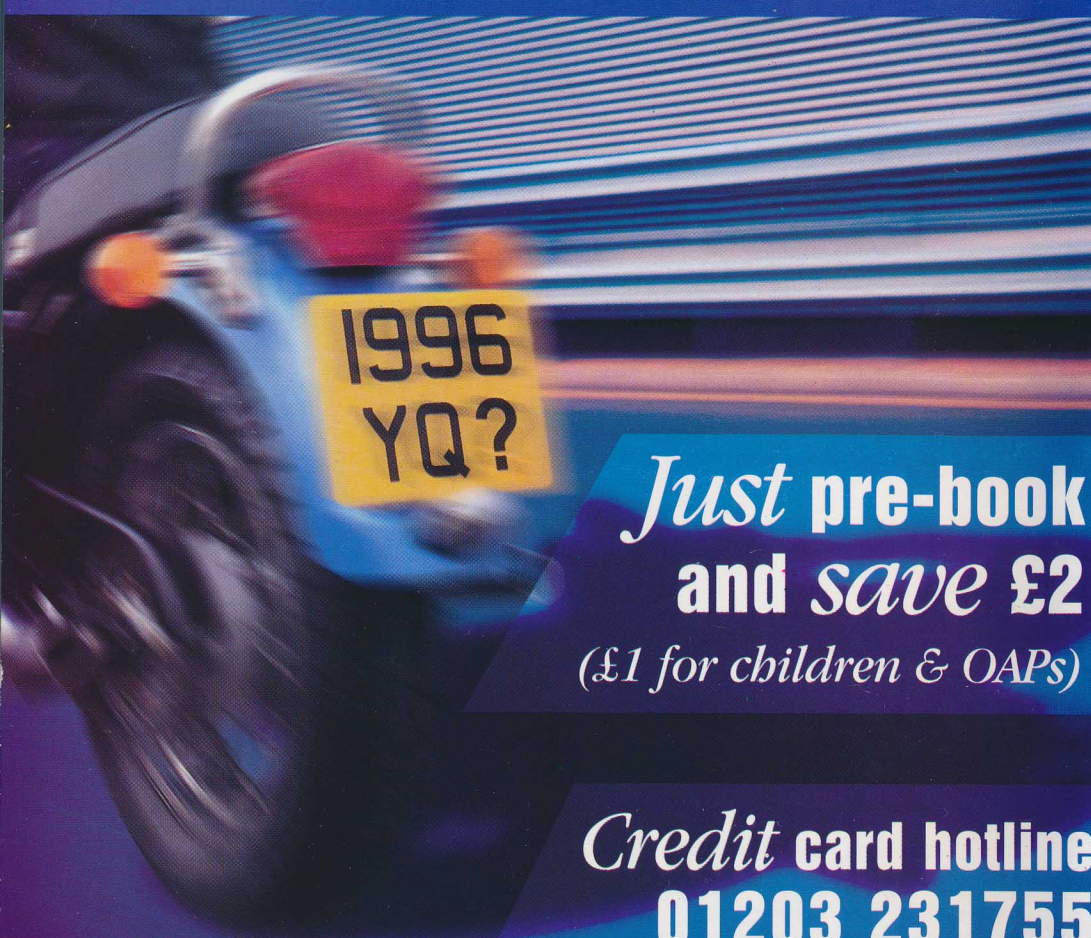


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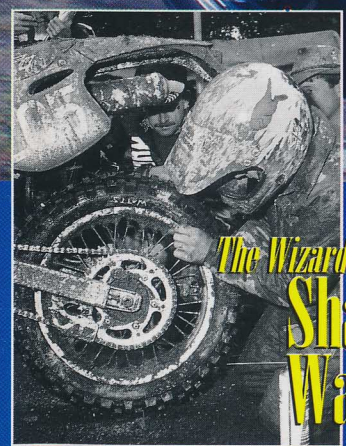
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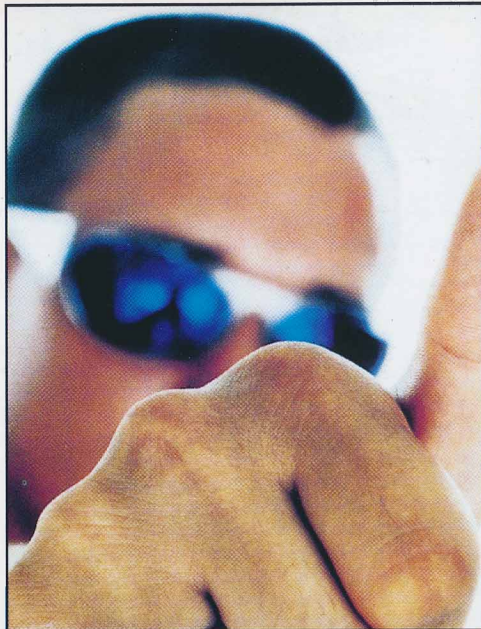


*The Wizard of Aus*  
**Shane  
Watts**



**Paul  
Edmondson  
Column**





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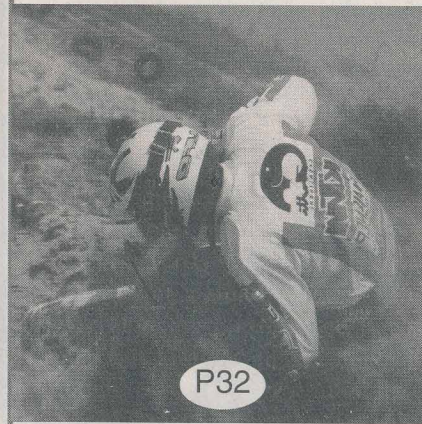
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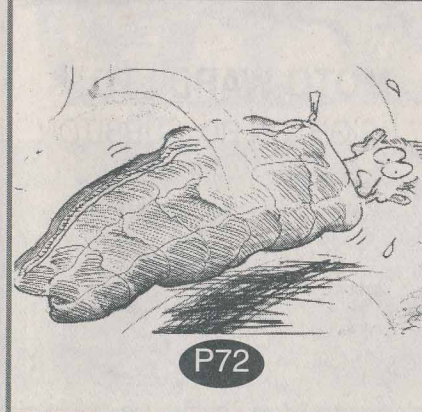
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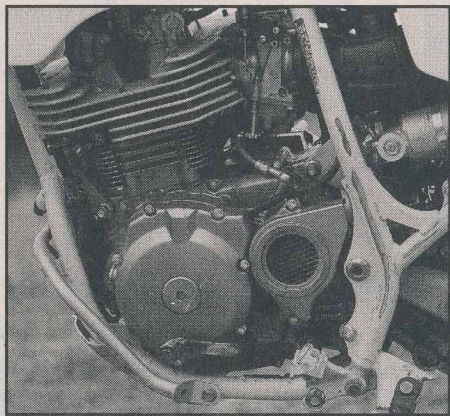
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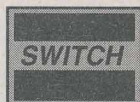
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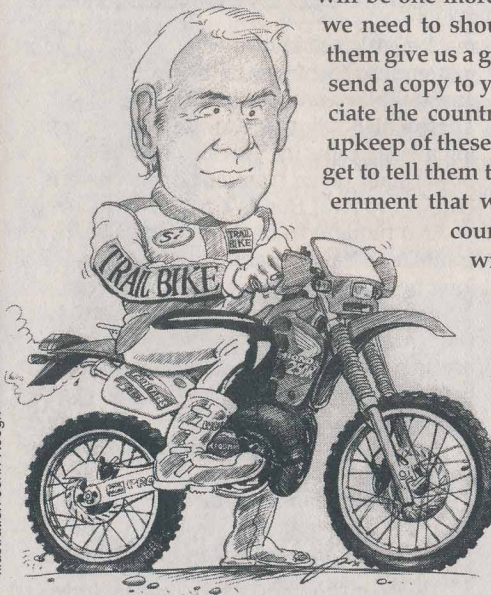
YOU should be worried. I am. In a consultation paper jointly published by the Department of the Environment and the Department of Transport, the government is inviting comment from interested parties (that's you and me), over whether they should make wholesale changes to the current system of rights of way (green lanes). One suggestion is that the current system of BOATs (Byways Open to All Traffic) should be replaced by a new classification of Byway, which would eliminate all motorised rights of way except for agricultural use or access to property. I don't need to spell out to you exactly what this would mean for our sport. Indeed, there would be no sport left. No greenlaning. No enduros. No fun. And indeed for many people, no access to the countryside. Routes whose histories are shrouded in the mists of time would fall into disrepair, eventually they would get ploughed up and assimilated into the surrounding farmland as if they never existed - and would certainly never exist again.

The government are kow-towing to the spoilsport generation, the NIMBY complainers and the over zealous rambler. And just like the European issue of bhp limits and nanny policy making, if you don't do something about asserting your rights, somebody else will almost certainly assert theirs over you.

