to the most deserving trail bike rider.



# Dear Trail Bike...

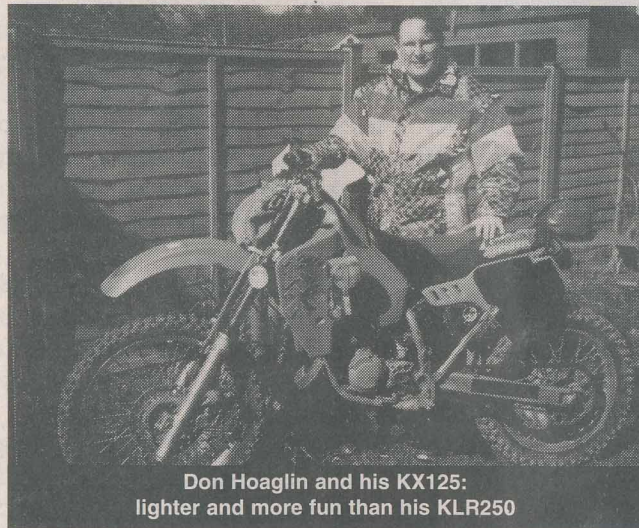
## KXcelent

Dear Si

I am a TRF member and their Thames Valley Group Rep. I have been riding a converted KX125 motocrosser on green lanes for the last four years at the same speeds as other TRF riders on 'normal' trail bikes (DR350s, KMX200s, XT350s etc). The bike is

fitted with a sidestand, had the wrong tyres for muddy conditions and was far too peaky for a beginner. However I was welcomed by the Thames Valley TRF and allowed to ride with them on their regular Sunday runs. The only complaint I received was about having racing numbers on the side of the bike.

My view (and this is not



Don Hoaglin and his KX125: lighter and more fun than his KLR250

silenced efficiently, and I find it lighter and much more fun to ride than my other bike a KLR250 which can hardly pull the skin off a rice pud'n.

I originally bought my KX by mistake, I had been out looking for a KLR250 after discovering the delights of trail riding with one of your advertisers, Derbyshire Dirtbikes. At the time the KX was incorrectly geared, not

necessarily that of the TRF) is that providing the bike is fully compliant with the law, MoT, Tax etc and is effectively silenced then there should not be a problem.

Keep up the good work, I will be renewing my subscription next year and supporting your excellent magazine.

Don Hoaglin  
Meopham, Kent

## Write Gear

Dear TBM

Thanks for a good, informative read. I was wondering if you could help us out with a problem? My friends and I do our 'brown laning' in sunny Cyprus. It has a range of exciting and varied conditions from salt lakes to dry riverbeds and high mountains. My main concern is one of personal protection. With the sun always shining it gets very hot out on the trail. Today it was 30 degrees C for instance. The use of traditional UK protective clothing is generally out of the question because of the heat stress it causes.

Perhaps with your wide range of experience and connections you could recommend clothing and equipment suitable for a hotter climate? After all what do they use in African adventures and places like Australia.

I hope you can find a solution to our overheating problem.

M Corner  
Cyprus

*The simple answer is this. In hotter climates and places like the Sahara or Australia, the going is generally much faster thanks to dry and open trails, and much of the time the riders rely on the cooling*

# Bike...

*effect of speed to keep the temperature down. That said, most Dakar racers wear white riding gear which helps reflect the sun's rays and keep the rider cool. Italian company Dainese do some fabulous white rally jackets which come with removable armour, and offer the protection you need. Also try German clothing company Hein Gericke who make a Saharan-type lightweight armoured white rally jacket.*

## XR650?

Dear TBM

Could you please do an article on the Honda XR650L as I am thinking about buying one. I had an XR600 and went to Wales on it with a friend on his DTR. While he could carry his gear in saddle bags I had to carry mine in my rucksack because of the XR's weaker subframe. Unfortunately the XR was stolen just before Christmas, and now I am looking for a new bike. Would the XR650 be as fast as the XR600RT, and is the subframe stronger as I like to go camping, and carry a lot of gear around?

Andy Orchard  
Birmingham

Got an opinion?

Then write to:

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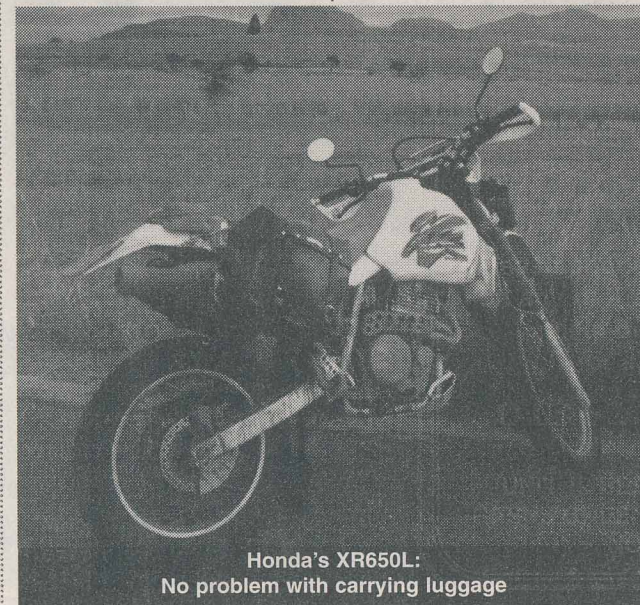
London

W13 9WF



*The XR650 is a superb bike probably much better suited to your needs. There's no problem with the strength of the subframe as the 650 is built to carry a pillion. The 650 is also faster and has the added benefit of electric start. But, and it's a big but, the 650 is*

*much taller than the 600 and a fair bit heavier, which makes it a bit more of a handful off road unless the trails are relatively easy. There are ways of lowering the 650 if you're short, but seat height aside, it's a cracking dual purpose bike. Test coming soon.*



Honda's XR650L: No problem with carrying luggage



# Dear Trail Bike...

## It's Magic

Dear Sir

I enclose two photos taken at this year's Welsh Two Day Enduro and wondered if perhaps you can explain how Paul Blezard's Honda XR600 which he rode on day one, mysteriously turned into a Husaberg 400 on day two? But seriously this year's Welsh was a great event for trail riders, and I look forward to going again next year. By the way Si, don't think that nobody noticed your superb crash on the special test on day one. It's a shame I couldn't get my camera out in time!

T Bunn  
Bristol

*I told you not to eat those mushrooms you found in that field on the first day - they make you hallucinate you know. Okay, it's a fair cop, see page 44 for the full and sorry story.*

## Enduro Guide

Dear Si

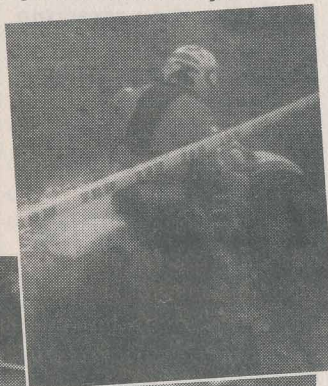
Congrats on a great mag etc etc. Now you've finished the extremely interesting and informative beginners Guide to Trail Riding, how about doing one on competing in enduros, explaining different race formats, clothing, bike

prep etc. Keep up the great work.

Arthur Road  
Southampton

PS. Re your caricature at the front of the mag, do your eyes really look like that or have you been on the Evo-Stik again?

*Look like what? Enduro guide on its way.*



Main pic: Paul Blez XR600-mounted on the first day of this year's Welsh, and as usual in some difficulty on the special test

Above right: Paul Blez, day two and now Husaberg mounted. How come? See It's Magic above



## World and International Enduro Champion Paul Edmondson writes for TrailBike Magazine

Phew, what a month. Things have certainly taken a turn for the better this month, and after what happened at the last World Championship round in Slovakia, it's certainly looking possible to get my hands on that 250cc World Enduro crown.

We'd travelled to Slovakia the week before the race as I knew this would be the most important race of the season. Being seven points adrift I knew that I had to beat my main rival Sala if I was to improve my chances in the championship. After the long drive down there we spent a day setting up the bike (though fortunately we didn't have to alter it too much) which meant that I could get on with practising rather than testing. I walked all of the special tests twice on the Thursday and Friday, but left it at that because I find that if you walk the special tests too much you can get very nervous about what's around the next corner and concentrate on thinking too hard rather than on your riding.

On to race day and the weather was looking good. It was to be an eight hour day, three special tests per lap and three laps in the day. I started off well, and after two laps was right behind Sala, knowing that I needed to pull something out of the bag on the final lap. I started the first special test on the last lap with a do or die attitude, set the best time and followed that up by setting fastest times on the two remaining tests. What I hadn't realised was that Sala had had a big crash on the motocross



test, and though he was okay he had lost a lot of time in the fall. So at the end of the first day he was lying in eighth place whereas I was in first. It was the break I had been pushing for all season.

At the start of the second day the heavens opened and the event was cut from three laps to two - a sensible decision since in the rain,

the special tests were nearly impassable. I set some good times and pushed hard on the final one to win the day and the event while Sala could only manage sixth place on the day and fifth overall. As you can imagine, we came home feeling very happy and satisfied with the result.

## 'In the rain, the special tests were nearly impassable'

The following week it was down to Mid Wales for the fourth round of the British Championship at Rhayader. This is normally a good enduro and follows some nice tracks around the forest and open moorland. It had rained hard on the Friday before, and what most people thought would be a wet and boggy event turned out to be nothing of the kind, with lots of dust on the fire roads and loads of traction in the trees. Each day consisted of 150 miles and three timed tests, and after two days of riding I managed to win both days and increase my lead in the British Championship.

So what next? Well we're now preparing for a busy month ahead as we have the ISDE in Finland followed by the final World Championship round in Germany. Can't wait.

Paul



# NIGHT RIDERS

**What do you do if you're looking for a new trail riding challenge?**

**You borrow four of the meanest looking, Baja-oriented bikes which between them sport more lights than Blackpool, and take 'em night-time trail riding, that's what.**

It's pitch black, 3.00am in the morning and in the light of the XR Baja's twin spotlamps I swear I can just make out the silhouette of a tent pitched across the byway in front of me. I swerve to the right to avoid hitting it as three other bikes thunder by within a few inches of the ropes. This guy must be mad I think to myself... but then again it is bed-time, and he *is* tucked up in his sleeping bag while we are out trail riding in the dead of night. Perhaps he isn't the mad one after all!

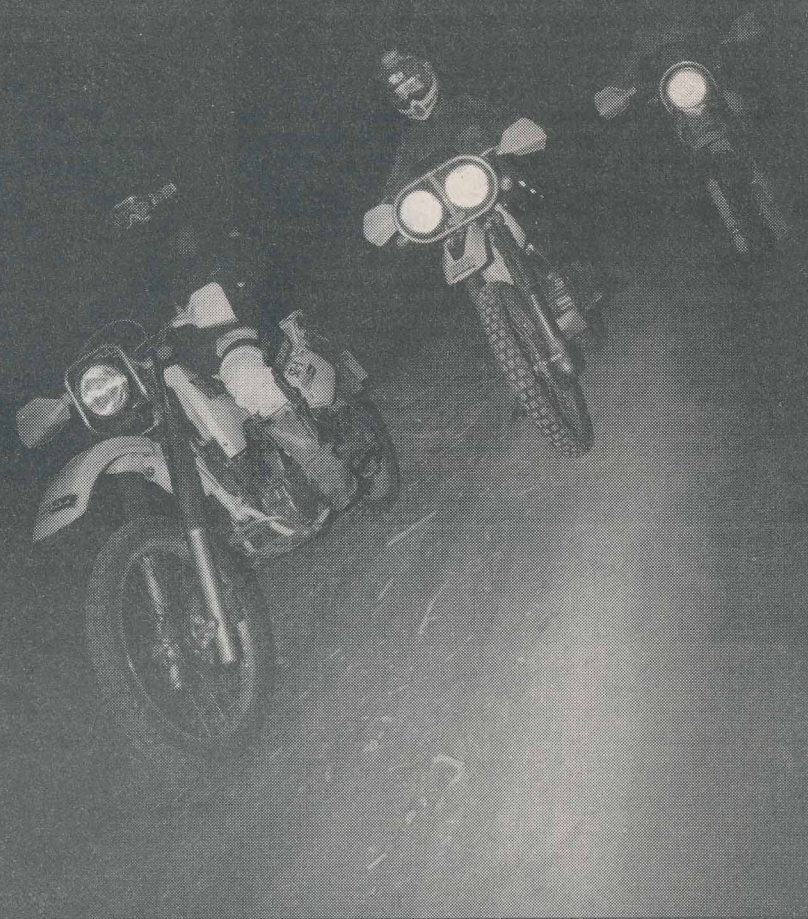
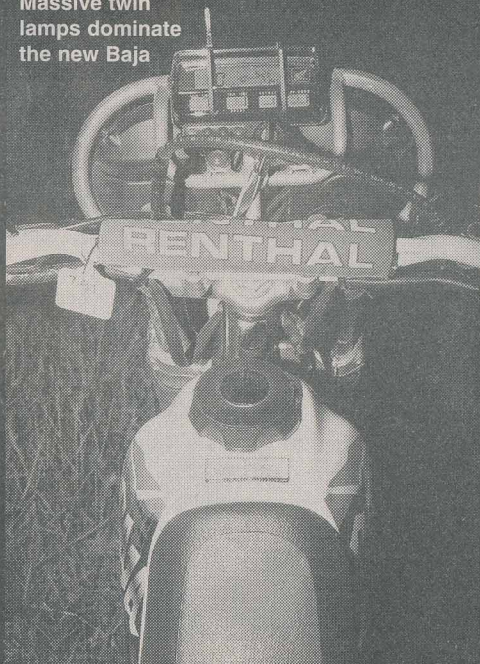
We all know trail riding is just about the most fun you can have in waxed cotton, but living in the flat featureless landscape of deepest Norfolk, challenging local trails are just about non-existent. Even in the depths of winter the lanes can be ridden on any big trailie without too much trouble. So if you're after a few extra kicks from your trail riding why not do like we did and try a night-time ride.

Planning for our midsummer night ride took several weeks, the first step being a recce of the intended route and familiarising myself with various landmarks, as things appear extremely alien after the sun disappears. Navigation in total darkness is not as straightforward as

finding your way around during daylight and any problems become magnified at 2.00am when fatigue combined with a lack of awareness can prove disastrous.

After several trips (and numerous phone calls) to the RoW office at the county hall I had a Landranger map marked up with our intended route which

**Massive twin lamps dominate the new Baja**



included the little used ancient Peddars Way. This green lane follows an almost straight line from the Norfolk/Suffolk border in the south touching on the fringes of Thetford Forest and crosses the county to finish near the old Roman settlement of Brancaster on the picturesque north Norfolk coast, a distance of around 70 miles of mixed, easy dirt roads and UCR

(Unclassified County Road) tarmac.

Choosing suitable bikes for the night ride was the easy bit. Three of the big four Japanese manufacturers have a Baja Desert Rally trail bike within their range in the ever popular 250cc four stroke class. The Honda XR250R Baja, Yamaha TT250R Raid, and the Suzuki DR250 Djebel were joined by another (earlier)



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WATEREND ROAD CUPAR,  
FIFE



Honda Baja which was to be used as the photo bike. Each has either a single, or pair of ginormous headlamps gracing the front end, so night-time vision isn't a problem. Each is relatively frugal - remember there aren't all that many filling stations in the heart of the countryside open at 3.00am in the morning when you need a fill-up. And most importantly, each machine is blessed with a super-quiet exhaust system; our aim was to be as stealthy as possible and create the least disturbance we could.

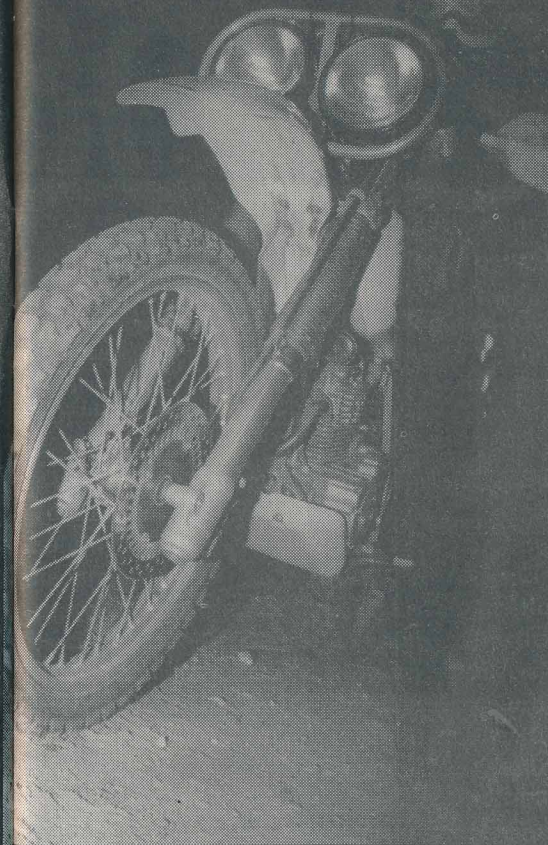
So there we were, at five to midnight in a 24 hour filling station on the A47. Our select gathering consisted of the overworked ed Si Melber, Paul 'the gimp'

Bleazard sporting a rather fetching line in thermal balaclavas, yours truly (Crasher Cornish), and fellow Elefant lover and mad fool Simon Fenning who had spurned a comfy bed for the night just for 'the crack' of going night-time riding with a bunch of certifiable lunatics. Filling our tanks to the brim, we had one last check of the maps then headed off by tarmac the 30 miles to Thetford and the starting point of the ride.

Being in charge of navigation I grabbed the best looking bike for myself, the 96 XR 250 Baja differs from the older models in a few key areas, the new bike's headlamps are now frame mounted onto the headstock and are even larger than before, a brilliant little trick LED computer just like the one fitted to the Africa Twin has several resettable trips as well as a clock and a kmh speedo. But most importantly of all this year's Baja now comes with an electric boot.

Belting along the A1065 at an indicated 120kmh I was suddenly aware of just how cold it was getting despite it being midsummer. Maybe Blez's balaclava wasn't such a bad idea after all. Arriving at our starting point, we headed off onto the first of the night's trails unsure of what we were getting into. I was impressed with the Baja's twin beams, lighting up the track in front of the bike like it was daylight. I had set one lamp low and the other lamp to shine way up front, to give a good view even under braking though I had figured without one of the bulbs blowing within the first 15 miles.

The bikes headlamps weren't the only form of illumination; we'd brought along



a selection of torches as well as a trick Petzl twin beam headtorch which was persuaded to fit onto my trusty Bell helmet. This version of the headtorch came fitted with a halogen beam which can be focused onto an object up to 50 meters away, (great for picking out changes of direction and sign posts), and a low intensity beam used for map reading etc. Whenever we stopped to check the map the

## Second Opinion

Four bikes, all with a common theme, but all completely different to ride. The new XR250 (Which reminded me of Dolly Parton thanks to an incredibly slim waistline and those two massive headlamps up front), was my least favourite bike. It looked the nicest, felt the quickest and the instruments were really trick, but somehow it felt a bit too over the top. The seat was hard and tall, and the rear suspension didn't match up to the excellent front forks - fourth place I'm afraid.

Back in third place was the TTR-Raid. Again brilliant instruments and this time the comfiest of riding positions, but let down by an engine that sounded much harsher than all the other machines, and felt flatter than the surrounding Norfolk countryside. To be fair it was just as fast at the top end as the other bikes but slower getting there because of all the extra bulk.

Joint first place in my book then goes to the old XR and the Suzuki DR250 Djebel. In this company the Suzook looked like a bit of a plain Jane but turned out to be a real sleeper.

Rather surprisingly it had the most effective headlight, as well as the best combination of flexible motor, competent (well matched) suspension and comfy riding position.

In truth it felt better than all the other bikes including the older XR in nearly every respect except for braking, but if it were my money I'd have to take looks into the equation. Despite being the most competent all rounder here, the DR just didn't tickle my taste buds like the older XR250, and though not quite up to the DR's overall ability the XR's nicer looks just gave it the nod.

Si Melber

# NIGHT RIDERS



## Second Opinion

Worst first; I didn't like the older Honda Baja much. Kick-starting it was a drag and the weight of the double headlights is particularly noticeable because they steer with the bars. I also wasn't keen on the bar/footrest relationship when standing up although it actually had the best brakes of the lot.

The later Honda Baja looked the biz, but riding it was a disappointment: again, uncomfortable to ride standing up and a genuine pain in the arse when sitting down. At least the twin lights were frame mounted but still seem cumbersome compared to the other two. I liked the Africa Twin-style computerised read-out though, especially since it included a timepiece. Both Hondas felt XR-quick off the mark but neither had the superb suspension set up of the genuine enduro article - to be fair they'd probably benefit greatly from a couple of hours' fettling, but as tested they were the ones I would least want to be stuck with.

The Suzuki Djebel was the surprise of the bunch - much nicer than expected and without any real faults unless you count a rather harsh feel when being used hard. Only its lack-lustre looks let it down - definitely the choice for short-arses.

My favourite was the Yamaha Raid - it felt good from the first moment aboard. It's not so suitable if you're small and light since it's the heaviest and tallest of the four (and therefore also less zippy off the mark), but it's by far the most comfortable. I could stay sitting down on trails which would force me uncomfortably upright on both Hondas. Definitely the closest to a mini-Dakar machine, but crying out for a bit more poke - roll on the TTR350! **Paul Blezard**



bikes were switched off, and the headtorch was used for checking our whereabouts so as to keep the noise down as much as possible. Even though the bikes were whisper quiet, in the middle of rural Norfolk at 2.00am any unwanted sound just seemed to be amplified.

So far so good, now I led the way onto the next stretch which borders the huge army training area of Stanton battleground. Half expecting to be jumped upon by trigger happy squaddies I soon had the XR into it's stride in fourth gear, the competition derived suspension delivering a smoothly damped ride on the potholed trails that make up this stretch of the PW. Coming to a halt at a tarmac crossroads I suddenly had a distinct feeling of isolation. I looked around but couldn't see the others anywhere. Oh dear, I'd just broken the first rule of trail riding, which is always keep tabs on the rider behind you. I decided to sit tight, have a Mars bar, shine the bike's lamps back up the trail and wait.

After what seemed like an age three sets of headlamps appeared through the darkness and following a few unprintable expletives from everyone else we were back on the throttle and disappearing into the next thickly vegetated section. Apparently Blez had believed me when I had told him that the trails wouldn't be very dusty (wrong) and had proceeded to fit a soft set of contact lenses. Oblivious to the choking dust cloud I had been throwing up for the previous ten miles he had been forced to stop and do a quick lens change. Meanwhile I had been charging on through the night and lost contact with him and all the others.

Lesson learnt I found myself astride

# NIGHT



# RIDERS

the Yamaha 250 Raid, although only fitted with a single headlamp the Yam's beam pattern is every bit as impressive as the Baja's twin units. I soon appreciated the Raid's extremely comfy seat which is a fair bit higher than the other bikes making the change from standing to sitting down much less tiring on the legs. Another short

tarmac ride and we headed off onto the final dirt section before our first scheduled refuelling stop.

It was gone 3.00am by this time and the strain of concentrating on the relatively small pool of light thrown up onto the trail began to show. The hypnotic effect of the bright lamps in front of the bike had me thinking I could see a tent pitched right across the middle of the grassy track. Much to everyone's surprise (apart from Blez who swears he never saw it) there really was a tent across the track but fortunately for its occupants we all narrowly missed it.

North from Swaffham and continuing roughly five miles past Castle Acre the PW is mostly all tarmac so in order to keep our over-tired senses active we decided to take in some fast sandy trails just off the main route. This time aboard the Suzuki Gerbil, I had no trouble riding through the rutted sandy hillside section until we came to a small river crossing near Castle Acre priory.

In the safety of daylight I've successfully crossed this gravel bottomed stream aboard my 900 Elephant, however in total darkness the depth of the water is difficult to gauge without actually getting in there. Cautiously I eased the Suzuki into the swift moving current, but I needn't have worried, it was only a few inches



# NIGHT RIDERS

deep at this time of the year and we all managed it easily.

Making sure we kept the noise down we left the village and rejoined the PW, though I had a distinctly uneasy feeling we were being watched. Riding through a narrow hedge-lined ravine at about 15mph I caught a glimpse of something twinkling in the bushes but assumed it was just another of the many hundreds of rabbits we'd come across. Just then without any warning, a huge deer leapt across the front end of the Suzuki. Slithering to halt, Si almost tailgated me and we sat watching the confused creature take off across a field. Phew, close one.

By now although it was still dark, the first signs of dawn could be seen way off in the distance towards the coast. Despite it being June, Blez was feeling the cold through several layers of winter clothing not to mention a blagged pair of tights belonging to my wife! Si took the lead, and



TrailBike -18- Magazine

having following my dust cloud all night long, shot off at an alarming rate of knots. Sat behind the wildly bucking, Baja mounted editor, I suddenly realised we had ridden full pelt straight across a tarmac road! Gulp, good job there's no traffic around at this time of the morning I thought to myself. Just then, we spotted the lights of a police patrol car coming straight down the road we'd just crossed. We switched off the bikes and ducked down into the bushes. Even though we were doing nothing illegal, the thought of trying to explain to the police in our tired state what we were up to riding along in the dead of night near an army base with a load of camera equipment didn't bear thinking about. The patrol car cruised by and we pressed on.

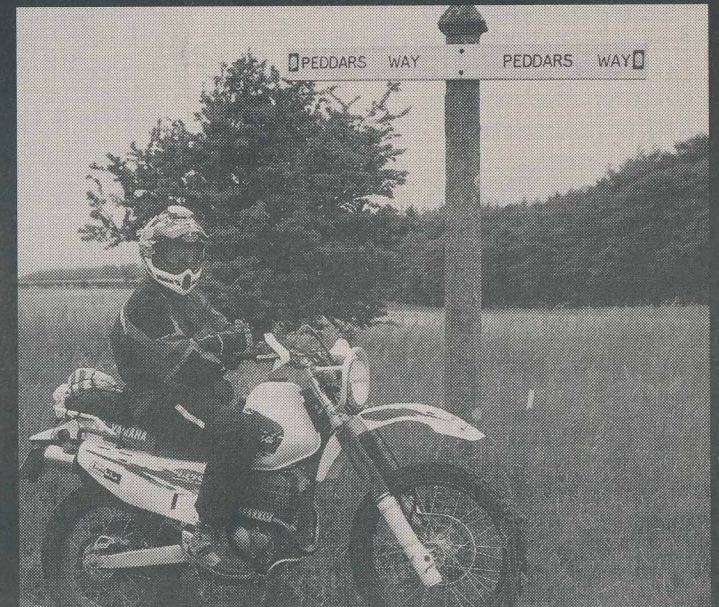
By now fatigue had started to catch up with me, I had been on the go for over 24 hours and my brain was beginning to play tricks on me, I swear I saw a Transit van heading towards me on the trail but it mysteriously disappeared as



## Second Opinion

I got on the best with the Suzuki Djebel, it was a nice easy ride and had everything I look for in a small trail bike. Despite its unassuming looks and the fact that it wears just one oversize headlight compared to the Baja's two it gave the best spread of light which just goes to show that 'bigger' doesn't always mean 'best'. Next came the XR250 Baja, the XRs have always been good, solid trail bikes and the Baja is no exception. Good looking, light and narrow, and now with an electric starter for added convenience. This one was noisy and the clutch slipped but I loved the instruments. Finally in third place was the TTR Raid, it took the award for comfiest saddle, but had to be worked hard to give its best.

**Simon Fenning**



TrailBike -19- Magazine



# NIGHT RIDERS

Fancy a bit of nocturnal fun? well several important details need to be sorted out before heading off on your first night time foray. Although any quiet trail-bike can do the job it goes without saying that a bike with a decent set of lights makes for an easier time. Here are some top tips for night-time trailing:

- 1 Make sure your bike is correctly silenced, keep the noise down and kill the motor at every stopping point. Stealth is the key word
- 2 Work out the fuel range of all the bikes in your group, it's not much fun running out of fuel at 3.00am
- 3 Prepare your bike even more carefully than usual and carry some spare bulbs
- 4 Do some research on the route to be taken. Careful planing will pay off, try to keep away from inhabited areas and stay legal
- 5 Take food, drink, and torches (with spare batteries)
- 6 Keep an eye out for your riding partners
- 7 Only ride as fast as your lights will allow, watch out for the unexpected ie wildlife, tents and deer with a deathwish
- 8 Wrap up warm (you can always shed clothing if you get too hot)

And finally have fun

## Let There Be Light



You'll need to see what you're doing at night so some kind of headtorch set-up is essential.

I say essential because while you can make do with an ordinary torch, it's easy to lose in the dark and of course you can't see to find the damn thing. A headtorch on the other hand, once in place is perfect for map reading, sign spotting and general lighting duties and always points the way you're looking.

We chose a Petzl Duo because in our opinion it's the best headtorch for the money (Dakar riders use them to work on their bikes at night), and it's fully waterproof, well designed and easy to use on the move. Twin beams offer either a focussable halogen spotlight for distance and clarity, or a normal torch-light which lasts longer. Either way you should have enough power for a night's riding or a lot more if you remember to switch off when you don't need it. There are cheaper and simpler headtorches on the market, but this one gets our vote for its versatility.

Cost: £44.99

From: All good cycling shops or by calling the distributors on 015396 25493.

quickly as it materialised. Time for a strong cup of coffee from the editorial flask. Daylight was beginning to break, making the map reading and navigation much easier.

Soon we found ourselves on the north Norfolk coast road just a mile and a half from the sea. determined to catch a glimpse of the North Sea we followed the main road around to the tiny coastal village of Thornham. Here a tidal track meanders through the salt marshes and into the estuary. We followed it and parked the bikes up for a few photos.

Within minutes Blez was snoring like a contented bull seal. It was the only sound to be heard on this remote and beautiful stretch of coast line. A distinct feeling of satisfaction swept over the TBM camp as we realised that the our night time challenge had been a success. With

some photos in the can we headed back south by tarmac for about 15 miles before turning our wheels onto the PW once more.

The need for food was now getting critical. No journo can survive for more than a couple of hours without an expense-accounted feed and so we ended our adventure at the appropriately titled Hungry Horse Cafe on the A47. Four huge lard feasts were systematically demolished in an eerie silence, and washed down by huge mugs of tea. We were all but dead on our feet and unable to communicate through conventional means. Nobody could say a word except for Blez who simply grunted, then fell snoring into the remains of his Hungry Horse special. It was an appropriate ending to a hard day's night.



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# BIKES Staff

**The continuing saga of what has been happening to the machines owned by the TrailBike Magazine staff. A sorry tale of neglect, abuse and overuse. Read it and weep**

## The Crasher

Since my last report on the big Cagiva's progress, a number of things have happened. First of all, to enable me to lug around all the paraphernalia I need to carry, some form of luggage system was urgently required. So after making a few enquiries I decided to settle for a removable top case which mounts onto the existing rack. Bickers Anglia (01473 745131) came up with the goods in the shape of a NonFango 36LX quickly detachable locking case and a universal mounting kit. This set up allows me to remove the case from the bike using just the key, and it can then be carried around like a (good looking) briefcase - the only downside being the universal mounting kit is a bit of a fiddle to fit onto the Cagiva's rack.