It's not too late to do something about it. Every letter that the government receives will be one more voice shouting for our cause, and believe me we need to shout loudly if we're not to just roll over and let them give us a good kicking. I urge you to write to the DOT and send a copy to your local MP. Tell them that you use and appreciate the countryside, tell them that you already pay for the upkeep of these lanes via your road tax, and of course don't forget to tell them that you'd never, ever consider voting for a government that wantonly disregarded your right to enjoy the countryside legitimately. The person you should write to is Mr Ryan, Traffic Policy Div'n, DOT zone 3/17, Great Minster House, London SW1P 4DR. If you don't write then don't blame us when they take away your sport - for good.

Sadly, last month Dave Taylor died. Not only was he an enthusiastic trail rider and avid motorcycle campaigner, he was also an occasional contributor to this magazine, and a bloody nice guy. To his family and friends our condolences. For the future sake of biking, lets hope there's more like him - he'll be sorely missed. **Si Melber**

Illustration John Keogh



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## NEW BIKES FOR 1997

**WHAT THE BIKE  
MANUFACTURERS  
HAVE UP THEIR  
SLEEVE FOR  
NEXT YEAR**

There's growing speculation that a number of manufacturers are on the verge of introducing new trail bike models for 1997, some of which may well make an appearance at the Cologne show later this month.

**Honda** are thought to be working on a new 650cc trail bike with the emphasis placed firmly on genuine dual purpose ability, as opposed to a road biased bike like the current 650 Dominator. The new machine which will be similar in styling to Suzuki's DR650 is likely to be built at one of their European factories rather than in Japan.

**Suzuki** on the other hand are expected to announce the launch of a trail-styled road machine more like the F650 or Aprilia Pegaso. No details are available as yet, but Suzuki are known to be keen to capitalise on the success of the BMW which has attracted buyers to the benefits of a simple yet rugged trail-style single.

If European rumours are to be believed **Kawasaki** are planning on importing a batch of KLX300s next year. The 300 (first shown in issue 6 of TBM) was launched in Japan at the end of last year in a bid to counter customer complaints about lack of bottom end and midrange power in the KLX250. If Kawasaki UK decide to bring in the new



**Kawasaki KLX300:**  
Could it be destined  
for the UK next year?

machine it's not known whether it will be in just enduro form or whether both enduro and trailbike versions will be available. There's also talk that Kawasaki are developing a large capacity V-twin trail bike using a powerplant taken from one of its custom cruisers to rival Honda's Africa Twin.

Also thought to be developing a monster trailbike is Italian manufacturer **Aprilia**. It's long been known that Aprilia have been developing a powerful 60-degree, V-twin, water-cooled and fuel injected engine for use in a supersports road bike, but rumours coming out of Italy suggest that the engine (which is designed to be made in any capacity from 650-1000cc) may yet find a home in an Elefant-style trailie.

Another Italian manufacturer thought to be at the design stage with a big trailie are **Moto Guzzi**. The cash-strapped Mandello-based company has built big trail bikes before, notably the ill-fated Quota 1000 and V65TT, but are pressing ahead with plans to build a new model using their traditional air-cooled, two valve, V-twin motor, which in injected form is said to be good for 70hp.

Meanwhile, closer to home, **Triumph** are known to be restyling the 900 Tiger with a view to a launch in late '97 or early 1998.

## Snippets

Dave Taylor, the former wheelie King, and contributor to this magazine has died aged 53 from cancer. See P56 for full obituary

There's still time to get an entry to the Hafren Rally.

SAE to John Edmunds, Brodowel, Llanbister, Powys LD1 6TH

Subs comp winner will be announced next month

*A number of the manufacturers have already announced details of their 1997 range of enduro bikes, including KTM, Yamaha and Husaberg (pictured). Full details next month*



## Sala storms to ISDE victory

Britain's World title hope Paul Edmondson narrowly missed victory at this year's ISDE in Finland after a hard fought battle with World Championship rival Giovanni Sala which went right to the wire. 'Sala was on a mission' said Edmondson afterwards, 'he was out to prove something and he did it.' Edmondson had taken the

lead on the second day in one of the toughest Six Days events for years - made even harder by the heat - but in the end he couldn't hold off an on form Sala who took the outright win, with Petri Sylvan third.

Finnish police added an extra hazard to the event by setting up a number of speed traps on the road sections. British rider Rob Sartin was one of the unlucky ones who copped a ticket and a £100 fine.

## In Brief

### DR650 Boost

Taylor Racing in Wiltshire are bringing in a number of performance parts (from the US) for the latest generation Suzuki DR650. The full list which include bash plates, carb recalibration kits and a new exhaust, as well as other bits 'n' pieces is available from Taylors on 01249 657575.

### New Raid

Normandy Raid organiser Chris Evans has released details of a new French Raid he is running in the Burgundy Region. The Burgundy Raid which follows a specially prepared roadbook takes place on 6/7/8 December and costs £240. With stunning scenery and quite different terrain to the more northerly raids, the Burgundy Raid will be added to Sport Adventure's other raids (Calais and Normandy) for which dates are also available (5/6 Oct & 1/2/3 Nov respectively). Details from Chris Evans on 00331 42099773.

### Malvern Springs Up?

Charlie Morriss of the Gloucester TRF is starting up a new TRF group in the Gloucester/Malvern area. Interested parties should head along to the first club night on Tue 17 Sept at 8pm at the Worcester Auto Club, Tower Building, Perdis Well, Worcester, or else contact Charlie direct on 01453 885323

# Dear Trail Bike...

## Which 400?

Dear TBM

Your mag's got me hooked and I'm dying to get onto the dirt. The Welsh Two Day, Hafren, Cambrian, Normandy Raid, some club enduros, some off road adventure breaks and a bit of green laning look the ticket.

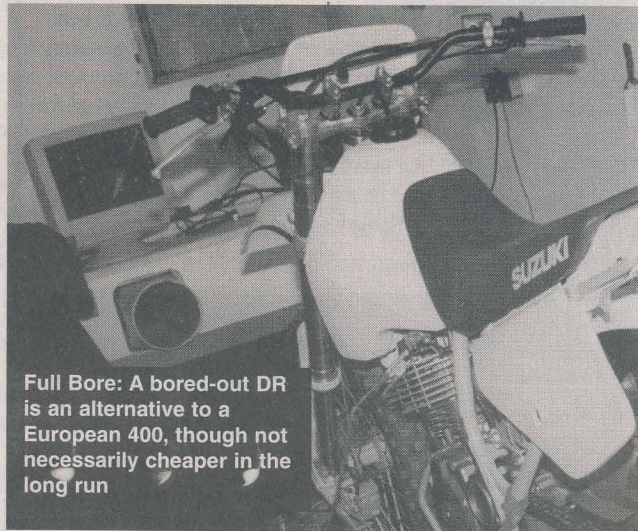
The bike for all this is the main question however - definitely 4-stroke and 400cc for size and maximum rideability, and off road use only (my Aprilia Pegaso takes care of the tarmac). The choice for me is between the Honda XR400R, KTM400SC, Husky TE410 and Husaberg FE400. Assuming unrestricted choice what would be your verdict considering the above requirements, and as I'm not trying to be Paul Edmondson would the least expensive of the above choices be more than serious enough to compete and have fun on?

You have a good thing going with this magazine, perfect for my needs, well done and I look forward to meeting you guys out on the front line.

Daniel Scott  
London NW2

*Hey, what a choice you have. Any of these extremely desirable machines would do for what you want. Though*

*they all feel completely different to ride, the differences are largely a matter of personal preference, and in terms of ability they are all pretty much on a level. In the end it really comes down to which manufacturer you prefer, whether you want air- or water-cooled and whether you*



**Full Bore:** A bored-out DR is an alternative to a European 400, though not necessarily cheaper in the long run

*value the advantages of an electric start - we'd be happy riding any one of them*

## Boring Japs

Dear TrailBike

I read with interest your article in the August issue about big-bore conversions to DR350s. I am interested in

entering enduro competition and would like to do so on a four stroke, but up until reading your article the only fourstrokes I would have considered were European. Are bikes such as the DR385 or Honda XR280 a serious alternative for competitive clubmen enduros or do I need to look at something like an XR600 for adequate performance? I would like to ride

fourstrokes, but am put off the European option by the higher costs involved. That said, is there really an alternative to a good two stroke such as the RMX or KDX?

Dave Carr  
Preston, Lancs

*Yes there is. Ultimately two strokes are lighter*

*and more powerful but if you want to go fourstroke racing then why not do just that. Fourstrokes are often better at finding grip in the wet, sail up hills and are generally easier to ride fast on, also many enduros have a fourstroke clubman class specially for the thumpers. The XR600 is a good dirt bike but probably best avoided for the majority of 'local' smaller enduros unless you particularly enjoy sweating. The big bore DR is probably a better bet than an XR280 because it's got more power to start with. If cost is an issue, remember that a secondhand European fourstroke like a KTM or Husky may cost you more to purchase than an equivalent two stroke, but will be worth more when you come to sell it on*

## On The Road

Dear All

I have recently bought an N-reg DR350 which unfortunately is used mainly for commuting to and from work, with the odd off road jaunt here and

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London

W13 9WP



there. What I want to do is obtain a second set of wheels and rubber to use purely on the road with my present set kept for off road use.

What I would like to know is what road wheels (ie from a pure road bike) will slot straight onto my bike and give me a wider choice of road tyres. Also if the wheels are a different size, should I use a different sized sprocket, and if so what size?

Hope you can help me in turning a great trailie into a more road oriented bike - if only for some of the time.

Karl Wardle  
London NW9

*I'm not quite sure of your reasoning behind wanting to change wheels if you only use the bike for commuting. These days dual purpose rubber such as Avon Gripsters give all the grip you're ever likely to need on the road with a set of standard wheels.*

*If you really want to have a second set of wheels so that you can perhaps use knobbles on the others then your best bet is to find a breakers with a spare pair of DR350 wheels and then using the existing hubs and brake assemblies have someone lace on a set of 17 inch rims to the existing hubs. That way there's no problem with matching up brakes, axles, spacers etc as these wheels will simply drop in.*

*Seventeen inch rims will give you the widest choice of road rubber though of course you'll have to stick to tubed tyres. Gearing will be a matter of trial and error to find what works best, though you could start by dropping the number of teeth on the rear sprocket by three, or try a one tooth larger front. Best of luck*

# Dear Trail Bike...

## Chair-man

Dear Si

Regarding your item 'A bit on the Side'. It's nice to see an article for people like me who have to fit another wheel on to their bike to stop it falling over!

There is nothing wrong with sidecars, I've ridden them in various guises for a long time. They're fun, even with a passenger and you can carry all sorts of things with you like a flask, sandwiches,

happy. So can you get away with no seat and an open back as the outfit in the article shows?

Also I don't suppose you could do some articles on green lanes in Surrey and Sussex or at least mention where they are?

Colin Fairs  
Ockley

*Last time we looked the green lanes in Surrey and Sussex were out-*

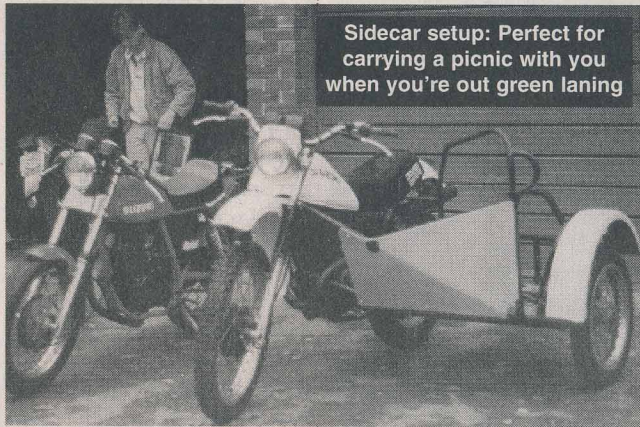
browsing my local paper shop I made the mistake of picking up a copy of TrailBike for a change. Now I'd always fancied riding some of the old Roman roads and tracks that I'd walked as a rambler, but somehow the FJ didn't share my enthusiasm.

The outcome of all this is that six weeks ago the much beloved FJ was replaced by a new BMW F650. Alright it's not a 250 Sherpa (for those that don't already know it, that was a Bultaco trials bike from the Seventies - ed), but already I've done 2,500 mainly back lane miles including several semi-green lanes around Wales and the Dales. The latest being a 200 mile 'off the beaten track' round trip in the Dales with a couple of proper 'greenies' thrown in plus the full length of the Bainbridge to Ribbleshead Roman road - a mixture of tarmac, gravel and deep 4X4 rutted peat with a river crossing at the end with an awkward, steep and slippery approach.

I'm having that much fun that I now have a massive guilt complex and whilst I blame you and your mag entirely for rekindling my youthful trials riding days, I feel honour bound to share my new found pleasure with other like-minded F650 owners and form a riders club.

So I respectfully request that you accept partial blame and print a notice in your par-

**Sidecar setup: Perfect for carrying a picnic with you when you're out green laning**



picnic table etc. Mine is an ex-motocross wasp outfit coupled to a DR400. The chair sat in a garage at first unattached to anything, then I bought a cheap bike to go to work on, and finally a heavy fall of snow one winter convinced me to combine the two.

The only thing I've fitted is a detachable rail around the back with a seat fitted for my son, and to keep the law

*doors and in the country*

## Club-man

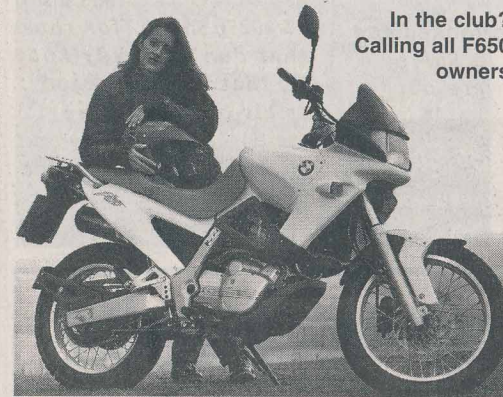
Dear TrailBike

God damn you sir! Up until a couple of months ago I was a mature owner of a super touring Yamaha FJ1200. With panniers bulging I was happy and contented touring here and there, been there, done that, got the T-shirt etc. But whilst

tisan mag asking anyone interested in forming or joining the F650 Riders Club to contact me (Kevin Needham) on 01942 882963 so we can get it going.

Kevin Needham  
Manchester

PS: Re 'Norfolk 'n' Good' on the letters page, issue 12. Yes Please!! Can we have more of a mixture of articles ranging from green lanes for novices to pure satanic route bogmasters.



*We accept the blame entirely... Crasher Cornish has been disciplined by his wife (o-o-er), whilst Blezard was to have been given 200 lines but we knew he wouldn't finish them in time! Me, I'm just very, very sorry. Hopefully I can make amends by suggesting that like minded readers get in touch with you on the above telephone number. Regarding more trail riding routes the answer is yes, but a reminder to everyone*

*out there that we pay for readers contributions (Rough Guides, Reader's Rides etc) when typed and accompanied by decent photos*

## Hot Tip

Dear TrailBike

Please could you help with a couple of problems? I'm rebuilding my 1992 XR600R using a 1mm oversize Wiseco piston, and what I want to know is will I have to do any rejetting etc, and what's the

**In the club? Calling all F650 owners**

best tailpipe for this bike?

Also I'm investing in another dirt bike for competing in enduros on at sportsman or clubmen level, and I've narrowed the choice down

to a KLX250 enduro or an RMX250. My maximum amount to spend is about £2,000 and I want a good reliable bike, what's best in your opinion?

Clive Baillie  
Grantham, Lincs

**A number of aftermarket pipes fit the XR600R**

*A good starting point is to go up one size on both the main and pilot jets if you're running with the stock pipe, but you'll need to go bigger on the main if you go for a performance pipe. There are a few good pipes around, such as the Supertrapp at about £190+ or a Cobra ISDE at about £170. Or how about this for a hot tip, get yourself a 'HOT TIP'. These fit in the standard pipe replacing the existing baffle and spark arrestor, improve the power, keep the noise down and cost about £100. Details from Taylor Racing on 01249 444193. As for your enduro bike it really depends on whether you want a two stroke or a four stroke. If I was going racing I'd take the RMX (out of these two), but both are fine*





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

Well as I sit here waiting to leave for the ISDE in Finland I thought I would just keep you informed about what I've been up to this month.

First of all it was up to Scotland for the next round of the British Enduro Championship. Unlike most of the rounds, this was a one day event, and not having ridden up there for some ten years I was really looking forward to it. It was a pretty long day with most riders having to complete four laps of a 40 mile course. The going was mainly open moorland with lots of heather and brush which hid a number of huge rocks. Loads of riders suffered from punctures, especially those not using mousers. I managed a tidy ride, winning the event and enjoyed a good day out. This has now increased my lead in the British Championship from 13 to 22 points, so things are looking good at home.

After that I spent some time practising and testing for both the Suzuki G-Shock



motocross team, and my own Gas Gas team. Riding the Suzuki was the first time for two years that I had been on a 125, and I enjoyed every minute of it. After riding the 250 the 125 felt as light and slow as a push bike!

The next test was on a 250 Gas Gas enduro (a bike with which I'm more familiar!) up at Geraint Jones' farm in Wales. I spent a great

day out with Geraint's son Rowan, and he and I were both happy with the machine. I must say that after racing all over the world, Wales is still the best place to ride a motorbike, and following Rowan I never covered the same piece of ground twice.

Anyway that about wraps it up for now, I'd better hit the road now as I'm due at the airport shortly. Keep reading because by this time next month I hope to have brought back the Enduro crown to Britain.