Boring practicalities out of the way the next step for the 900 was a trip to the dyno. Whilst I was away making large Transalp size dents in the Spanish Picos mountains, the illustrious ed decided to strap my pride and joy on to the rollers and give it a good caning. Cagiva claim 68bhp @ 8000 rpm and a max torque figure of 56ftlb at a lowly 4800 rpm, so

given the age and mileage of the bike (over 12,000 hard miles) and the Italian interpretation of horsepower I wasn't expecting much more than 60 true rear wheel ponies. Amazingly, the dyno run revealed a rear wheel figure of 70 bhp @ 7000 rpm which didn't drop off until way past the eight grand mark.

Not only that but the 900's torque readings of almost 58ftlb @ 4400 rpm held out all the way to 6000rpm before gradually dropping off at 8000rpm. Gob smacked! I should say so. The dyno room reckoned it was the smoothest torque curve they'd seen out of a Ducati motor, and though 3hp down on a standard 900SS, the Elefant's breathing is severely restricted by having to use just a single silencer to the 900SS's twin can set up.

Since the dyno test a free-er flowing K&N air filter (01753 811060) has been slotted into the stock Cagiva air box and the stock silencer has been discarded in favour of a gutted and resleeved (in stainless steel) Ducati 888 exhaust can with the idea of releasing yet more power from the big vee twin.

The bike certainly feels more respon-

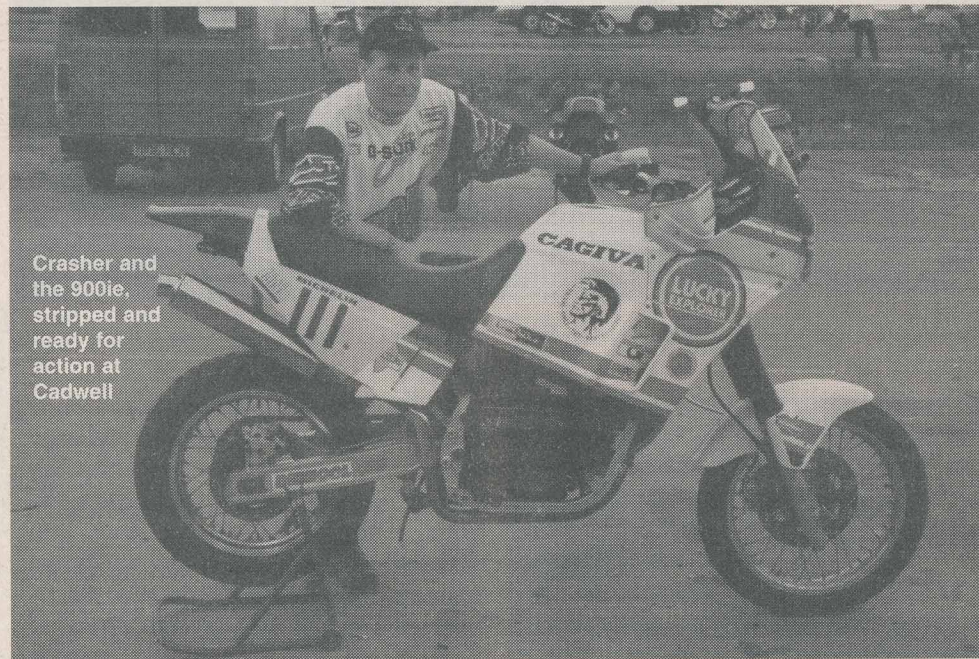
sive with this set up and the fuel injection's computer seems to have coped by automatically altering the mixture to suit the less restrictive breathing, however care has to be taken with the throttle to keep the decibels down to an acceptable level especially in built up areas, and the leaner running set up also requires a tad more throttle to fire up from cold.

So with midsummer rapidly approaching I decided it would be fun to enter the Elefant in the Ducati Owners Club track day at the picturesque woodland circuit at Cadwell Park in the Lincolnshire Wolds. The organisers stress

formation from road going trailie into track day race bike.

After more than 6000 hard and fast miles (including the Cambrian Rally) the rear Michelin T66X high speed radial was well past it's best. As these radial boots suit the Cagiva (and my riding style) so well, it wasn't a difficult decision when it came to replacing the worn out rubber. Not only are the T66s durable, but more importantly once warmed up they grip the tarmac with the tenacity of the ed to a fiver!

Other preparations for the event consisted mainly of shedding unwanted



Crasher and the 900ie, stripped and ready for action at Cadwell

that this is *not* a race, it's just a chance for like minded loons to remove their brains for a day's fast riding in the relative safety of a race track. My previous experience here indicated that this particular track day definitely *does* turn into a deadly serious event with more than just a hint of friendly competition. With this in mind the Elefant began the trans-

weight by removing all of the none essential road going gubbins. In total over 25kgs of excess fat was liberated by removing the bulky stock silencer (8kg), sump guard (4kgs), lights, mirrors, tool kit, rack etc. The difference was immediately noticeable, pushing the bike onto the trailer seemed much easier than before and I couldn't wait to try it out on



# BIKES Staff

Ducati 851 Vs monster trailie?  
No contest. Ducati was lapped



the circuit. Of course the other reason for stripping the bike to the bare minimum was... well, bearing in mind my reputation as an er, 'occasional' crasher, let's just call it a damage limitation exercise.

Arriving at Cadwell I was surrounded by some fairly serious bikes (and riders), the paddock obviously consisted of mainly Ducati sports bikes although several Japanese machines and a sprinkling of new Triumphs had somehow found their way into scrutineering. Before long my group was called into the holding area, with the Adrenaline already pumping in my way to the start line. The bike certainly seemed much more responsive than before and bearing in mind the short and twisty nature of Cadwell I'd taken the precaution of swapping the 15 tooth front

sprocket I'd fitted for the road, back to the standard 14 toother.

Unfortunately I found myself at the back of the pack with about 25 bikes in front so I didn't see the pace bike pull over after a couple of warm up laps. suddenly, without warning the pace went from mild to wild. Hard on the brakes going into the hairpin I squeezed up the inside of a pair of 900SSs, and getting the power down immediately the big fuel injected Elefant out gunned the two sports bikes into the next uphill left hander.

Catching another gaggle of riders a quick tug on the upright bars had the bike heeled over on it's side and I'd gained three more places. Shifting into top and tucked behind the screen I was waiting to be retaken on the straight by some of the faster sports bikes, but much to my sur-

prise by the time the braking markers hove into view I was still at the head of the main pack, with just a few bikes in front.

Braking hard at the end of the long straight the single front disc hauled the bike down from an indicated 120mph as I shot past two more of the leaders under braking. Then, just when I thought I had everyone well and truly beaten, a Triumph 900 triple shot past on the straight.

Determined not to let the Hinckley built bike to get away I soon found out that the only place the Cagiva was actually loosing out was towards the end of the fast straight when the roadster would pull out a few bike lengths.

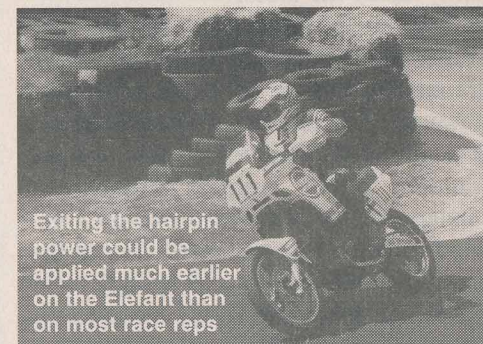
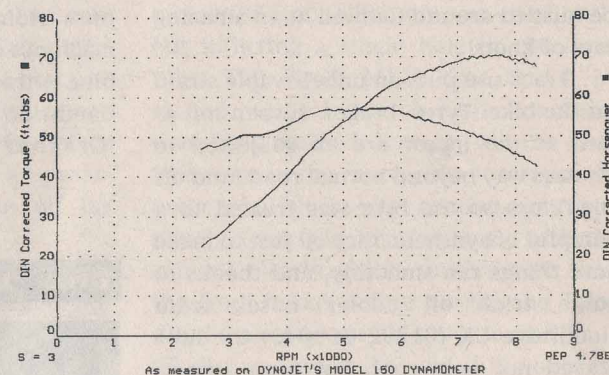
Tucking in behind the Triumph I could tell its rider knew his way around a race track so I followed in his wheel tracks to see if he would make a mistake. Unlike me the Triumph rider was taking wide 'classic' road racing lines whereas I tended to square off the corner in true dirt bike style, going in tight, making the turn, then gassing it out early. Getting tangled up in a whole gaggle of backmarkers allowed the Triumph rider to get almost the full length of the straight in front, but by the end of the following lap I was soon drafting him going in to the goose-neck. A mad sprint to the chequered flag saw me narrowly beaten into second place. Damn. Still there were two more races, er sessions to go yet.

Chatting to the Triumph rider in the paddock afterwards revealed that he was indeed an ex road racer but having competed in enduros even longer than I have,

his real heart lay with dirt bikes. The following two sessions saw my lap times drop by three seconds down to 1min20 secs, maybe not the quickest of the day (1min15 secs set by a Ducati 888SP rider) but the Cagiva was certainly the fastest in my group which enabled me to take the chequered flag first in both of the last two races, sorry sessions.

I think a lot of sports bike owners had a shock at Cadwell. Most dirt riders know that a well ridden trailie (on a suitable road) can run rings around many so

TBM.005 - ELEFANT 900IE ALL STOCK POWER CHECK RO



Exiting the hairpin power could be applied much earlier on the Elefant than on most race reps

called sports machines thanks to loads of cornering ground clearance, grunty, soft-tune motors, and big wide bars for plenty of steering leverage. The Elefant had certainly proved itself to be a serious track tool with a surplus of fuel injected grunt



# BIKES Staff

from the Ducati Desmo motor and with the forks stiffened up (thanks to ProRacing 01327 301322) to match the brilliant rear Ohlins unit, the bike could be hustled around Cadwell at an amazing rate of knots!

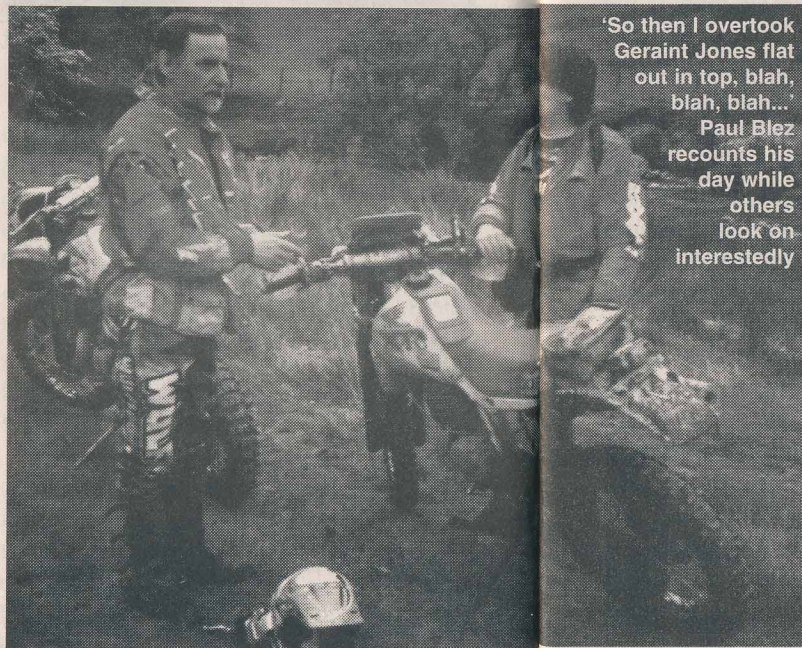
Track use puts an unbelievable strain on the bike. Tyres, brakes, suspension as well as the motor are all subjected to stresses way beyond normal road (and off road) use so the bike was treated to a sumpful of synthetic race oil just to make sure things ran smoothly, and thanks to some trick oil cooler hoses from Goodridge UK (01392 369090) the lube stayed not only cool, but more importantly inside the motor.

My main worries concerning the brake fade problems proved to be unfounded, thanks to a set of Venhill stainless PowerHoses (01306 885111) transmitting the silicone brake fluid to the standard Nissin calipers fitted with Dunlop's (01203 343741) latest sintered pads. This set up has eliminated the previous boiling fluid and spongy lever feeling for good, and allows me to brake repeatedly from high speeds without problems.

Since the Cadwell track day several people have shown an interest in the bike and I've had a few serious offers, including one from the editor who spent ten days with the bike while I was away in

Spain. But right now I'm not planning on selling it. In my opinion nothing currently on the market gets anywhere near the Cagiva for performance, practicality and pure riding pleasure. How many other machines can you think of which can combine a track day with something like the Cambrian Rally? Nuff said. **Dave 'Crasher' Cornish**

## The 'Late' Paul Blezard



'So then I overtook Geraint Jones flat out in top, blah, blah, blah... Paul Blezard recounts his day while others look on interestedly

The last Staff Bikes piece in TBM 10 may have left you with the impression that my trusty XR600 was nearly ready for the road. I was labouring under the same misapprehension myself, however, when the rapid approach of the Welsh 2-day finally forced me to extract my digit and get fettling, the 'couple of hours work' I'd fondly imagined turned into a three day marathon.....

I'd had a major stroke of luck just before Easter thanks to TBM's free ads section. One of our readers in North London advertised a load of XR600 bits and pieces, including, glory be, a rear brake caliper hanger. (Mine, you may remember, had broken in half last time I put the rear wheel back in and a new one costs over £60 plus VAT). A quick phone call, and I was soon round his place admiring an Aladdin's Cave of aftermarket XR stuff which he'd taken off his machine before selling it.

I ended up buying not only the caliper hanger, but the brand new caliper it was attached to, plus a Talon front disc, an after-market chain protector, a US-spec enduro headlight modified to take a conventional twin-filament bulb, an aftermarket air filter and a huge great Baja-style headlight. I was sorely tempted to buy the 630cc hop-up kit on offer as well, but in the end decided it was an unnecessary extrav-

agance.

Anyway, I finally got back to spanning in earnest on the weekend before the Welsh. I put the new rear disc hanger onto my old caliper and added a set of new pad clips - the brake works perfectly well without them but I've come to the conclusion that they are important a) to stop the pads' steel backing plate from 'fretting' their way through the soft ally of the hanger, and b) to stop the pads falling out as a result, as happened to me in Ireland..... Leave them out at your peril!

After my last disastrous attempts at tyre changing it was satisfying to fit a motocross front all on my own-ee-oh without inflicting a single hole in the inner tube. The Pirelli MT21 that I took off turned out to be much more knackered than I had realised. Not only was the tread well worn in the centre, but several of the outer tread blocks were coming away completely from the main carcass, with the canvass clearly visible underneath! Next: the front brake. Before buying the Talon disc I'd already got hold of a second hand CR disc and wanted to see if it would fit. The only important difference from the XR item was that the mounting holes were bigger, so I made up some spacers the same width as the disc to fill them out. The plastic hub-cover also had to be modified but then the CR disc bolted on fine, or so it seemed....

Then there were the two brake pistons to sort out; when the front pads popped out in Ireland I'd lost the metal cap to one of them and guess what? You can't buy them separately so I ended up buying a brand new brake piston. One of the old pistons came out with no difficulty but the other was stuck fast. Even an airline would not budge it and I finally had to resort to Mole grips, which didn't do it much good, so it was just as well that I'd bought a



# BIKES Staff

spare. When I came to fit the new front brake pads I discovered that Fowlers had supplied me with ones for the earlier (pre-91) XR600, which, in typical Honda fashion, are completely different from the later ones I needed. So I ended up leaving in the lop-sided pads (one thick, one thin) that I'd been forced to fit as an emergency measure in Ireland. At least there was still plenty of meat left on them.

Believe it or not I had never in my life bled a disc brake before - only seen it done, so I was a bit nervous about this operation. I modified a car brake bleeding kit which made things a lot easier and it all worked out fine. Or rather, it worked out fine once I'd realised that the master cylinder had two inner covers and that up till then I'd been pouring brake fluid on *top* of the second cover! In fact I was so confident of my new-found skills that I treated the rear brake to a thorough bleeding too - it's first in over five years. Lots of nasty looking black bits pumped through so it was obviously well overdue!

I had more fun and games trying to fit my new throttle cable. After a lot of faffing about I finally realised that once again I'd been supplied with a part for the wrong model of XR600, this time by Tippet's of Surbiton. They were apologetic but couldn't get the right one in time for the Welsh (this now being the

day before scrutineering) so it was back to Blez-bodgery to repair the outer cable of the second-hand American-made item that I had miraculously found in a tiny shop in the back-streets of Dublin after my throttle cable snapped in Ireland.

A smidgen of gaffer tape and a tiny jubilee clip worked a treat, although these repairs meant that I could not adjust the cable at the throttle end. I also took tuner Bob Farnham's advice and left the return cable off altogether. It still snapped back and forth as it should and was slack-free for the first time in about two years!

The XR had not run for six months but after draining the carb it started up after only a few kicks. (I never did get around to checking the tappets) Before I'd got to the end of the road I realised there was a problem with the front disc - the symptoms were of a warped disc but I'm pretty sure it was more to do with my non-standard mounting. I didn't have time to mess about getting to the bottom of it so just replaced the CR item with the Talon disc instead - end of problem.

The rear lights had also gone on strike and that was traced to completely rotted wiring - the copper core had just crumbled to dust. Once that was replaced the bike sailed through its MoT, but there were still a few more bits and pieces to do before the XR was battle-ready. The American chain protector was a pain to fit thanks to being held together with non-metric allen bolts,



Blezard hustles the big XR around one of the special tests on this year's Welsh Two Day Enduro

but I reckon it was worth the effort because it looks far stronger than the standard one.

I decided to fit the secondhand Acerbis bark busters on top of the standard hand guards, but with plastic number plate bolts holding them together for extra strength - the left one went straight on, the right one didn't and I left it for later. Getting the Acerbis tool bag securely fitted, and then getting the alarm-style gel battery firmly held inside was also a fiddle, but the end result worked well - the plastic aerosol can lids I used either side of the battery were ideal for holding a small roll of gaffer tape and there was still room for a basic toolkit.

I beefed up the repairs to my battered headlight/numberplate and for the top mountings I replaced the broken 'rubber band' type fittings with heavy-duty re-

usable cable-ties, which I also used to replace a missing Dzus fastener on one of the side panels. Finally, at 10pm on the day before leaving for the Welsh, the XR was ready and I was feeling nervous - I'd never had so much time to spare before!

On the way to Llandrindod Wells I invested in a time card holder (£10) which fitted neatly around the filler cap though I didn't get chance to secure the other end so it simply flapped around in the breeze. I spent the last hour before scrutineering finished trying to get the right hand bark buster thingey to fit properly, but even after mucho hack-sawing, pushing, shoving and swearing the bolt still wouldn't go all the way through the alloy clamp so in the end I just used a zip tie. I just squeezed into the parc ferme with moments to spare - Phew - situation normal once more - what a relief!



# BIKES Staff



The ed goes mudplugging aboard his CRM at the Cambrian Rally in Wales

Bob Ferring

## The Editor

Well the Honda CRM250R has been in service now for the best part of seven months and in that time its been used as the office runaround, being pushed into service whenever a shiny new test bike is unavailable. It's been rallied, raided and enduroed as well as used for numerous trail riding sprees, and it still never fails to put a smile on my face. In the last report I mentioned that I was planning on getting the forks revalved and larger foot-pegs added. As yet I've been unable to source some larger pegs, but Pro Racing of Daventry (01327 301322) revalved the front forks and now it feels much

smoother than before with a nicer, slightly firmer action. Also the new DID X-ring chain I fitted is still going strong and despite some serious abuse has yet to need any adjustment.

Since the last time I wrote about it the CRM it has been over to France to take part in the Adventure Sport Normandy Raid. In the company of numerous full-on enduro bikes the bike just kept plugging away in the tricky conditions while all around suffered numerous breakages. Not one single thing went wrong with it until on the last day while powering up a slippery climb a log got

jammed between the frame rails and the rear brake lever, jamming the lever on and in just a few seconds flat wearing the rear pads out completely and scoring the rear disc. The disc wasn't damaged enough to need replacing, but when I got back home I dropped in a new set of Dunlop brake pads front and rear (courtesy of Phil Ayliffe Products 01203 343741) which have vastly improved the braking though they initially took a lot of time to bed in.

After that it was entered for the Cambrian Rally in Wales where it once again spent a terrific day charging around the Crychan Forest, though I confess I struggled a bit to get used to the power coming in -the way it does - all of a sudden on some of the fast fire breaks. On one memorable occasion (which I won't forget in a hurry) the powervalve opened on a long righthander in fifth gear at about 60mph sending the rear end outwards onto opposite lock speedway style. A real sphincter clenching moment I can tell you.

More recently it has seen service on some of the lanes of Sussex where it was used to follow the CR500 powered sidecar of Paul Pelling and Sue Kemp. Paul who is also a useful solo clubman rider tried the CRM and pronounced it the best trail bike he's ever ridden. Paul Blez who was also there at the time couldn't believe how torquey it was and how forgiving the bike was when things inevitably started to get out of shape. There's no doubt the geometry of the Honda is fairly conservative giving it plenty of stability out on the trail and as I've mentioned before, the low seat height helps when it comes to footing on difficult going.

That said the one time the CRM did struggle a bit was when we entered it in

an enduro. We hadn't planned on using the CRM but at the last minute Blezard's XR wasn't ready (surprise, surprise), and the CRM had to be hastily called into action. Despite both he and I feeling completely wasted thanks to heavy summer colds we were still able to tell that the CRM really wasn't quite up to enduro bike standard. The road gearing left a huge gap between first and second gears which meant that on some of the power sapping climbs the bike either had to be screamed up in first gear or chugged up in second, never really getting into its stride. The rear suspension felt a bit too soft for some of the faster bumps though it rode the whoops well, and through the wooded sections felt just fine.

All in all then not a bad little bike especially when you remember that it can happily take a pillion, doesn't require me to carry around a bottle of two stroke oil, and comes completely road legal as standard with indicators and mirrors. Judging by the number of people who have called to tell me that they've also bought themselves a CRM it's obvious that there's a growing band of followers out there for this type of machine - not all that surprising really, what is surprising though is that you can't just go down to your local Honda dealer and order one more's the pity. **Si Melber**





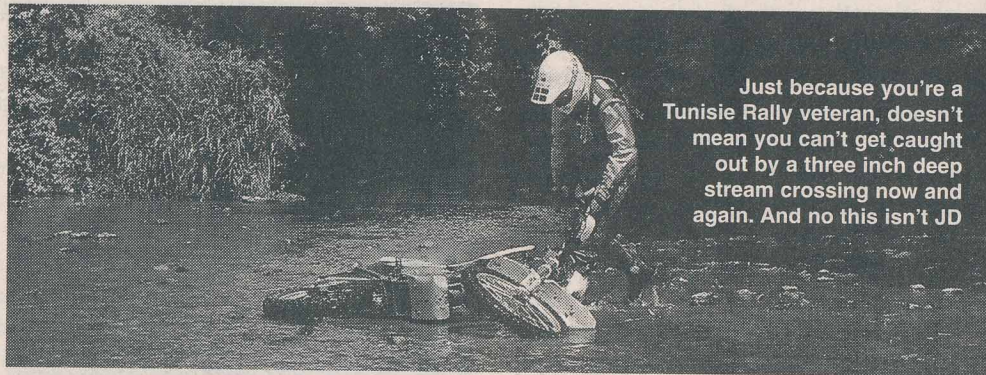
TrailBike Magazine were invited to attend the first raid weekend organised by Dakar and enduro racer John Deacon. Si Melber headed to the West Country to take up the challenge

# RAID-ON

**I**t was hardly what you might call a deceptive corner; one of those tarmac bends that ordinarily you wouldn't seem to notice. Slightly cambered and turning about 35 degrees to the right, okay the road was wet, but I wasn't going that fast. I felt the front go first, a sort of gentle oh-God-no-not-another-tarmac-getoff type thing. And before I could correct, add opposite lock, steer into it, hit the rear brake or any of the other myriad of things that they teach you at bike jour-

nalism school (ha ha), I was on my bum and sliding up the road.

Just then another bike came around the corner, I waved my arms frantically trying to warn the rider of the impending danger, it was obviously as slippery as ice, or I wouldn't have gone down, right?. The following bike slowed gracefully to a halt without the tiniest sign of slippage. John Deacon got off and removed his helmet. 'Hello' he said in a sort of half chuckle. 'Been having a spot of bother have we?' I



**Just because you're a Tunisie Rally veteran, doesn't mean you can't get caught out by a three inch deep stream crossing now and again. And no this isn't JD**

looked around frantically for some sign of slurry on the road or maybe some loose gravel, in fact just about anything on which to blame my slide.... but there wasn't anything - nothing at all. I muttered something about crappy tyres, hung my head in shame and got back on the sorry looking XR.

The reason I came to be lying in the road nursing yet another armful of gravel rash was as a result of joining John Deacon for his inaugural raid weekend. For those of you that have been hiding under a stone for the last year, or for any-



one for that matter who still doesn't know what I'm talking about, a raid is not a rally, nor is it any form of race. In fact a raid is simply a trail ride using a road book (a set of drawn instructions) rather than a map.

No sooner had I opined in an editorial that what we really needed in this country was a few more raids run along the lines of the French ones, than along comes ex-British enduro



# RAID-ON



Raid takes participants through one of the most picturesque parts of the country

champ Deacon with exactly the thing. Using the plethora of legal tracks, trails and UCRs (Unclassified County Roads) that abound in Devon and Cornwall where he lives, John has created a pleasant weekend with just the right amount of testing lanes to provide enough of a challenge to the average trail rider.

Although, as with most trail riding in the UK, there's a need to use a number of tarmac roads to link the trails together, the advantage of places like the west country is that some of the tarmac lanes are as challenging as the green ones (as I found out to my cost). Not only that but riding along the pleasant, winding, narrow country roads while the scent of Foxgloves gently assails your nostrils (or in my case, aggravates my hayfever) is a pleasant enough experience in itself, and really makes you feel like you're on holiday.

Sensibly John has not simply gone for the hardest, most demanding trails, but mixed it up a bit with both easy and tricky lanes which should appeal as much to the experienced rider as the novice off roader. Deep fords, tricky rock steps and slippery grassy ascents are of course all included, as is an interesting tidal road, a short ferry journey, and some comfortable overnight accommodation. As I've said before, the idea is not to test your stamina or endurance so much as to guide you around an area at your own pace.

With the assembled throng sporting a collection of KTM's both old and new (Deacon if you didn't already know it, is the local KTM dealer), as well as a smattering of XR's, DR's and DT's, and with the prospect of some good weather for the first day at least, we headed off on the first section of the roadbook. The advantage of following a roadbook, apart from the obvious extra challenge of navigation it brings, is that it allows a greater number of riders

of varying abilities to ride the same route without having to wait for each other.

The first day took us east from our starting point at Saltash towards south Dartmoor. Mid morning a shallow but slippery ford claimed one of the KTM's, though there was no damage done and the soaking the rider took proved to be a blessing in disguise in the baking sunshine. The roadbook was turning out to be incredibly accurate and easy to follow, though as the route was originally recced in spring, many of the lanes had become overgrown with weeds and wild flowers. Often I found myself cutting a swathe through thick vegetation that obviously hadn't seen any form of traffic (whether wheeled or not) for a number of months. It's a great feeling to emerge from a densely overgrown lane into the summer sunlight, and the extra hazard of negotiating

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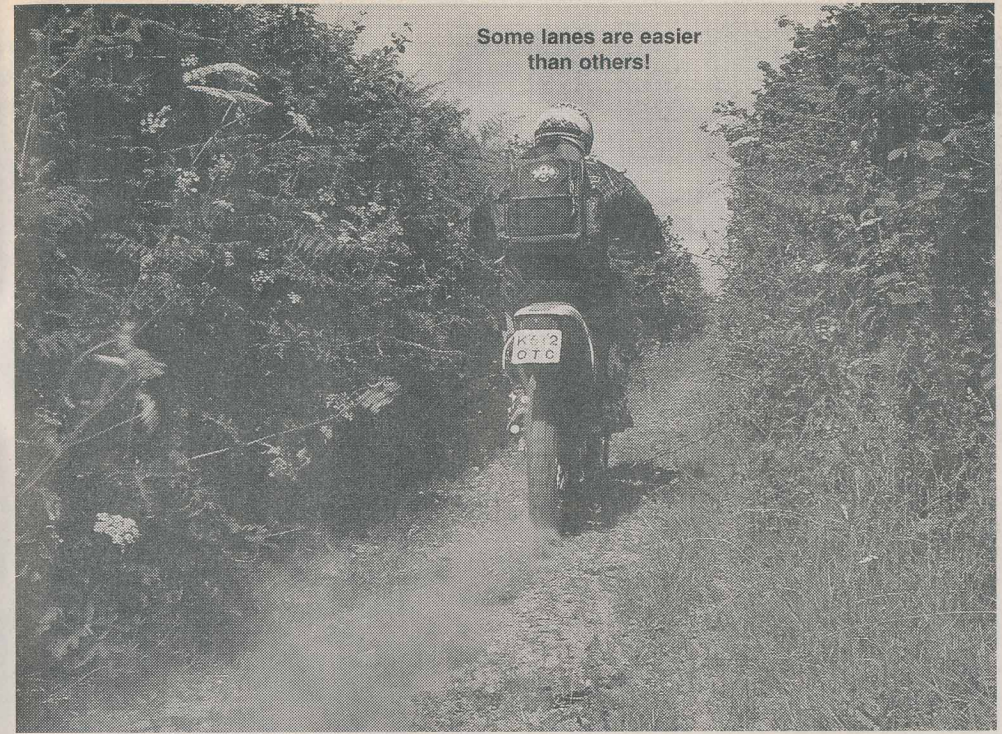


# RAID-ON

trails where you can't see your wheels due to the thick vegetation, necessitated an increase in the level of concentration.

From time to time there were checkpoints in the roadbook where we'd all meet up, and where John's wife Tracey would keep us refreshed with food, sandwiches and mugs of tea or ice cold drinks. These enabled John to keep track of everybody, and the rest of us to have a good old natter and discuss the lanes we'd just ridden. John was always on hand to offer advice to those that wanted it and discuss the group's progress.

Just before lunchtime we boarded a tiny ferry to cross the River Dart, and once on the other side headed north east in the direction of Torbay. In the afternoon I made my first roadbook error. The instructions said straight on at a cross-roads, then along a track before joining a main road. But oblivious to the route veering off sharply to the right, I sailed straight into a farm where barking dogs, flying chickens and a rather sour looking farmer's wife confirmed I'd taken the wrong turning. I turned the bike around, rolled the roadbook on a bit and checked



Some lanes are easier than others!