*Paul*



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## What's On in September

**1-8** Transdanubia Rally. Competitive fun rally which starts in Munich in Germany and progresses through Austria and Czechoslovakia to Hungary. Lots of back up and suitable for any type of prepped big trailie or enduro bike. Details on 0049 8324 2876

**8-9** Black Prince Enduro. British Championship (solo) event. See all the stars in action, good spectating but expect a tough ride if competing. Tough forest event. Starts

10am Linburn Head Farm, Hamstreley Forest A68  
**14-20** Rally of Discovery. Treasure hunt type rally aimed at big trailies which takes place in Ireland. Mainly road miles but some off roading. Only semi-competitive, and not too tough, plus chance to revel in glorious Irish scenery and hospitality. Details on 00353 218 89462

**21-22** Natterjack Enduro. British Championship event (solo & sidecar). Sandy event run on army training ground, good spectating and a good

ride for clubmen. One of the easier events. Starts 9am Weavers Down, Longmoor Hants

**29** Hafren Rally. Fun but competitive rally specifically aimed at trail bikes and four stroke enduro bikes. Either a leisurely ride around looking at the scenery or if you're feeling competitive a good blast on shale tracks with a little bit of mud here and there. Starts 9am at Sweet Lamb, signposted off the A44 west of Llangurig. Details on 01597 840293

# TT350

YAMAHA

—USED  
—BIKE  
—TEST

If there's a range of bikes that seem to generate more than their fair share of interest from you the readers, it is Yamaha's TT range - which is strange as they were never officially imported into this country. The TTs of course, were Yamaha's equivalent of Honda's XRs, and like the XRs, were designed as a more capable off road trail/enduro machine to run alongside their dual purpose trail bikes. Over the years they came in various guises 350, 500, 600, and the the latest version of the 600s (some with electric start) are still available as current models in most of Europe as well as Australia.

Back in the late Eighties an enterprising individual brought in a batch of re-routed Australian enduro versions which were instantly snapped up by eager UK punters and some of these are still running around today. Our particular test bike however came into



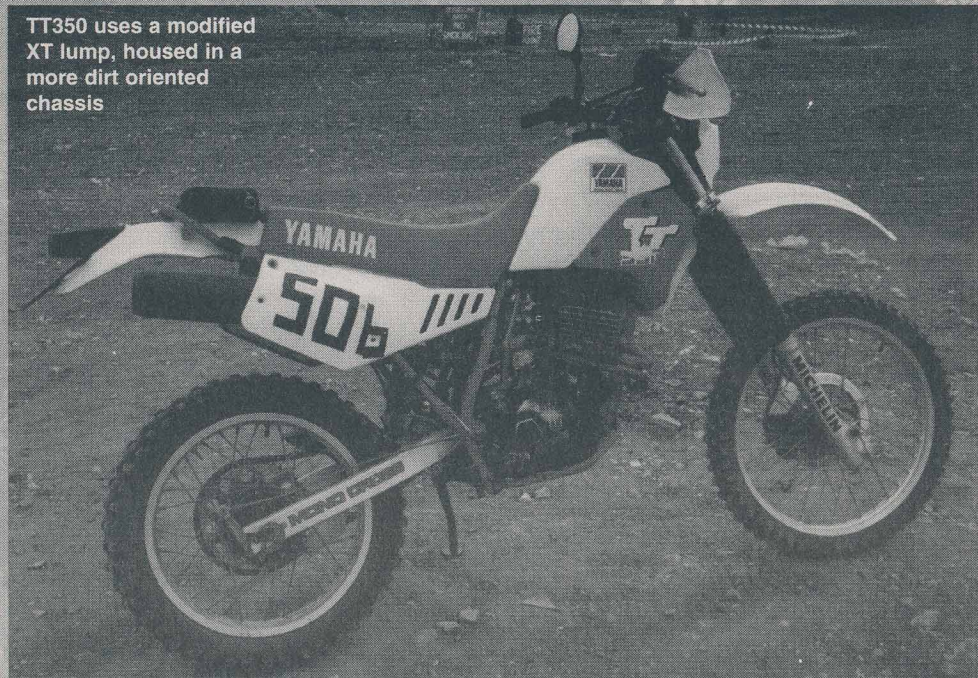
The TT350 is the bike most XT350 owners really want. Same rugged reliable power characteristics, but in a more off-roadable chassis. Dave Crasher Cornish tried one for size

Blighty via Italy rather more recently, and is a 1987 model. Whereas the Aussie-spec machines were sold as out and out enduro racers, our Italian import was marketed more as a serious trailie rather than a competition-only machine. Differences between them are limited to a few roadgoing accessories on the road-

sion of the cooking trailer's motor fitted into a chassis more suited to competition use. Visually they're pretty similar, the TT of course sports a more dirt-oriented plastic tank and much simpler lighting, and close up you'll find the running gear is quite different also; beefier forks, a remote reser-

has been factory tuned by fitting a different CDI unit, bigger valves, slightly higher compression ratio and the twin carbs have been re-jetted to suit the free-flowing air filter/exhaust system. No power claims were made for the retuned motor but these mods together with lowish gearing certainly make the bike

TT350 uses a modified XT lump, housed in a more dirt oriented chassis



registered Italian bikes and ours came fitted with a battery, speedo, ignition lock, mirrors and indicators.

If you haven't seen a TT350 before, try and imagine a cross between an XT350 and a mid-Eighties YZ motocross machine. Basically, that's what a TT is; a slightly tweaked ver-

voir (and rebuildable) shock, different linkage, swingarm, hubs, brakes, spokes and so on. In fact virtually no chassis components are shared by the two machines (though many of them are interchangeable). To do the heavy duty chassis justice, the standard XT350 lump

feel more responsive on the dirt than any of the XTs.

Firing up the four stroke mill entails nothing more than a touch of choke and a firm boot on the long kickstart. Once started the carb mounted choke can be dispensed with, and after a few seconds the 350 is



ready for action. Pull in the firm-action clutch, snick it down into first and a touch of gas has the TT straining at the leash. The retuned XT lump certainly feels more lively in this guise and thanks to the low gearing the front end can be lofted with ease in the bottom couple of ratios. Although the relatively torquey motor will pull from low down, the bike responds best to a handfull of throttle. Keep the twin carbs wound open and acceleration is brisk though not breathtaking, and whilst not exactly in KTM or Husky territory, will just about keep a DR350 in its sights.

For an oldish design the Yamaha certainly wears its years well. There's no doubting it's Eighties vintage but it doesn't look much more old-fashioned than say an XR600, and our example whilst not exactly in showroom condition, showed little sign of any serious dirt use. White plastics combined with a red seat and graphics to match the red chrome-moly frame and help lend the TT a reasonably 'butch' appearance. I was pleased to see that the bike came with folding tip levers, a beefy chain guide and plastic hand guards as standard equipment although the crankcases looked a bit vulnerable, protected as they were by a few strategically placed steel tubes. I would have preferred a substantial alloy sump guard to ward off the odd rock or tree stump like the one fitted to the XT350, but doubtless any enterprising owner could fix this. Like more modern dirt bikes long travel suspension mean it's quite a stretch to clamber over the TT especially for anyone under 5ft 8" tall. At a rough guess I'd say it's a full 36" from terra firma to the top of the red seat, though once seated the footrests, seat and bars feels just right.

In order to try and give the TT a proper outing off road we decided to enter it in a local off road day which consisted of an

observed trial in the morning and an enduro in the afternoon. Race day arrived and following a long drive to Greatham quarry in Essex, I was itching to get out onto the dirt and see just how the TT would perform off road. Unloading the bike from the back of the van the TT soon drew a small crowd of inquisitive admirers - (not the least reason was because this was supposed to be a 'trail bikes only' event, but as our TT was a trail bike version complete with indicators (removed for this event), we were sportingly allowed to compete).

I was in a determined mood as I gunned the TT off the line (even though this wasn't a timed stage), braking hard for the first corner and down shifting from fourth I eased the TT into a small drainage ditch, then gassing it hard found some unexpected grip and together we launched out of the ditch. By now I realised the bike was out of control and following a painful coming together with an inconsiderately placed steel post I found myself underneath the TT for the first (and certainly not the last) time during the day.

Luckily no damage had been done, (except to my pride), so it was on to section one and the beginning of the trial. Rather than park up and inspect the downhill rocky section like everyone advised, I pointed the TT's front wheel at the gate and 'ooooohhhh shhhh' it was too late. Boulders the size of wardrobes sent the bike's front end crashing first one way

# TT350



TT can be hurried when required - suspension is better than on the XT

to clear a small jump. Using the motor's torque to accelerate up the hill and then hard on the brakes to negotiate an off camber right hander. This was more like it, the TT was clearly more at home when given the chance to stretch its legs. Hammering down the fast straight and just grabbing sixth gear before a sharp second gear turn the bike could be slowed safely without any drama thanks to a twin piston caliper squeezing the front disc and the antiquated drum at the rear. This set up may not be the latest in off road brakes, but the TT's rear drum offers heaps of feel at the lever allowing the rider to brake right up to the last second without fear of a lock up.