A short ferry journey takes riders across the River Dart



that I was heading in the right direction (the next instructions mentioned a boat yard and encouragingly, up ahead of me I could see the sea). I turned the roadbook back and headed slowly back in the direction I'd just come. By now one of the other riders had joined me and we both spent ten fruitless minutes looking for the correct route. There was only one thing for it, we headed back into the farm and asked the farmer's wife if she could help us. Her earlier sour expression melted away when she realised that we were part of an organised event and

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# RAID-ON

she pointed out the track we'd missed bidding us better luck in the afternoon.

Lunchtime was taken in a handy lay-by and once again Tracey and crew were on hand to provide the food and drinks. It was an unhurried affair with plenty of sandwiches, choccie bars, fruit and cakes to choose from, and the chance to take a breather and stretch out in the sun. Everyone was by now feeling relaxed, and the good weather and technical lanes we'd been riding became the main talking point. For the afternoon John had selected some testing little trails including one with a series of three foot high rocksteps (going down), as well as a much deeper ford to finish off with.

With lunch over, I found myself riding in the company of Tunisie Rally competitor (and TBM contributor) Charles Thompson aboard his deceptively fast DT200R. Between us we were keeping up a fair pace and swapping the lead whenever one of us made an error as we occasionally missed or overshot turnings (the great thing about following a roadbook rather than just the rider ahead of you is that you can spot the mistakes the rider in front makes, and capitalise on them), though I was glad that he was leading when he headed off down one lane and came face to face with a loose bull! I've never seen someone turn around so quickly and get hard on the gas... and he's a farmer too!

The final ford was everything it was

cracked up to be; deep, slippery and a good challenge. The roadbook said keep to the left yet surprisingly some either ignored it or just didn't bother reading the notes and bombed through the middle getting soaked in the process. Even so, everyone made it through without coming to grief and once again there were tea and biccies on the other side. The first day over with it was a short run back to our hotel for an evening meal (included in the cost of the weekend) and a few lazy pints in the bar before turning in.

The next day dawned wet and drizzly. Wet, drizzly and slippery in fact and the toughest lanes were of course first thing in the morning. Barely a couple of miles from where we'd been staying, we turned off the main road and headed up our first trail. Again it was overgrown but this time we had the rain to contend with, making the going more slippery than the day before. A couple of narrow sections, a small stream and some tight turns led us to the beginning of a lane which headed off into the distance between two lines of trees. This sunken road had obviously once been an important thoroughfare as the crumbling blocks of granite which once walled its route but now lay strewn across the path, testified. The trail itself was uphill, slippery and littered with these blocks which lay hidden in the grass, though it didn't stop a few riders from making it to the top - feet up.

Again our day took us along over-

Numerous river crossings  
were always eventful



grown tracks, through woodlands, up and down rocky climbs and across a number of streams and fords. The damp roads were making the going treacherous and I had a close encounter of the awkward kind when I just managed to slip between a car and the rock lined hedgerow on one narrow road, much to Deacon's amusement as he followed on behind.

By lunchtime three of us had slid off on the road, and just about everybody else had managed it on the trail, though

there were no injuries and no broken bikes, and uppermost in everybody's minds was grabbing a bite to eat before hitting the trail again. With the changing geography came a change in the type of lanes we were riding, as the smooth Devon scenery gave way to the harsher Cornish substrate. Again a mixture of woodland, loose surface paths and the occasional boggy section thrown in for good measure kept up the challenge, and by the late afternoon on the second day virtually



# RAID-ON

everybody was proficient at navigating by roadbook.

The final few miles included yet another deepish ford, followed by a rather surreal ride across an exclusive golfcourse (sticking to the legal rights of way of course). It had been a great weekend - the mixture of challenging lanes, beautiful scenery and Deacon's obvious enthusiasm have created an event that is a must for the fun-loving trail rider. The added bonus of course is that it's the only raid currently being run in the UK. But why?

## Want to know more?

If you fancy having a go at one of John Deacon's raid weekends and have a suitably silenced trail or four stroke enduro bike, it'll cost you £145 which includes your bed, breakfast and evening meal on the Saturday night (sharing accommodation), as well as lunches and various snacks on both days. Call John on 01752 606888 for the next dates.



Lunch stops allow time to relax and talk trail bikes

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# ELDUR

# ADO

**HUSABERG  
FE400E  
ELDURO**

By a strange quirk of fate, two of the TBM staff did the Welsh Two

Day Enduro..... on the same bike!

**Day 1**



Long, low and lithe, the Husaberg 400 makes a very manageable enduro mount



**F**ive seconds.' Yelled the start line marshal. 'Three, two, one go. I hit the electric start button, but nothing happened. I fumbled for the choke, checked the fuel was on, and gave it a big handful, the bike was turning over and over but still it refused to fire. Beside me Paul Blezard had managed to coax his XR600R into life on about the tenth kick. Time was running out - as with most enduros, unless you manage to get your bike started within one minute of your start time you incur penalties. Hesitantly I reached for the kick-starter but then I thought I'd give it one more go on the button, this time without choke or throttle. Instantly the Husaberg burst into life and I shot over the line penalty free. It was the only time during the whole of this year's Welsh two day enduro that the bike failed to start first time on the button, and it was my fault for not sussing out the correct starting procedure beforehand.

Okay, I have to confess I am a big fan of Husabergs. I like the way they look, the way they ride



# ELDUR-ADO

and the philosophy behind them. They differ from all other enduro bikes (both two and four stroke) in two important ways. Firstly they are relatively long and low, and by that I mean the seat height is low enough for me to comfortably reach the ground with both feet flat on the floor. It's not the first thing most people look for in an enduro bike, but perhaps they forget that a lot of enduros (and trail riding for that matter) include tight, nadgery or slippery sections where the ability to put a foot down easily makes the difference between staying on and coming off. Secondly, they come with the option of an

electric start (the strangely titled Elduro model). I don't care what you think about the weight penalty, for the average club-man rider the advantage of an electric start more than outweighs the extra 7kg the battery and starter motor add. So when it came to choosing a bike to test for the Welsh Two Day there wasn't too much of a decision to make. Having spent much of the year riding two strokes at various enduros and rallies I decided it was time to reacquaint myself with a punchy four stroke. A quick phone call to importer Colin Hill confirmed that he had a fully prepped FE400 electric start which was free that weekend and the deal was on.

We've tested electric start Huseys before (FE501 back in issue 2), and while the FE400 is essentially the same bike; it shares the same chrome-moly steel chassis, the backbone of which houses two (count 'em) air filters. The same suspension - a brilliant combination of White Power USD forks and Ohlins rear shocker - and essentially the same motor - the crankcases are common to all electric start machines, and contain a counter-balancer and simple oil pump - the 400 obviously differs in the size of the barrel, piston and cylinder head. Apart from the obvious 100cc deficit, cylinder head differences make the bike go like a totally different machine. This is because the 400 (with its bore and stroke of 92x60.2mm giving a true displacement of 399cc), uses a different shaped combustion chamber and smaller-valved head than the 500. Not just because of the extra throughflow of gasses

generated by the 500 either, but because the reshaped head and smaller valves confer on the 400 more in the way of torque than the bigger valve head would.

Consequently the 400 sports a nice broad powerband spreading its 30-odd rear wheel horsepower over the whole of the rev-range (see the dyno chart). Power starts at about 4,500rpm and builds progressively to a maximum torque of just less than 22ft/lbs at 6,400rpm while maximum power peaks at a smidge under 30hp at 7,700rpm. [It's interesting to note that the Husaberg 400 produced less power on the dyno than the big-bore Suzuki DR385 we tested last month, though exhaust analysis confirmed that ours was running very rich (which would account for it needing to start on a closed throttle) and probably caused the loss of an estimated 2-3hp].

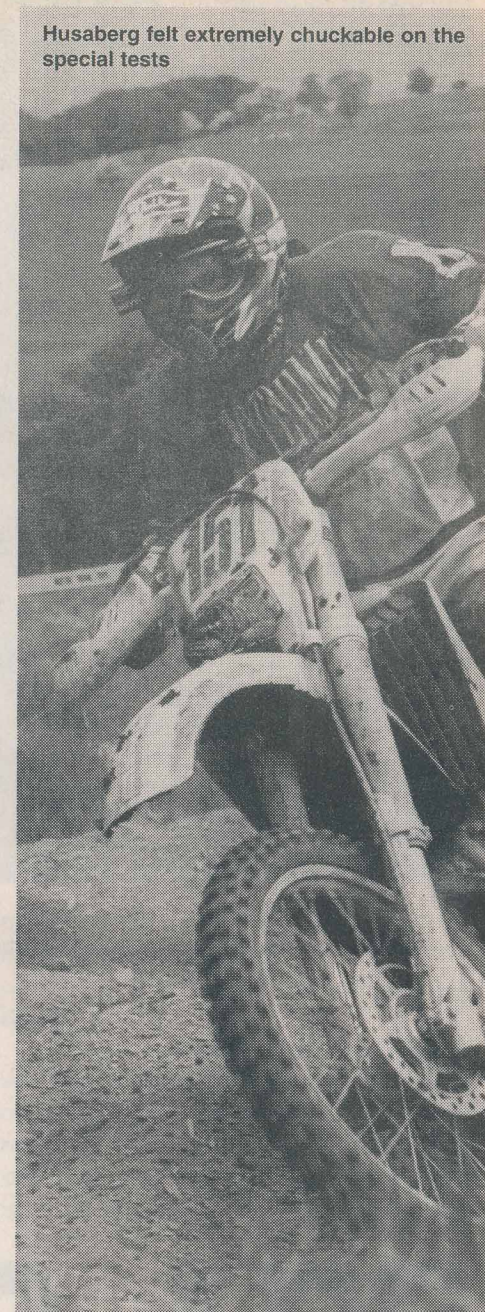
While the 400 doesn't have the same sort of killer punch as the bigger machines, what it does have is rideability. Crack open the throttle on one of the bigger Huseys and the front end simply avi-

ates, but do the same on the 400 and it responds by surging forwards. It makes for a bike that's easy to ride fast because you can



get on the power far earlier exiting corners, and thrash the thing in the same way you can with something like a Husky TE350. That's not to say the 400 feels underpowered - the Husaberg has more in the way of bottom end than the Husky 350 (we've yet to test a 410), but it also has the same fruity top end and a good solid mid-range which was proving its worth in the Radnor forest on the first day.

Husaberg felt extremely chuckable on the special tests



Thanks to Colin Hill for the loan of the FE400E, if you want to buy it from him call him on 0181 660 3728

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I'd already come off it of course - on the special test of all places - attempting to jump a drainage ditch but not quite making it. It probably cost me no more than about 30 seconds, but it would've been more were it not for the safety net of that 'leccy start. No faffing around with kickstarters and getting the bike on a level bit of ground, just hit the button and go. I'd also managed to injure myself - quite badly as it turned out - in one of the faster stretches of the forest. I caught my toe on a branch which was sticking out and managed to twist my ankle right the way round. Worse still my knee made a sort of squelching sound not dissimilar to the sound made when preparing a chicken for a barbecue. Ouch!

As it was my first Welsh, Blez and I were advised by those 'in the know' to enter the Sportsman class, though on all the checks we actually made the clubman times, and could have happily slotted into the clubman four stroke class. Riding Sportsman gave us the chance to have a bit of a natter at the checks and discuss with other riders what they thought of the course. In a sense that's what the Welsh is all about, it's a social event

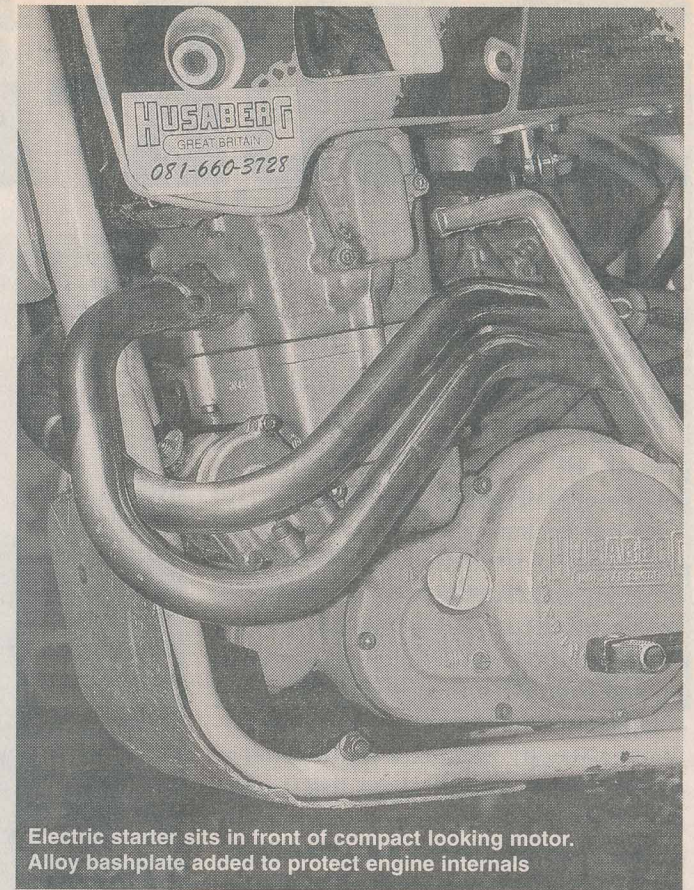
as much as anything else, which thanks to its lack of championship status (except for the sidecars), attracts a different sort of rider to many of the more serious two day enduros.

Through it all I was coming to terms with the Husaberg. The suspension felt plush and well matched, it handled predictably on the rough and soaked up some of the bigger hits without getting out of shape. It blitzed through mud without a problem, and about the only time that I felt it could do with more power was on Becon Hill, a long, loamy uphill which seemed to sap all the Husaberg's power, and forced me to change down part way through the climb. By now my ankle was beginning to throb and I was making a conspicuous effort to keep my toes in. We refuelled the Husaberg at every opportunity (though it carries its fuel nice and low and looks to have an enormous tank, in fact most of the space is taken up by the frame and air filters), and I was keeping it wound on as much as I could which obviously wasn't helping fuel consumption.

Check eight was the famous Strata Florida section, a series of water splashes linked together by a continuous rocky track lasting just under seven miles. Having never ridden this before I was unsure as to how fast it could be taken and it was only when Blezard overtook me through one of the water splashes, drenching me in the process that I knew I needed to get my skates on. Fired up I gunned the Husaberg hard and stuck right

on his tail, but the big XR was hurling rocks the size of footballs at me, and with just a couple of miles to go I knew I'd have to force my way past soon if I was going to get by. I didn't fancy my chances in a side by side drag for the line against something boasting 200cc more. I lined up an overtake at the exit of the last stream crossing but just as I was almost past, Blez got it all sideways and I had to slam on the anchors on the way through. Fortunately he exited pointing the wrong way and with a bit of bumping I managed to get by and hold the lead right up to the check.