After the previous trials section disasters the hard charging Yamaha allowed me to set second fastest special test time of the day, so in a much more positive frame of mind I was eagerly looking forward to the afternoon's two hour enduro.

Rushing to the start line I failed to make a note of my start time. By now the sun was scorching down into the dusty rock hard quarry. Here the TT's fourstroke lump was a distinct advantage, sat right forward on the tank and gently feeding in the power allowed me to drift the rear end at will. Charging full throttle into a huge sand bank enabled the TT to be 'railed' round the top like a massive berm, although revving the motor always had the desired effects in a tricky situation I could fall back on the low end torque to lug me over the next obstacle.

Several medium size jumps were to

then another. Needless to say I fived this first section which set the scene for the rest of the morning.

I'm not trying to make any excuses *but*, in this type of tight going the TT is a bit of a handful. The tall seat and long travel together with a sharp clutch and snappy throttle response (not to mention my lack of trials skills) makes the cooking XT version a much better bet for slower going.

Lining up at the first special test I had the chance to redeem myself. Starting off in second gear the TT blasted off the line and into a tricky left hander, a handful of throttle picked up the front wheel in order

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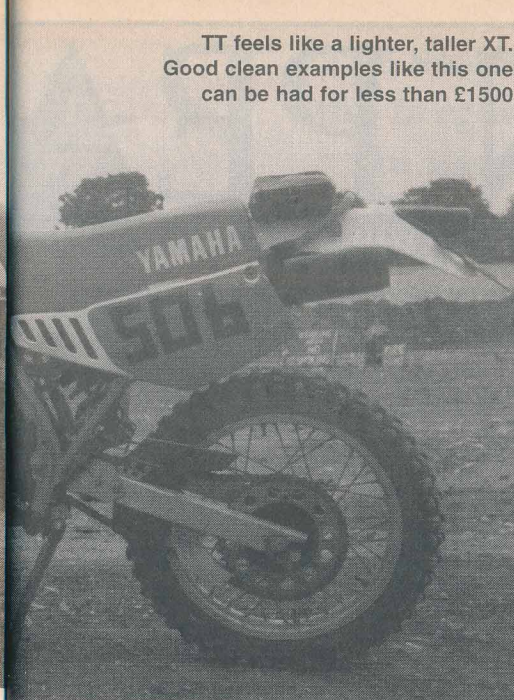
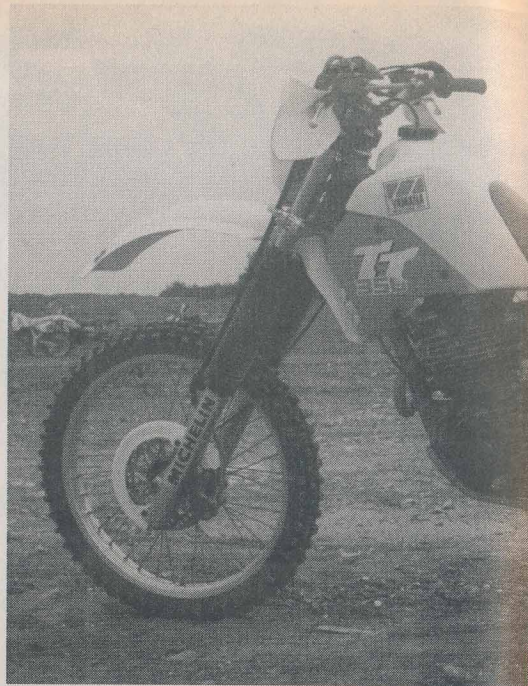
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TT feels like a lighter, taller XT. Good clean examples like this one can be had for less than £1500

start with, no problem for the bike's plush suspension, however as the pace hotted up and I began to get the hang of the TT, these same jumps caused the suspension to bottom out with a crunch. Though the TT's springing is leagues ahead of a stock XT350's, in comparison with something more modern like a DR350, the elderly Yam can feel a bit dated. Likewise the motor doesn't pick up and rev like a DR, though there was plenty of torquey midrange for the steepest climb on the course. Hitting the bottom of the slope in third gear the bike stormed up in fine form and gave me a distinct advantage over some of the other riders.

As the afternoon wore on, the TT's forgiving nature would time and again get me out of trouble. At least it did until 30 minutes from the end when another rider stopped dead in front of me at the top of the steep climb. I had the throttle wide open in second gear when he stalled and

# TT350

avoiding him I pointed the TT to one side and looped out. With my right arm grilling gently on the exhaust it didn't take long to find some hidden reserves of strength and get out from under the two wheeled barbecue.

With a few more laps in the can and unsure of my official finish time I decided to pull out and pay my old mates at the St John's Ambulance Brigade a visit to get my singed arm strapped up. Oh well, an early retirement but the bike would doubtless have carried on to give me a better overall placing (20th as it happens).

## Conclusion

So, despite it's age, the Yamaha TT350 makes for an excellent trailbike and fun enduro machine. Its gutsy motor and competent suspension together with easy starting and forgiving manners makes you wonder why the bike was overlooked by the official importers. And one point which shouldn't be forgotten is the TT's fuel economy; with the 10 litre tank full to the brim the bike should be capable of around 100 green lane miles between top ups - good enough for most users.

We rate the TT as a cheap (1500 quid should score you a tidy example), rugged and competent trail bike. As the bike was only imported in small numbers actually getting hold of one may prove to be your biggest problem, though some like this one are now finding their way into the country as good, used examples.

Spares on the other hand can be obtained through various sources as it shares many engine components with the XT.

Its suspension and weight count against it for serious enduro use these days, and it's not as quick as something like a DR, but then again its much cheaper and you can't have everything can you. Having ridden one again for the first time in a number of years it's not hard to see why TTs still attracts more than their fair share of interest.

THANKS:-

**NOTE The TT350 featured is up for grabs at TrailSport in Norwich. Give Clive a call on 01603 504595 as he can import TTs (as well as many other Italian spec bikes) for you.**

# TWIN PEAKS

Honda Africa Twin *vs* Cagiva Elefant

On Tour: Cagiva Elefant and Honda Africa Twin tackle a deserted French country road on their long journey south to the Alps



**T**he throttle's pinned hard against the stop, below me the Africa Twin is roaring away pumping out maximum horsepower. To my left the Cagiva Elefant 900 is slowly, but inexorably gaining a few inches on me all the time. I screwed the throttle

on even harder, but it's no use, I know when I'm beaten, I'm completely stuck.... I relinquish any thoughts of powering out of the snowdrift, switch off the engine and start digging.

Okay, so perhaps the Africa twin and Cagiva E900 weren't exactly designed to

**The Stella Alpina Rally in Italy is the largest gathering of trail bikes in Europe. Dave Cornish and Simon Fenning took a Honda Africa Twin and a Cagiva Elefant along to see what it was all about**

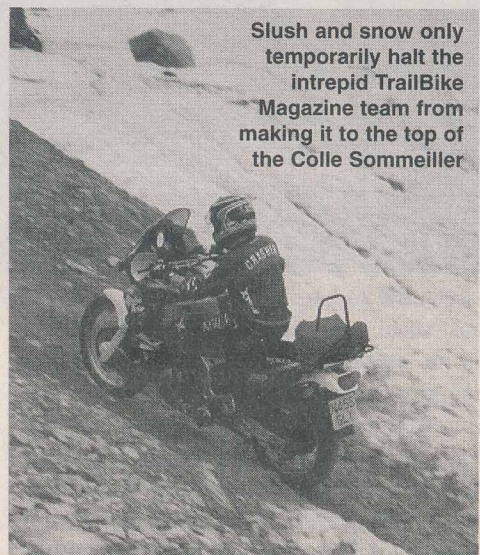
tackle alpine snow fields, but the life of any big trailie is always a varied one - especially when we have it on test. Up until now, the 31st running of the Stella Alpina Rally had been swift and relatively painless, though I suspected all that was about to change as I set about digging out more than 200 kilos of snow-bound mega-trailie from half way up the Colle Sommeiller in the Italian Alps.

Our choice of bikes for the biggest trail bike rally in Europe made much more sense when the 800+ miles of tarmac to Bardonecchia (the rally base) were taken into consideration. We needed a pair of trailies which could carry us and our luggage at a reasonably high cruising speed, remain comfortable after a full day's riding, yet still be capable of some half serious off roading when we reached

our destination.

Single cylinder machines (though undoubtedly more trailable) were discounted on the grounds of relatively low cruising speeds; so the Honda Africa Twin seemed like a wise choice of bike alongside a (fresh from the crate) Cagiva E900. We could have opted for the 750 Cagiva but the fact is that the Honda retails at the same price as the larger Elefant so that was our first choice.