I was impressed with the way the Husaberg could hang with the XR, it may have been lighter but it was still giving away 200cc to the XR on a check where speed and acceleration counted for a lot. And while we're on the subject of weight, Husaberg claim an all up mass of 114.8kg for the electric start 400, now I'm not saying they're telling fibs or anything, but that's the same weight as my two stroke CRM250, and I know which feels the lighter to me. Even so the Husaberg is

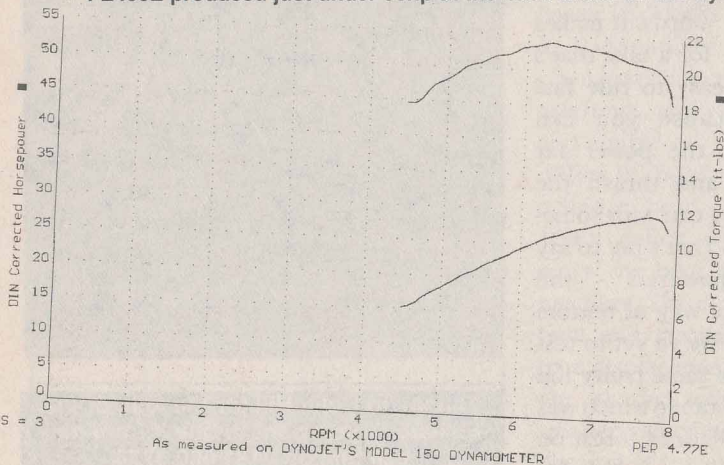


Electric starter sits in front of compact looking motor. Alloy bashplate added to protect engine internals

not heavy for a four stroke, it feels comfortably lighter than all the four stroke opposition despite none of them boasting an electric start.

If I had a complaint with the Husey it was that it felt skittish crossing white lines on the road, and just occasionally (at tick-over) the motor would sort of cough and stall. Oh, and the seat felt bloody hard after an hour (let alone a day) in the sad-

FE400E produced just under 30hp at the back wheel on the dyno



# ELDUR-ADO

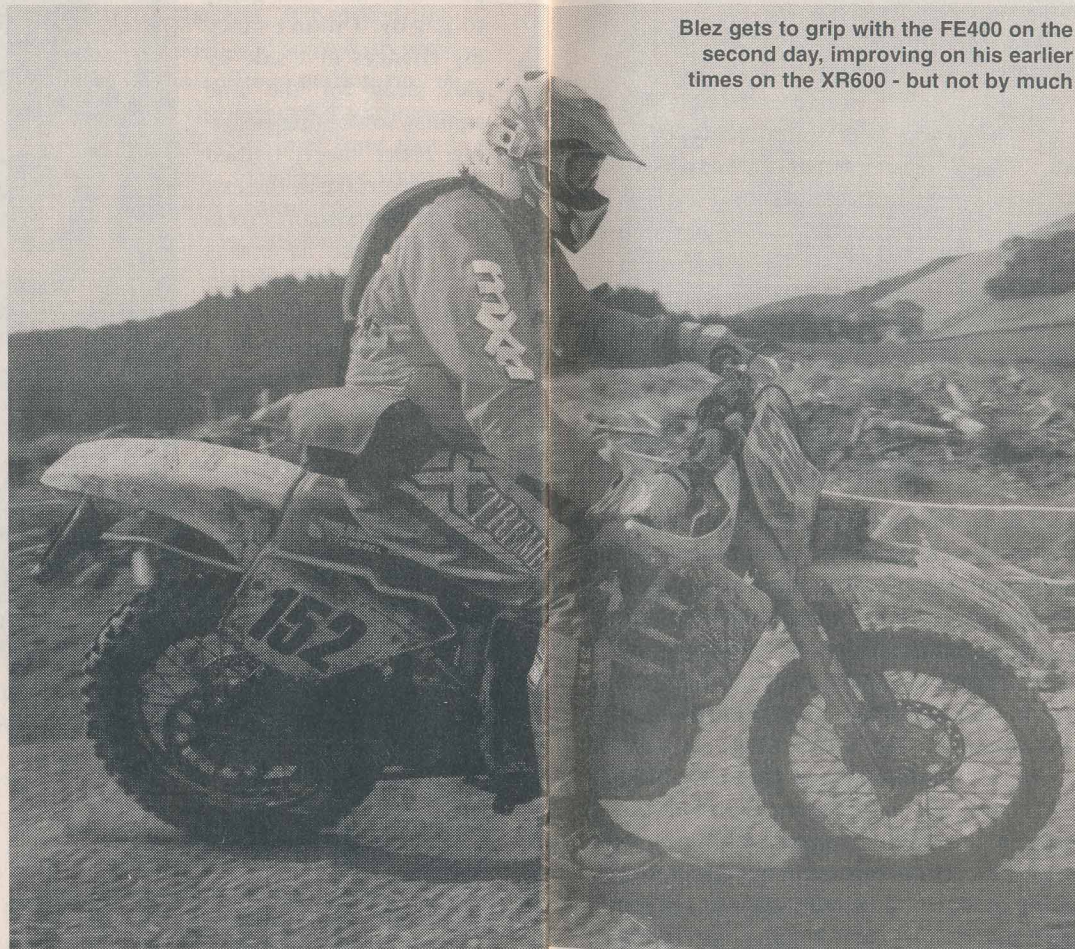


# ELDUR-ADO

dle though it had a non standard seat cover and for all I know, might have had harder foam as well. Other extra fittings included wraparound lever guards and a neat alloy bashplate to protect the engine internals from flying debris.

By the time I got to the cross country special test at Bwlchciliau, I was feeling knackered. My ankle was hurting, my knee was beginning to ache and my butt had gone to sleep hours ago. But the Husaberg was running sweet as a nut, and setting off 20 seconds after Blez I soon had him in my sights. Catching someone up and overtaking them though, are two completely different things. But I finally found a way by when Blez ran wide on a corner only to fall off about half a mile later when the front wheel clipped a log in one of the ruts. Surprisingly Blez didn't come past as he was having troubles of his own, but when I lost it again at the bottom of a sandy climb, right in front of the video camera, Blez stormed past using his momentum to carry him up the hill. I thought I'd lost him this time but the Husaberg once again reeled in the more cumbersome XR and I finally got past with less than half a mile to go. Impressed? I certainly was. Not with my ability but with the Husaberg's, though the next day things would take an ominous turn for the worse.

I knew I'd seriously hurt my ankle, but I wasn't ready for the pain the next morning when I tried to walk on it. I could barely put my foot down, let alone ride a bike, and as it slowly sank in that I



**Blez gets to grip with the FE400 on the second day, improving on his earlier times on the XR600 - but not by much**

wasn't going to finish my first Welsh, Blez and I hatched a plan that would at least allow us to finish testing the Husey.

And so it was that bike number 151 became number 152 the next day. Blez of course was riding under his own name it was just the machine that was different. But as we knew we weren't in with a chance

of stealing the silverware we felt justified in continuing the Husaberg test the only way possible. Besides, Blez had had a quick squirt on the 400 the day before and was keen to see if it was the bike or my superb riding abilities that were responsible for our differences in pace.

## Day 2

**W**hen Friday dawned with Melber feeling less than peachy and far too crippled to ride, it was hardly a tough decision when he offered me the 400! It was curiosity more than anything which made me desert my

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trusty Samurai warrior and go Viking biking instead. Was it the machine that had given the ed the edge, or was I merely degenerating even faster into Old Fartdom than I'd feared?

For those not familiar with the rules of enduros a change of steed mid-event is strictly *Verboten* (which hasn't stopped it happening on many occasions in the ISDE!), but if you are going to switch bikes it's customary to use two machines which at least bear a passing resemblance to one another..... Since the XR and the Husa aren't even the same colour, the same capacity, or the same anything, I half expected to be challenged before I even got to the start line, but no one said anything as I changed the 'Berg's numbers as discreetly as I could. The only snag was that the old numbers were a little reluctant to come off, so I was a few seconds late getting to the start line, which cost me



a 20 second penalty. Curses.

I missed having a speedo and a mirror (the Husa does normally come with a speedo but it had been removed), though I was soon enjoying whipping the wicked little Swede through the winding, gravel-strewn back-roads to the cross-country test which we'd done at the end of Thursday - (the second day being a shortened version of the first, but run in reverse).

Thus the four and a half mile special test was actually my first experience of riding the Husaberg off-tarmac, and what a revelation! It felt so much lighter than the XR, particularly at the front, and so much easier to maintain upright in the slippery bits, yet with just as much power for the faster going. The brakes were impressive too, as I discovered when I accelerated flat out through the gears up a straight-looking forest road only to realise that the route turned back off into the forest after only about 100 yards. I really thought I was going through the tapes but a quick squeeze with two fingers on the lever kept me on the right side of the markers and I only lost a few seconds.

The back brake worked equally well, but the lever was so tiny and tucked away compared to my XR's that at first I kept missing it entirely, or finding that my foot slipped off when I tried to use it - it was also adjusted much too high for my liking, especially when standing up.

I must admit that I was surprised and a little disappointed to discover that I'd only beaten the previous day's special test

time by a handful of seconds, but I certainly found it a lot easier. I can only put down the small time difference to the fact that I was still getting used to the bike, the course was more cut up and perhaps most important, I had no one to pace myself against, unlike Thursday's furious battle with Gruppenfuhrer Melber.

The following Irfon Forest section was the part of the course where I'd lost the most time in '95. But I had no trouble this year; the course was significantly drier and therefore easier but more importantly, the Husaberg made even tricky sections seem easy. I particularly remember one long dark section through the trees which was like riding through a tunnel. On the previous day on my XR I had slipped and slithered along, standing a bit, then paddling a bit, as other riders disappeared out of sight. On the Husaberg I could stay happily balanced standing on the pegs without difficulty and go about half as fast again with only half the effort. And when I did get a bit carried away, got cross-rutted and fell off, the bike was dead easy to pick up and I only had to press the button to get going again. What joy! What a time saver! I don't care what anyone says, an electric start is worth its weight in gold on a big thumper.

By the time I emerged from the Irfon Forest I felt like a different rider from the chap on the XR600 - gone was the self-doubt and frustration as grey-beards left me for dead. On the Husaberg I felt I could give 'em a run for their money, and on the Strata Florida I proved it. By the end I'd



Superb combination of White Power and Ohlins suspension helps the Husaberg tackle whoopy climbs

caught up the full minute on the rider in front and passed a lot of slower riders in between. I also survived a huge 'moment' on the 'Berg when I got cross rutted at some speed. The bars actually went on to full lock as I thought 'Oh no, this is going to hurt' before miraculously coming straight again - I'm sure I would have crashed the XR in the same circumstances.

It wasn't all wonderful on the Husaberg though. On the easy but deeply rutted twin-track trail from Tynfron to Ysbyty Ystwyth I found it much harder work than I had on the XR, or indeed did other competitor Zenek Zamroz on his trusty PE400. I followed him for several miles during which he never once got out of the saddle while I was up and down like a yo-yo - I didn't feel comfortable sitting down on the 'Berg's unforgiving and narrow saddle, but I wasn't comfortable standing up either. Interesting.

However, on the fast, Cambrian Rally-style fire breaks in the Irfon forest where the XR600 is actually very good, the Husaberg was even better. I could drift around fast bends knowing that if I overcooked it I could still get the plot back without running out of road, thanks to the light weight, great brakes and low centre of gravity. And in the really nasty loose-log hill climbs where I stalled the XR and got stuck for several minutes in '95, the Husaberg just kept thumping away. I actually lost control of it for several seconds at one point, but whereas the XR would have stalled, the Husaberg bashed on through the steep undergrowth as if on 'automatic pilot' until I'd got things together again, and I blessed its low seat height as I took a couple of desperate dabs.

A similar thing happened on a much faster and more open section with hidden ruts in long grass. I got cross rutted again

# ELDUR-ADO

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and was convinced I was going to crash, but the Husaberg just refused to go down! We made an unplanned sharp left turn off into the bracken, but to my total amazement, I stayed on once more.

I really enjoyed the bike on the fast sections of the A44 too - it zipped up to nearly 90mph and felt just as quick as my XR and even surer footed - brill! (But God was it loud!). Mind you, it slurps juice like a two-stroke and this thirst nearly led to disaster when my 'trusty' back-up team missed our rendez-vous and I only avoided running out of petrol thanks to a friendly marshal and a drop of juice from Neal Martin of 'In Chains' - thanks folks.

The only 'glitch' in the Husaberg's performance was towards the end of the day when it started to misfire a bit at low revs. There was a long steep climb on the last check where it misfired so much that I thought for a moment I might have a problem, but it 'cleared its throat' whenever I was able to give it full throttle, so it may have been nothing worse than a bit of dirt partially blocking a jet.

The only glitch in *my* performance came right at the end of the day on the so-called 'moto-cross test'. Despite feeling well pumped up (unlike our first go at the course right at the beginning of Thursday morning) I managed first to drop the bike completely on one innocent-looking climb and then got stuck in virtually the only boggy section on the whole course. Yet despite these two disasters I still got around quite a bit quicker than I had riding the XR on which I had a virtually trou-

ble-free (but rather limp-wristed) run (at least I didn't land in a heap after crossing the finish line, unlike about two-dozen competitors who got caught out by the slippery grass).

To sum up then, I enjoyed my day on the Husaberg immensely. It's quite simply in a different class from my XR600R. In off-road terms I reckon it's about on a par with an RMX250 but given the choice between a Husaberg 400 and an RMX I'd take the Swedish banger every time. If I wanted a bike solely for competition, a Husaberg would be very high on my short-list. Though unlike on this one I'd keep the baffle in if it was mine!

### HUSABERG FE400E

**Price (new): £5800 otr**  
**Eng: Liquid cooled, 4-stroke sohc, 4-valve single with counterbalancer and e/s**  
**Displacement: 92x60.2 399cc**  
**Comp ratio: 11.6:1**  
**Carburettor: Flatslide 38mm**  
**Transmission: 6-speed W/R**  
**Frame: Chrome-moly cradle**  
**Forks: 57mm WP IBS USD**  
**Shock: Ohlins**  
**Brakes (f): 260mm disc**  
**Brakes (r): 220mm disc**  
**Ignition: cdi + battery**  
**Lighting: 70+70W coils**  
**Wheelbase: 1490mm**  
**Seat ht: 950mm**  
**G/clear: 390mm**  
**Fuel cap: 8.5L**  
**Weight: 114.8kg**  
**Importer: 0181 660 3728**

# ELDUR-ADO

TrailBike -52- Magazine

# WELSH FOR BEGINNERS



Brian Williams

The Welsh Two Day Enduro is probably the most sociable 'proper' enduro of all. This year there was a huge entry as hundreds enjoyed a sunny couple of days riding in and around the forests of Mid Wales. Paul Blezard recounts the highlights of this year's event

This year's Welsh Two Day Enduro had a bumper turn out of nearly 400 riders - there were 428 listed in the programme but only 385 competitors actually turned up for scrutineering at the scenic lakeside parc ferme in Llandrindod Wells on Wednesday June 19.

There was the usual fantastic mix of old and new machinery and youthful and mature riders of all abilities - and both sexes. At one extreme there were young 'guns' like 21 year old George Brent on his Yamaha YZ250 who finished a storming

second in class at his first attempt, and at the other end of the scale was sixty-something army veteran Ted Johns doing his last Welsh on a KLX250 after decades of urging young guns to go for it.

Despite dire warnings of severe police checks on machine legality, virtually the only evidence of plod presence was the radar gun posted on the outskirts of town at the start of the first day, unless of course you count all the many members of the local constabulary who were actually taking part in the event!

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The weather was kind, both leading up to and during the event, which meant that (by Welsh enduro standards) the going was easy. Thankfully it wasn't as hot as last year, but if anything the course was even drier than in '95. The only drawback of course was the amount of dust generated on some of the fast fire roads, and as the warnings posted on the parc ferme fence said, *'Dust Means Danger'*.

For those not familiar with the Welsh (or enduros in general) the event is decided on the times posted in the four special tests (barring disasters elsewhere on the course). There are two special test courses, each ridden once per day, to make up the four tests: a short two and a half mile 'motocross test' and a longer four and a half mile 'cross-county test' and each one is ridden twice at either end of the day.