Loading up the two bikes before the long haul south was made much easier thanks to a Ventura soft luggage system fitted to the Africa Twin, while the Elefant

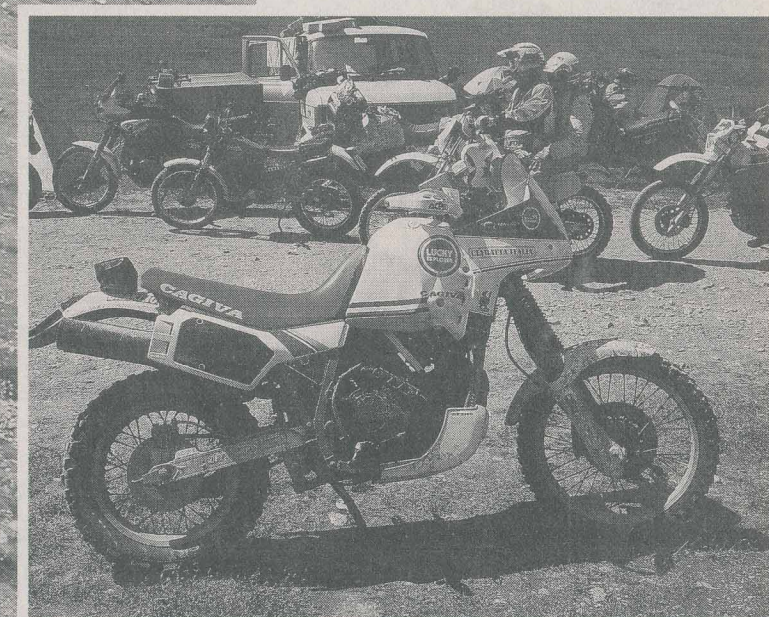


**Slush and snow only temporarily halt the intrepid TrailBike Magazine team from making it to the top of the Colle Sommeiller**

# TWIN PEAKS

Honda Africa Twin vs Cagiva Elefant

Crasher Cornish contemplates a sinewy alpine trail on the way up the Colle Sommeiller



comfortable seat, which combined with an aftermarket (taller) screen fitted to our particular test bike helped improve the riding position no end. In fact the only reasons for keeping cruising speeds down to around 85-90mph was because the Honda initially felt stressed above this sort of speed, plus the fact that the Elefant with only 400kms showing on the trip still felt a bit tight and unwilling to rev freely.

We just missed a train on arrival at 'Le Shuttle' so loaded up with duty free provisions and sat down to a strong black cof-

Early Cagiva Elefant one of numerous trail bikes used to make the annual pilgrimage to the Stella Alpina Rally

was subjected to various soft bags and a host of bungies and cargo nets to hold it all in place. By the time my travelling companion and fellow Elefant owner Simon Fenning had repacked his Rupert Bear pyjamas for the umpteenth time we were running several hours behind schedule. Heading out into the darkness after the luminescent splendour of the palatial

TBM office complex it was pleasing to find both bikes came fitted with a powerful set of headlamps even though the extra weight of the luggage we'd fitted meant that the beams were now illuminating the tops of hedges.

Onto the M25 and needless to say we were soon caught up in roadworks (it always infuriates me that the slowest part

of any European touring trip is the bit ridden in the UK), a check on the digital clocks worn by both bikes (but only functioning on the Honda) revealed we should make our rendez-vous with the chunnel at about midnight.

On the long and boring M20 motorway I was soon appreciating the latest Cagiva's lower, broader and much more

fee. Before long it was time to board the train through the large side doors, the helpful staff instructed us to ride into a weird looking mobile wheel clamp device. To my amazement once the front wheel of the bike had made contact with the clamp the whole mechanism cantilevered over centre and secured the bike in an upright position, simple but effective.

# TWIN PEAKS

Honda Africa Twin vs Cagiva Elefant

Just to be on the safe side I left the side stand down and a little over a half an hour later we disembarked onto French soil. Within a few minutes we were on the Autoroute bound for Paris, no customs, no passport checks just straight onto the main road totally hassle free. We soon settled down to a steady 90mph - the tacho on the Cagiva reading less than 6000rpm in top gear (6th) - and started to chalk up some miles.

While very little in the way of vibra-

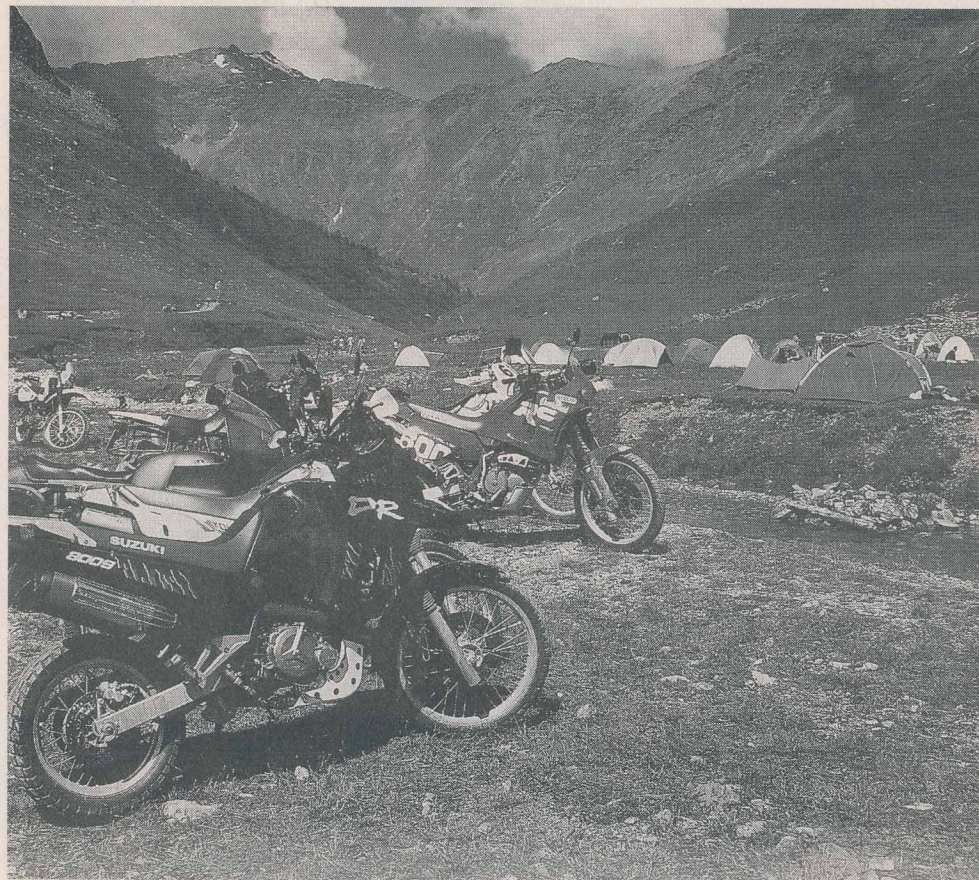
tion makes its way through to the rider on the Ele thanks to that 90-degree engine, the Honda rider on the other hand - as Simon was finding out - is subjected to enormous amounts of vibration. In fact at high speeds the 52-degree vee twin Honda motor generated so much in the way of vibes that the fuel tank 'buzzed' and was uncomfortable to touch with your knees.

The first of many fuel stops reminded us of the extortionate cost of European 'sans plomb', 85p a litre! Jeez, I was glad to be on the 900 which burnt two litres less per refill than the harder working Honda. Clearly this would make a small but noticeable difference to the overall cost of a trip.

A quick calculation showed that the Italian bike was averaging an impressive 52mpg while the smaller capacity Honda could only muster 47mpg. Still, both bikes come with a useful range of well over 200 miles thanks to large capacity tanks, 24 litres in the plastic Cagiva reservoir and just a litre less in the AT's steel tank, since much of the space is occupied by airbox.

Having coughed up nearly a fiver for the privilege of *leaving* the Autoroute, we found ourselves in St Quentin (twinned with my birthplace, Rotherham, no less), and the beginning of the Routes Nationales we would follow. By now it was 5am and belting along towards Reims in the early morning mist the two big trailies were covering ground at a respectable pace. Stopping only for fuel

There's no facilities at the campsite but at least it's free!



and a caffeine fix we passed through Neufchateau into the beautiful Jura region which skirts the German border. As the sun rose higher in the clear morning sky the temperature increased with every mile, and the road which follows the course of the River Marne changed from a

pleasant country lane to a scratchers delight with mile upon mile of gently carving bends surfaced with a smooth and grippy tarmac

Despite the luggage we were carrying, both bikes could be hustled along at an amazing speed. The Africa Twin held the

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# TWIN PEAKS



Don't be fooled by its looks. Elefant is a stylish and capable tourer with genuine off-road ability

advantage on the brakes but the big 900 Desmo-Ducati powered Cagiva was loosening up nicely with every mile covered and was improving all the time. Picking up from 3000rpm the Elefant would rocket away from corners, easily overhauling the heavier Honda thanks to its creamy smooth torque and extra capacity. Overtaking the occasional 38-ton articulated lorry again showed the 900's advantage; whereas the Honda always required a down-change to make a safe pass, the Cagiva could be left in top and simply grunted passed anything in the way.

But the Cagiva didn't have it all its own way; despite a noticeable power deficit and the AT's more dirt oriented

21" front wheel, the Honda handled far more predictably than the Pirelli-equipped (19" front) Cagiva. The Honda's Bridgestones inspired seemingly impossible angles of lean and the front could be pushed hard into downhill hairpins without fear of letting go. Conversely the Italian bike's front end felt never gave the levels of feedback enjoyed by the Honda rider, and the rear felt even worse; in spite of the temperatures and high speeds it plainly refused to heat up and grip like the Honda's sticky Bridgestones.

Entering the ancient walled town of Besancon we encountered some serious traffic congestion. Here the Cagiva's heavy controls and dry clutch were no match for the Honda's super-smooth controls and the amount of heat being generated by the Elefant's searingly hot catalytic converter was enough to cause concern about luggage meltdown. At least the carbure-

tion on both bikes seemed unaffected by the heat though we were glad to clear the hold up and get back out on the open road.

By the time we reached Camponile in Chambery we'd been riding more or less continuously for 20 hours. In the distance the Alps were clearly visible and our destination was now less than an hour away. After a welcome shower we retired to the local rip off bar (three quid for a 25cl bottle of Euro fizz) and took the chance to reflect on the previous 750 miles of mainly high speed riding. Both bikes were proving themselves to be capable mile munchers; the Cagiva in particular with it's grunty motor, frugal appetite for unleaded (55 mpg at one check) and comfortable seat had certainly impressed me.

Simon on the other hand, was begin-

ning to prefer the easier handling Honda and despite lugging around an extra 18kgs over the Cagiva's claimed dry weight it was also proving to be a pretty good allrounder. The Africa Twin in usual Honda style is still a better finished and polished product than most bikes although some of the welding on the frame left a bit to be desired. On the other hand, quality control at the Cagiva plant in Varesi has improved in leaps and bounds over the last couple of years and this shows up best in the E900's lustrous metallic blue paint which puts the finish on my own 1992 900ie to shame.

Comparing the earlier 900ie to the latest version does however show some signs of cost cutting on the new bike, for instance a brace of Mikuni carbs have replaced the fuel injection, the expensive Ohlins rear shock has been ditched in favour of a cheaper (and harsher) Boge unit and items such as the older bikes span adjustable levers are also missing



The Elefant may be 20kg lighter than the Africa Twin, but it still feels heavy when you have to push it

while the nice alloy bars have been replaced by cheaper steel items.

Some improvements however have been made, such as the new 'USD' forks and twin Brembo front discs, and though the brakes lack a certain amount of feel, at least they refused to fade on the extreme alpine descents unlike with the old single braked bikes.

The next day after a well deserved lay in I struggled with a myriad of bungees whilst Simon simply clipped his Ventura gear onto the Honda. Fifteen minutes later and we found ourselves on the main route to Turin. High speed sweeping bends had the bikes heeled right over - the Cagiva's extra grunt paying dividends as we began the climb through the Alps to the 13km long Frejus tunnel.

Once past a pretty grubby industrial area on the valley floor the road opened out again, climbing higher and higher the views were becoming more breathtaking by the mile. I noticed that Simon was having to rev the AT and shift down even more than usual, clearly the altitude was taking the edge off the smaller bike's performance.

After 13km of traffic and fumes it was a relief to emerge from the darkness of the tunnel and into Italy, though 16 quid for a return ticket was a bit of a blow. Bardonecchia itself is only a few kilometres into Italy and following a confusing diversion we arrived at our destination with plenty of time in hand before the start of the 96 Stella Rally.

This small alpine ski resort was crawling with bikes from all over Europe. Bars were full, the whole town was buzzing with bikes and riders, serious looking enduro machines stood next to all manner of road and trail bikes, and wherever you looked there were wall to wall dirt bikes. The next problem was to find out where

## S E C O N D

First impressions can be deceptive. In the beginning the Elefant felt much tauter, firmer and more responsive. I felt more inclined to explore its limits straight away than with the flabbier Africa twin, but as the miles began to clock up over all sorts of terrain from Autoroutes to goat tracks a rather different picture began to emerge.

The Elefant is irritatingly unrefined; the clutch and throttle are both heavy and take up late and early respectively, which can make low speed manoeuvres tricky. The motor also has the light flywheel feel of a typical straight four, despite it being a V-twin which results in a snatchy sort of progress up and down through the gears in all situations other than full-bore, press-on mode. The standard screen is useless for anybody taller than the average Italian, the front brakes lack feel, the Elefant's clock didn't work and the warning lights were invisible in daylight. Even the standard-fitment Metzlers were less grippy and wore faster than the excellent Bridgestones fitted to the Africa Twin.

In contrast the Honda displayed little of the Cagiva's so-called 'character'. True, it has a heavier, more flexible frame, a motor that vibrates at motorway speeds and is thirstier and significantly less torquey than the Elefant, but it feels much more complete than the quirky Italian, pointing towards a bigger spend on R&D by the Japanese manufacturer. For me it was simply the better tool for the job. **Simon Fenning**

## O P I N I O N

the organisers had set up camp, sort out the entry forms and plan our attack on for the following morning's blast up the Colle Sommeiller.

Despite the number of entrants the only advice we could get was to hang around the train station on Sunday morning and follow everyone else. Not exactly what I had in mind for supposedly the largest bike rally in



**Honda Africa Twin VS Cagiva Elefant**

Europe but what the hell. As the saying goes, when in Rome....

The next morning we were rudely awakened by a bunch of Germans in a hurry to get their BM's up the mountain and spread out their towels first for the prime spectator viewpoint. After a leisurely breakfast I fumbled around for the Cagiva's awkwardly positioned choke and set off to sign on at the rally organisation HQ.

We knew that the rally was a non competitive event and this would simply mean riding up the Colle Sommeiller collecting a rally badge and 'T' shirt at the summit and basically just having a pleasant ride in the mountains. The charming Italian lady in the Tourist office (aka rally HQ) handed over the official rally info pack which contained nothing but tourist maps, hotel listings and a ski guide, and seeing as she spoke no English (and we spoke little Italian) the

only help she could give us was to point us in the rough direction of the rally route.

The most difficult part about the first section of the route was overtaking dozens of overloaded Fiats making their way up the badly surfaced twisty mountain road. Even when the tarmac ended we seemed to be passing more family hatchbacks than bikes. As the track continued to climb another hazard confronted us - traffic coming back down the mountain towards us. I thought I'd seen everything when a brand new Suzuki GSX-R750 wobbled around the corner on the dirt. Then without warning, an out of control German on an elderly Honda 550 Four came straight towards the front of the Cagiva. In a desperate attempt to avoid an expensive disaster my left leg took the full weight of the bike (at around 45 mph) - ouch!

Although the Cagiva was having little trouble coping with the dry rocky trail the 19" front wheel would occasionally kick

# TWIN PEAKS

out when hitting rocks. This made off road progress hard work, so I did what any self-respecting journo would do and cunningly suggested to Simon it was time for a change around. This was more like it, the 750 tracked much better on the rough stuff despite its extra weight, and I was glad to be on the big Honda when pushing on past the half way point the trail became steeper and steeper. Hairpin after hairpin followed until we reached the first snow drift. Taking it steady I eased the big Honda through the single line cut into the snow and tried to ignore the large drop off to my left hand side.

Feeling fairly pleased with our progress we blasted up some easier tracks until we came to the huge snow field, (where our story began). This almost proved to be our collective undoing. Sweating, cursing digging and lifting drained us of vital energy and if we hadn't been recognised by some cheerful TBM readers from up north (thanks lads) we would have probably given up the unequal struggle and turned back. But with TBM honour at stake (yet again) we summoned up our reserves and finally made it to the top.

Disappointed? I should say so. No rally organisers, no welcoming committee, no scantily clad dancing girls waiting to place garlands of freshly picked edelweiss around our necks, not even a bloody caff. Just an abandoned mountain refuge and a frozen lake. It was only later that evening we discovered that the final rally check had been less than two thirds of the way up the mountain, and in our haste to get to the top we'd simply blasted straight past. No wonder we saw only lightweight dirt bikes beyond that point, most riders had signed on at the check, picked up their coveted Stella badge and 'T' shirt and disappeared back down the mountain

for a spot of early lunch. Meantime we had nothing to show for it but our pride at making it to the very top - still at least we'll know for next year.

Heading north towards home, once again we avoided the main Autoroutes. Crossing back into France the road took us through the heart of the picturesque Savoie region which is fighting for more independence from the Paris-based national government. As the miles rolled on the amazing scenery slowly changed. Huge fields full of bright yellow sunflowers began to appear bordering both sides of the twisting tarmac and drenching the surrounding countryside in a deep golden hue.

After spending the night under canvas I was a little disappointed to be almost at journeys end. Both bikes had performed faultlessly on the high speed scratch down to Italy and back. Cruising at between 90-100 mph on the way back (our speed had increased as the journey went on) both bikes can cover 200 miles before needing to stop for fuel and the Cagiva in particular is comfortable for long stretches in the saddle. Not only that but I doubt if many other machines could have been as much fun both on and off road as these two big trailies.