The only drawback to this arrangement, at least for 'fun' riders like myself, is that you don't get any credit for going well on the fast fire roads or other checks (as long as you stay on time), but conversely, you only need make a single mistake in one of the special tests to lose about 20 places in the overall results. (Or in the case of the editor and myself, make several mistakes per test.)

There were plenty of Lady competitors at this year's Welsh. Liz Millett, Coral Powell and Marianne Walford stuck together like the Three Musketeers, and if it hadn't been for Liz's TM80 crying 'enough' they would all have finished. Coral and Marianne survived various machine and other mishaps - Coral on another TM80 and Marianne on the same KMX200 with which she won the ladies' class of the Monte Carlo rally in 1988! (It brewed up several times, as KMX200s do, but she managed to keep going).

I doff my cap to their mate Trudi

Silvey who beat me fair and square on her KTM125 and as for expert rider Katrina Price I metaphorically throw my cape across the muddy puddle, get down on my knees and cry 'I am not worthy'. As usual she beat the vast majority of mere males, and this despite suffering a seizure and having to nurse her KTM125 through the last special test.

Paris-Dakar veteran Patricia Schek had a disaster when she lost her time card towards the end of the second day, while husband Jon Watson Miller like numerous others, survived punctures but managed to stay on time. If there were an award for 'best performance on most unsuitable bike' (and By George there should be!) it would go to Sean Watt from Croydon who struggled manfully to the finish with a non-electric start XT600 Tenere, despite dropping the monstrous beast on his ankle in the first tricky descent in the Radnor Forest just a couple of hours from the start on the first day.

Unluckiest competitors in the whole event must be Paul Pelling and Sue Kemp (featured in last month's issue), who were on course to win the sidecar class outright when they got trapped behind a stuck outfit on the very last special test, just minutes away from glory. They still managed a creditable fourth place, but have yet to win at the Welsh.

My only regret of the whole event is that after I finished on the Friday I didn't dash straight back to the special test to watch the Experts show how it should be done. No, actually I've got one other regret. If I'd got my numbers changed a bit quicker before the start on the second day I wouldn't have copped a 20 second penalty and TMX correspondent Bob Perring wouldn't have beaten me by 12 seconds! Curses! See you next year.

# MT 80 RS

# TIGHTEN YOUR GRIP

Athlete: Carl Lewis (member of the Sunia Morica Track Club); photographer: Albert Walker

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## Ian Kerr samples trail riding Antipodean style

Queenstown, in New Zealand's South Island has been billed as the adventure capital of the world. When you sit high on top of the mountain overlooking the spectacular lakeside town it is not difficult to see why. Access

Adventure Tours. Motorcycle Adventure Tours is a company run by Denis Columb and his wife Marion along with help from his sons and a few other guides. It started not because of a love of motorcycling, but a love for gold! Denis is a histo-

# KIWI

## CAPERS

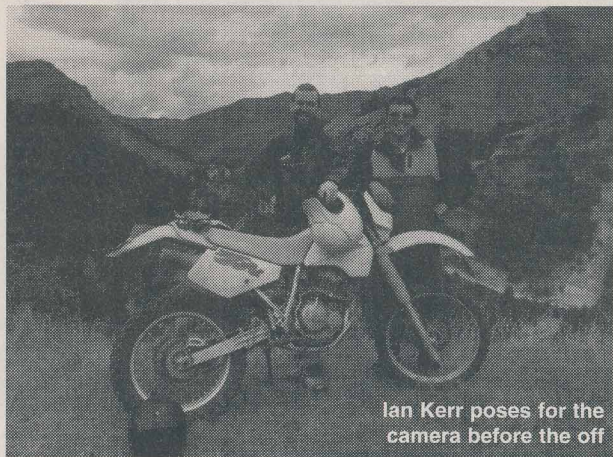
to the Fjords for powerboating, spectacular walking country, white water rafting and of course bungee jumping are just some of the activities available to the prospective thrill seeker.

But Queenstown also houses one of the best kept secrets in NZ, Motorcycle

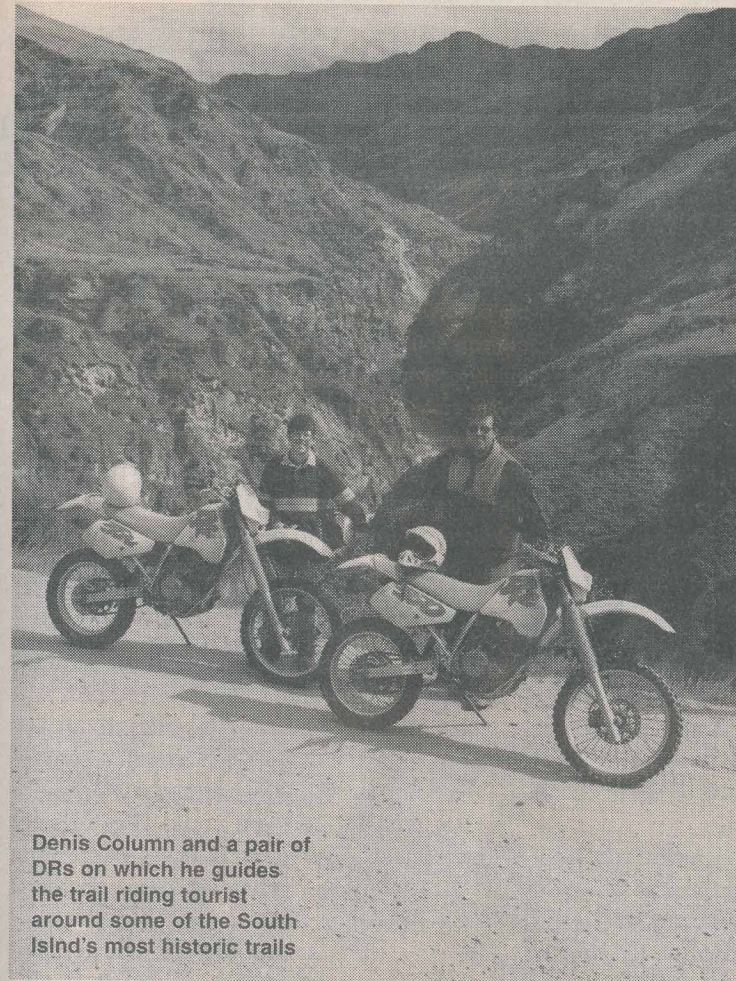
Adventures. Denis is a Kiwi with a superb in-depth knowledge of the NZ gold industry that started in the 1860s.

His quest for knowledge led him deep into the hillsides, but Denis quickly found that he couldn't get very far in a weekend just by walking. He chose a motorcycle to cover the miles of narrow winding tracks and old mining roads that litter the area, and found a dirt bike opened up a lot more of the island and its history to him.

The need to study maps soon brought knowledge of tracks long since abandoned along with others that had passed into private ownership, and though some of the terrain proved difficult to negotiate, gradually it honed



Ian Kerr poses for the camera before the off



Denis Columb and a pair of DRs on which he guides the trail riding tourist around some of the South Island's most historic trails

this full time has seen nearly 3,000 people take advantage of his guiding skills, equating to around 15,000 hours of riding time. Clients have included many local and international sportsman, such as the Britten race team, and despite the diversity of ability of people who have attended, the injuries have consisted of just two cuts that required stitches and one dislocated knee - and that was an experienced rider who did it whilst pushing the bike!

I called into Denis' house in Queenstown which also doubles as the office, workshop

and base for his activities. A large four wheel drive vehicle sat outside with a car sized trailer full of Suzuki DR350s on the back. These form the basis of the bikes on offer to clients, though there are also DR200s and 250s as well as Yamaha XT225 Serows and Honda XR100s, while a range of Quads allows non motorcyclists to join the tours.

The Quads are used during winter months when the temperature can drop to minus 26 and the going would be too dangerous without the additional stabilising his skills on two wheels, and meant that his offspring who were by now following in his wheel tracks were soon adept at riding as well.

Eventually Denis realised that other people had an interest in the rugged terrain over which he was riding most weekends and he started guiding people, reinforcing his knowledge of the tracks and his love of the area. He then bought machines for those who hadn't got their own and the rest, as they say, is history.

The last four and a half years of doing



# KIWI CAPERS

wheels. In the future he hopes to add more four wheel drive car-based vehicles to the fleet to offer the non motorcyclist the chance to venture off road.

Most of the tracks Denis uses are historic gold roads but he also uses a lot of private tracks with the permission of the owners. He reckons that he can do over 40 days off roading in the South Island without covering the same track twice, and only using metalled roads to reach accommodation in the evenings.

I joined him for an afternoon as he took some visitors from the USA out along some of the gold mining tracks. Boots, helmets and gloves are all provided, but for the longer tours it is recommended you use your own equipment. High above Queenstown everybody was kitted out with the most suitable bike for their ability, and after a check on equipment and a safety briefing we were off.

To get everybody into the swing of things we followed a hard-packed track out across the bridge where the highest bungee jump in the world takes place. This allowed everybody to settle down for half an hour before we hit the real thing. The trails varied from hard rocky going high above the spectacular Shotover river,

to mud and grassy hillsides. Tracks that repeatedly crossed rivers, and technical rocky climbs and descents certainly tested your bottle, though such going is reserved for the more competent riders... he foolishly seemed to think I was one!

Back with the main group, frequent stops allowed time to get one's breath and hear fascinating historical tales about the gold industry in the area as well as enjoying some superb views. Certainly a camera is a must though you could very quickly run out of film. Many of these panoramic vistas will never grace a picture postcard thanks to the effort needed to view them, so any shots taken will be different to most other people's holiday snaps.

Considering the diversity of the riding skills present I was impressed by his ability to keep everybody happy and safe. Although scheduled to last for three hours by the time we returned to load up the bikes five hours had passed; Denis does not keep strict time, so in terms of value for money, it's excellent.

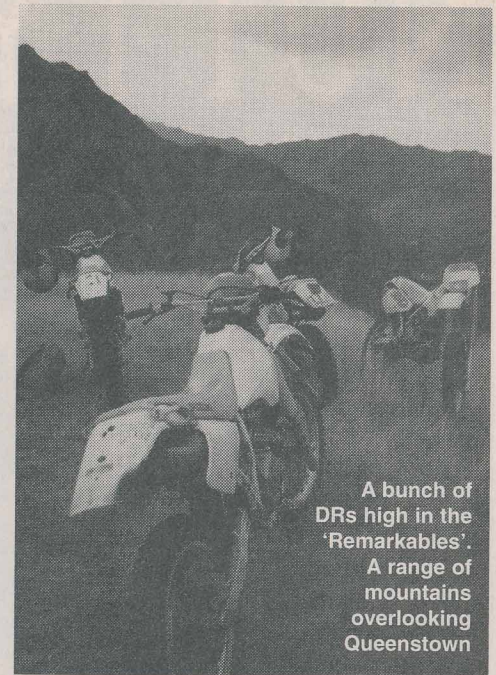
The trips are all variable and can be tailored to people's particular needs. There are of course set routes and tours like the three days around Milford Sound, or eight days tour around the Mt Cook

area. On the longer trips a back-up vehicle accompanies you and accommodation and food is provided. Some trips involve camping out but again it depends on what the customers wants.

Denis is a typical Kiwi, more flexible than an access card and great fun to be with, as well as being a very experienced rider. The day invariably ends in a bar reliving the day's riding, and he seems to know all those bars that stay open late!

New Zealand may be a long way away, but if you're considering a trail riding holiday that's out of the ordinary, look him up.... I promise you'll not be disappointed.

Motorcycle Adventure Tours  
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A bunch of DRs high in the 'Remarkables'. A range of mountains overlooking Queenstown



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# NUTTY BOYS

Reader Neil Finch tells the story of the birth of a small, but exclusive trail bike club



**N**ow that the long hot, dusty record breaking, drought ridden summer of 96 (ha ha) is half over the Coulsdon and District Off Road Riders Club (current membership three) is actively planning its winter expeditions. It all started way back in 1993 when we arrived at an establishment known as Derbyshire Dirt Bikes on a cold and wet Friday evening.

On arrival we were met with a warm welcome by Carl and his lovely wife Steph, introduced to a guy named Mark who had travelled from York, and listened attentively to tales of riding trails through some of the most unspoilt areas of the country. Saturday morning found us having trouble making it down for eight o'clock breakfast as

we had been out sampling the local ales the previous evening. Eight thirty and we were each assigned a Kawasaki KLR250 upon which we followed Carl (our guide) through the village to the first trail. We tackled this trail with confident enthusiasm, and 80 yards later were lying beside our motorcycles in a large area of mud. I think it was at this point that Carl realised what he was dealing with. The day continued with various individual interpretations of how to ride/replace chains/drag bikes out of mud etc, until fading light brought the day to a close.

Sunday morning found us in serious trouble as having returned to the beer drinking emporium for Saturday night we were forced to suffer the consequences of being locked in until nearly three o'clock in the morning. We picked at our breakfast and staggered to the bikes. That

morning's trails were a little more demanding but there was one among us who by now was seriously thinking of turning professional. This particular individual whinged and whined so much about his bike that Carl gave him a nearly new DT125 to see how he would get on. There following a steep climb up from the road near Ladybower reservoir (which incidentally, is the place where the bouncing bomb was tested), before we came out on what appeared to be the top of the world with the trail stretching away in front of us towards Buxton. We were indeed riding in the most beautiful of places and were all taking in the scenic views as we trickled along, when, riding like a man possessed and with a facial expression not unlike that of Stuart Pearce when he hammered in the penalty against Spain, our man Roachie shot passed us in true motocross style, rear wheel spinning a great plume of mud as he rapidly disappeared into the distance. Five minutes later and about a mile and a half further down the trail the rest of us came across a DT125 hanging vertically on a barbed wire fence and the crumpled form of a man grasping his testicles and calling for God. My how we laughed.

All too soon the day was over, we battled our way back down to the vastly overpopulated

south eastern corner of England, recounting tales of skill and bravado and being entertained by Roachie now able to sing soprano. On our return to the real world we wrote to Surrey council and obtained a list of RUPPs and BOATs, copied them onto an OS map and turned our attention to machines.

Already being the proud sixth owner of a Kawasaki KMX200 and expounding its virtues to the others, Nick quickly followed suit, and Roachie searched long and hard for a bike. He finally ended up parting with 300 sovs for a mechanical timebomb in the form of a Suzuki TS250 of



Anyone for a spot of gentle green laning?

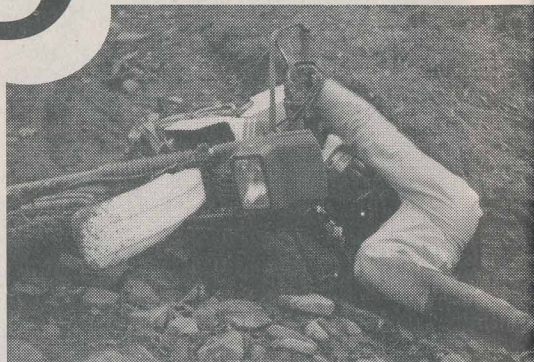


# NUTTY BOYS

1979 vintage. If the Japanese ever decide to properly apologise for past atrocities then I suggest they start with this particular motorcycle.

We had our bikes, we had our map, nothing could stop us now. For the next couple of weeks, Nick and I would ride out in the evenings and weekends trying out all of the trails marked, until we could find the best of them from memory. One in particular runs from a place called Great Bookham through to the A25 and is used a fair amount by the 4x4 fraternity. Along its length lie several long puddles, all of which are shallow enough to negotiate on bikes.... well, all except one that is.

This particular puddle lies to one side of the track and curves between two banks. One unusually cold morning Nick and I had been breaking the ice on all the large puddles and decided to try the smaller one to the side between the two banks. We rode boldly into the water and came to a dead stop in the middle with the water covering the cylinder heads. To remove the bikes from this predicament meant suffering ice cold water to well above our knees, and at least half an hour of coaxing the bikes to get them to restart, before a 20 mile ride home and a hot bath.



The following Sunday we had Roachie and his comedy motorbike out with us for the first time, and he was bringing up the rear. Having stopped 30 yards or so before the infamous puddle, and noticing that it appeared somewhat deeper than the previous week, we hatched a plan most foul. 'You can go in front for a bit if you like', we said to the unwitting Roachie, 'but make sure you give it a big handful through the puddle because it's full of thick mud at the bottom.' We went on to question his courage and pass derisory remarks as to his sexual persuasion, and so to our immense delight he selected first gear and gassed it towards the water. The splash, the scream, his bike disappearing up to the handlebars, and him flying head first over the far bank was truly a sight to behold. I can hear Brian Belstaff and his colleagues at the TRF tut tutting at such irresponsibility, but well, you had to be there.

Anyway Roachie was fine, if a little

Main Pic: The entire membership of the Coulsden & District Off Road Riders Club  
Left: Oops!



muddy, and when we'd finally finished laughing we helped him remove the 'Yellow Submarine' from the puddle. When water had finally ceased to pour from the bike's every orifice he swung the kickstart and gave it an almighty boot. To our utter, utter disbelief it fired first time and continued to run, albeit not quite so smoothly as before. Roughly a mile later a noise not dissimilar to a washing machine full of cutlery could clearly be heard emanating from the engine room as he passed us. 'If it can survive that, it'll survive anything' he shouted over his shoulder as he shot past. Just then there was an almighty BANG and Roachie's bike ground to an ominous halt!

Over the following months he ruined each and every outing we went on by breaking down everywhere. Rebuild the engine, a shock absorber breaks. Replace the shocks, the chain rips a hole in the gearbox casing. Repair the hole, the frame snaps, all interspersed with puncture

upon puncture. The frame snapping was discovered only after he complained of vague steering on return from our favourite haunt known locally as 'The Playpit'. In all fairness the bike was subjected to phenomenal abuse, and its rider is a rotund person of dubious parenthood. But when eventually the entire frame had been replaced by huge chunks of weld, and all ancillary equipment was held in place gaffer tape, he sold it. He sold it to someone we know. He sold it to someone who's vocabulary is devoid of the words 'mechanical' and 'sympathy'. The bike has run trouble free ever since.

We three now all enjoy KMX200s and spend many an enjoyable evening playing games like 'change the piston' and 'hunt the rear wheel bearing' not forgetting our favourite 'make the brake pads disappear'. Certain parts of the bikes do seem to be a little fragile when subjected to fairly hard use, but when they provide us with fun factor ten then what the hell.



# the TRAILBIKE GUIDE

We don't claim this to be the definitive guide to all the trailbikes ever made, merely the sum total of our collective knowledge, trawled from the depths of dim and distant memories and assembled in some sort of order that you may find useful. What we do know is that no-one produces a guide to trail bikes that is as comprehensive as this, and that if you think there are revisions we should make, bikes that need adding to the list or merely things we've got wrong please feel free to drop us a line with your suggestions. This month we have again split the guide to allow more space for features within the magazine. Pages 3 & 4 this month, other pages to follow.

**Elefant 750:** 1988-1990. 188kg/414lbs, o-a/c, 4-str, desmo, V-twin, e/s.

Distinctive looking big trailie with white/red/blue/blue paintwork, angular styling and gold anodised rims (21 inch F, 17 inch R). 750 motor was nice, but suffered from poor carburetion at bottom end thanks to Bing carbs. Nimble handling and good off road ability.

**Elefant 750/900 (Second generation):** o-a/c, 4-str, desmo, V-twin, e/s, 60bhp/68bhp (claimed). Second generation Elefants from 1991-ish are bigger, and slightly heavier than their predecessors. Lovely torquey engines are based on the Ducati 750 and 900SS. 1991 versions (distinguishable by Lucky Explorer paintscheme), were higher spec than later ones, with Ohlins suspension and electronic fuel injection. Although they have a high CofG the new generation Elefants make a great touring bike for the road, but they're a bit monstrous off-road - more like a Super Tenere than the original Transalp-sized 750s. *Verdict: For those who like to be seen and heard. Secondhand 900 tested TBM1.*

## ENFIELD INDIA

**Bullet trail:** a/c, 4-str, ohv, single. Indian made version of the venerable Royal Hen, now with 12v electrics and sprung saddle option. *Verdict: Strictly for masochists everywhere.*

## GAS-GAS

**Pampera:** 85kg/187lbs, w/c, 2-str, 238cc, single, 6-speed. Brand new hybrid trail bike from top Spanish trials manufacturer using a trials engine and suspension mated to an enduro style chassis. Brilliant performer off road, but trials inspired gearing limits road use. Top-notch components make this a real steal. *Verdict: What are you waiting for?*

## GILERA

Now defunct part of the Piaggio group with legendary road-racing history.

**50/125:** a/c, 2-str, single. Learner bikes - not

officially imported.

**RC 600:** w/c, 4str, 558cc, single, e/s. Nice-looking P-D styled trailie with unimpeachable Paris-Dakar winning pedigree. Shares engine with Northwest. Quite a few still for sale brand new from selected Italian specialists. Good value at approx £3500. Watch out for fragile plastic.

**Nordwest:** 140kg/308lbs, w/c, 4-str, 558cc, single, e/s. Supermoto version of the RC 600 with 17 inch cast alloy wheels, USD forks, and serious brakes. Superb 'street scrambler' with drop-dead looks, but not as powerful as the Pegaso or F650, and engine can be vibey. Still a few new ones around. *Verdict: Wonderful style.*

**XRT600:** w/c, 4str, 558cc, single, e/s. Clumsily styled, Paris-Dakar influenced big trailie that uses the stock Gilera lump in yet another manifestation. Big, heavyish and extremely rare in the UK. *Verdict: Ugly duckling.*

## GREEVES

British as bully beef manufacturer of scramblers, and road racers in the swinging sixties. Two-strokes used ubiquitous Villiers engines. Distinctive alloy box-section frames with leading link forks. Also adapted for Triumph twins. **Dave Taylor on his Greeves-Triumph 500 in TBM No.1**

## HARLEY DAVIDSON

Not the V-twins, but a mish-mash of European-made stuff with the H-D badge.

**H-D 90:** a/c, 2-str, 90cc, single. Aermacchi-made 1970s mini-trail funbike. Very rare these days. Passable off road. CCM sold the rights to the Armstrong army bikes to H-D circa 1992, and H-D duly won the British army contract. Now electric start (after heavy squaddie casualties with the old left-side kick-starts) and reportedly more robust but down-sized from 500 to 350cc.

## HONDA

XL = a/c, 4-str, trail.

XR = a/c, 4-str, enduro.

## TRAILBIKE GUIDE

MTX = a & w/c, 2-str, trail.

Basic beginners' bikes: XL100S, XL125S, XL185S. 1970s-80s. All use basically the same sohc air-cooled engine in twin-shock chassis (but with different gearboxes). Great bread-and-butter trail bikes, but getting a little long in the tooth nowadays. As with all small Hondas, frequent oil changes are the key to a long, trouble-free life.

**Cub 90:** Whacky off-road 'scooter' for whacky off road riders, different, but lacking any lights or credibility! *Verdict: For planet-e.*

**MT50:** a/c, 2-str, single. Many a 16 year-old's first bike. Unburstable moped-legal trail bike. Staple fare for trail parks. *Verdict: Fun in a small package.*

**MTX 125:** 227lb/103kg, w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Learner-legal monoshock trail bike with an unfortunate propensity for brewing up in serious off-roadery. No longer imported. Definitely not as robust as the XLs.

**MTX200:** w/c, 2-str, 198cc, single. Bigger brother of 125, but never quite lived up to expectations. Quite rare and prone to boiling up - no cooling fan. Be very careful replacing ceramic seal on the water pump. Questionable reliability especially with old ones. *Verdict: Good for making tea.*

**CRM250R:** 114kg, w/c, 2-str, 249cc, single. Japanese-spec trail bike roughly based on CR motocrosser but with usual trailie luxuries. Low seat height, reasonable spread of power, superb suspension. Later ones (after1990) had USD forks. *Verdict: Best of the stroker trail bikes.*

**CL250S:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Bit of an oddity sold to farmers in the early Eighties, for on and off road work. Unusual in that it featured a 5-speed gearbox with a range of both high and low options. More roadified than most trailies with low saddle and front mudguard, and chromed (twin) shocks. Boxy styling and front and rear drum brakes makes it rare but not highly desirable. *Verdict: Conversation stopper only.*

**TLR200:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, 199cc, single. Early Eighties trials-styled trailie ideal for really snotty green lanes and long distance trials events, but not as comfy as some trail bikes and not really built for speed. Still available new as personal imports at fairly attractive prices.

**TLM200:** a/c, 2-str, 199cc, single. More modern version of above with 2-stroke engine and monoshock suspension built for Japanese home market. Not much of a seat but you can't have it all. *Verdict: Nothing will stop you.*

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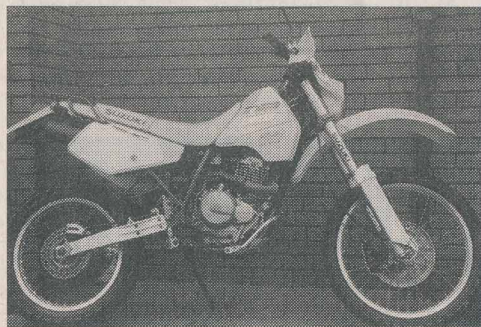
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adult trail bike, 1970s, tidyish runner, maintenance record and Haynes manual, £160, also Dave Cooper bike carrier, £15, number plate/light board, £10. Tel 0161 861 9165 (Manchester)

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**Honda** TLR200 Reflex, 1995, Taxed, Pirelli MT43s, O-ring chain, handguards, toolbag, £1300. Tel 01823 433972 (Somerset)

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# TRAIL TALES...

ROGER WILLIS GOES 'OVER THE TOP'

**A**ll scenery has scale and character - big and lumpy, smooth and flat, rolling, rugged, vertiginous, dizzying, verdant arid or whatever. And when viewed from the vague proximity of a dirtbike saddle, Acquires an extra dimension, usually of the vertical kind. Such parameters have been troubling me recently, because I finally realised that the scale of what you are riding through is entirely relative. And for me, it is inextricably linked to the Isle of Man and the TT festival. Let me explain.

Last year, along with a ruffly-tuffly party of similar miscreants I abandoned The Island during TT week (I actually live there now you see) and moved my personal festivities to the Picos Di Europa in northern Spain. A week of glorious trail riding ensued, up and down some of the most precipitous mountains I've ever assaulted. Want to grab some skytime high above the cloudbase? No problem. Want to test your courage by chasing your mates along a six-foot-wide, rubble-strewn mining track which cuts across a sheer cliff face with a vertical drop of 1000 metres? Hey, I've been there.

I didn't do any falling off at all. Because of course the consequences did-

n't bear thinking about. Which is why I (who has never had any trouble with heights before) spent so much time thinking about them. What exactly would be the correct etiquette as the front wheel paws apparently endless fresh air, to be followed by self, back wheel rest of bike and life assurance payout for undeserving relatives? Blurt out a last cliché? Consider the

**MY SURVIVAL OF  
THE EXPEDITION  
PROVED THAT  
THERE'S NOTHING  
AS POTENT AS  
FEAR FOR  
FOCUSSING THE  
CONCENTRATION**

meaningless of existence? Well, during the Picos scale of inadvertent descents you'd certainly have plenty of time.

The sequence would probably run something like this: 'Oh crikey... I really should have done something about the brakes on this piece of scrap... Why did I bother paying that huge phone bill before I left... Oh look at that interesting and rare short-toed eagle, notable

for the grey-brown colouring on its upper parts, the black and white plumage on its belly and a singular diet of carrion... Hello, it seems to be following me... I wonder what the wife will say when she finds my collection of S&M spanking vids... Well at least the taxman will never get me now... Splat!

However my survival of the expedition proved there's nothing as potent as fear for focusing the concentration. This year of course I decided to stay safely on The



Island. My own back yard - and still managed to ride my trusty DR straight off a cliff. Now this is a bit of a tradition in our family. Someone near and dear to me once did it deliberately off all 237 ft of Douglas Head. Two back flips, and terminal depreciation on a Peugeot 309 later, she walked away unscathed - strong cars Peugeots.

Anyway back to my personal chasm. As many of you might know, the Isle of Man is a veritable trail riders paradise. It's possible to cover its length, breadth and virtually all the bits in between on green roads, tracks and paths. The government

even puts up handy green signs emblazoned with motorcycle and horse icons to save the bother of excessive map reading. Naturally, while all those limp-wristers are thrashing around the mountain circuit hitting each other's pink FireBlades with their handbags, we real men stick to the dirty bits.

And that is what I was doing at TT week this year, accompanied as ever by Mac McDiarmid who like me is a sucker for punishment. Returning from Port Erin in the Manx deep south one afternoon he decreed that we should explore the leafy



glades of the glen that slithers down the creepy side of Dorlish Cashen, which I have since learnt is Manx Gaelic for 'eat hard scenery, pigdog Englishman'. And we did...

Fanciers of the wilder and more painful parts of what we modern day colonisers like to call Ellan Vannin (*er, that's Manx for Isle of Man - Ed*), might be familiar with this hauntingly beautiful excuse for a track. It begins innocently enough, but then tries to hurt you. It usually succeeds. In my case it earned its reputation in double quick time. The section entry is seductive: a gentle descent into a gully with a rustic dry stone wall on the left blocking your route of escape. Suddenly you realise you are trapped in a tunnel of angst, a corridor of cruelty, a passage of pain. It gets steeper, while all the time under your wheels pours water running over dastardly slippery slate slabs. So when I saw Mac in front of me get off his bike and attempt to roll it down with a dead engine I got clever, but not clever enough.

With a big handful of gas I gunned my trusty thumper up a parallel track that I had spotted with Holmes-like perspicacity, onto the hillside above. But, and I say again 'but', for some reason this path of right-



**I HESITATED ONLY MOMENTARILY, AND THEN I LEARNT JUST HOW MUCH LEARNING CAN HURT**

eousness ended in an insurmountable bank topped by a further masonic extrusion. Turning round on the narrow ledge was impossible. My choice was simple: it was a case of either attempting to get down the small but perfectly formed cliff that now lay beneath my wheels and which separated me from Mac and the rest of the trail, or giving up and hoping that the mountain rescue dogs would be carrying enough Brandy. I went for it.

Having seen Eddy Lejeune, Steve Colley and Uncle Tom Cobbley and all perform the self-same feat at any number of trials, I hesitated only momentarily. And then I learnt just how much learning can hurt. Despite my superb body Irish, as it were, everything suddenly became foreign. I nosed off the edge, the front wheel dropped, and dropped, and dropped, then stopped. The bike though kept on going, in a rotational fashion. I touched down, then it touched down. Upside down. On me. Very, very painfully. McDiarmid, whose steed was actually stuck further up the gully had abandoned it to watch the show. He laughed, because laughing at the agony of others is what he does best.

I might never master the art of riding off cliffs, but next time I'll make sure I take him out on the way down.

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