Unlike another publication which recently gunned a trio of big trailies down the Autoroutes on a European trip and then promptly slagged them off for being too slow, uncomfortable and heavy, we deliberately stuck to the real roads (ie N roads) and had a great time in the process. And once at our destination, both machines coped well with the climb up to the Colle, something I suspect, a FireGrate owner could only dream about.

# TWIN PEAKS

This is the whole point about big trail bikes, yes, some bikes might be faster from A to B but if you stop riding when the tarmac runs out you're missing out not only on some of the very best views, but more importantly on big fun.

## Conclusion

Riding both bikes back to back, on and off the road had totally reversed my previously held opinions; I had imagined the Cagiva would be the better dirt bike and the AT the ace tourer, but in fact quite the reverse was true. If you haven't already sussed it yet, the Elefant gets my vote over the Africa Twin thanks mainly to its nicer engine. Flawed it may be (like most Italian bikes), but where it counts the Elefant is still streets ahead. It's all down to that Ducati motor, I defy anyone not to be impressed after sampling the sheer grunt of the 904cc lump. Fully loaded up it can propel bike and passenger at improbable speeds over all sorts of terrain. The Africa Twin on the other hand feels strained (and uncomfortably vibey) at anything over 75mph, and its extra bulk seems unnecessary. But that said, if 75mph is as fast as you'll ever need to go then the Honda offers the adventurous off roader more in the way of go-anywhere ability than the Cagiva, and a slightly superior handling package to boot. The choice of course is up to you, the Stella Alpina Rally is in our opinion the best way to find out if you have made the right choice.

## TECH SPEC

### Cagiva E900

**Price (new):** £6990 + otr  
**Eng:** Air cooled, belt driven, desmodromic 90-deg, V-twin  
**Displacement:** 92x68 904cc  
**Carburettor:** Two 38mm  
**Transmission:** 6-speed  
**Frame:** Steel & alloy cradle  
**Forks:** Showa USD 45mm  
**Shock:** Boge  
**Brakes (f):** Two 270mm disc  
**Brakes (r):** One 240mm disc  
**Wheelbase:** 1555mm  
**Seat ht:** 835mm  
**G/clear:** 210mm  
**Fuel cap:** 24L  
**Weight:** 185kg, 408lb  
**Warranty:** 24 months plus 12 months RAC cover  
**Importer:** Three Cross Ltd  
01202 823344

### Honda Africa Twin

**Price (new):** £7195 + otr  
**Eng:** Liquid cooled, 52-deg, V-twin  
**Displacement:** 81x72 742cc  
**Carburettor:** Dual 36mm  
**Transmission:** 5-speed  
**Frame:** semi double cradle  
**Forks:** 43mm  
**Shock:** Pro-Link  
**Brakes (f):** Two 270mm disc  
**Brakes (r):** One 240mm disc  
**Wheelbase:** 1565mm  
**Seat ht:** 870mm 34.3in  
**G/clear:** 215mm  
**Fuel cap:** 23L  
**Dry Weight:** 205kg, 451lb  
**Warranty:** 24 months plus 12 months RAC cover  
**Importer:** Honda UK Ltd  
0181 747 1400



***This year a young Australian by the name of Shane Watts has made his mark on the world enduro scene, and not just because of his riding. Geoff Meyer charts the rise and rise of a future world champion***

# Watts

***in a name***

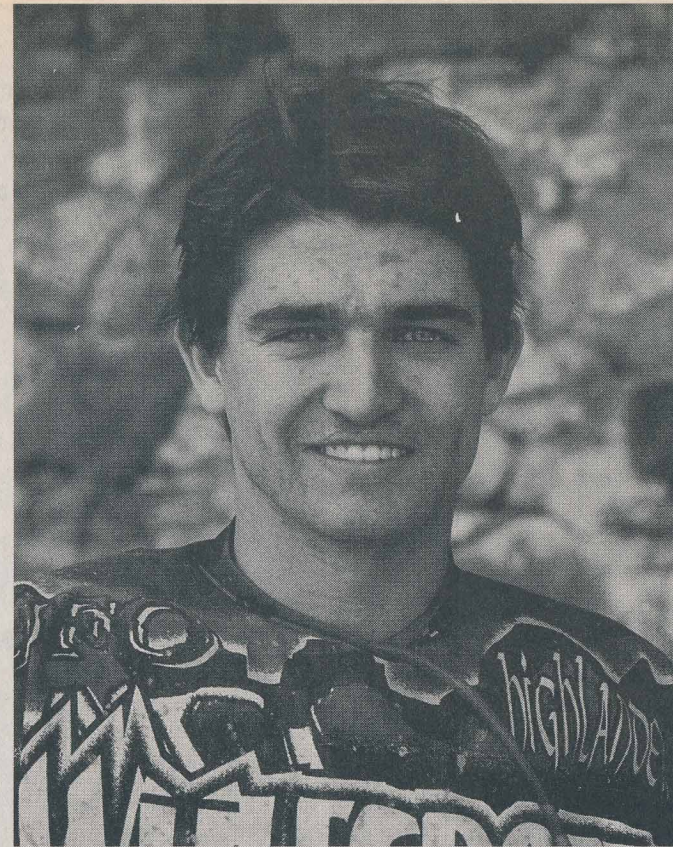
The heavy rain is pelting down on the riders at the third round of the World Two Day Enduro Championships in the south of France. Australian enduro champion Shane Watts (KTM) is doing his best to control the situation; you see the Aussie boy is not the best wet weather rider in the world, but still his balls-out approach has captured the attention of the normally partisan French crowd who shout encouragement at him. The rain turns to hail and while the likes of three times world champion Giovanni Sala (KTM), along with three times world champion Paul Edmondson (Gas Gas), and five times Dakar winner Stephane Peterhansel (Yamaha) don waterproof clothing, the Aussie rider presses on in the terrible conditions dressed in just a motocross shirt and trousers. 'Those guys couldn't believe I was riding with just a jersey on' says Watts afterwards, 'they were all wearing thick wet weather gear... what a bunch of pussies.'

Shane Watts' attitude towards his rivals is not surprising; the rider who hails from Victoria in South Australia is known not only for his courage and determination but also for his outspoken attitude. During his past two years riding in Europe he has made the progression from young gun to top gun with a succession of top five finishes at the very highest level.

Watts' European vacation started with a couple of World Championship rounds

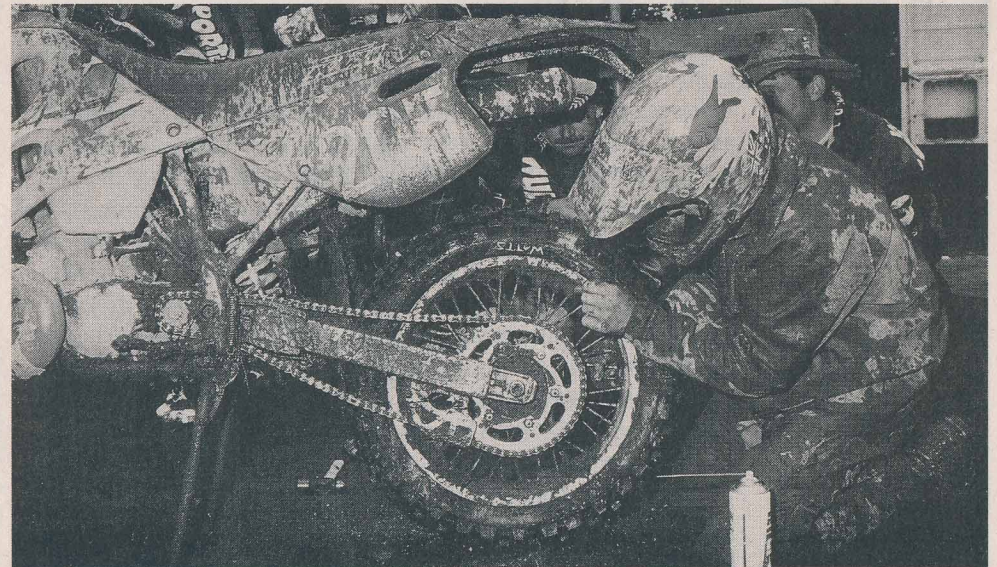
back in 1994; despite some rather average results he gained the all important desire to return to the world stage the following year. 'It cost me a lot of money' he says 'but I wouldn't change a thing. I need to race the best to be the best, and I'm finally getting to where I feel I can win the World Championship.'

Based in Bergamo in the north of Italy at the famous enduro team of Farioli KTM, Watts has made a



*Shane Watts: 'It's a commercial world... and I'm basically in this for the dollars'*

**Prodigious talent, Shane Watts is shaping up to be a future world champion - if he can just let his riding do the talking**





Before Watts can claim his world title there's the small matter of defending champion Giovanni Sala (pictured) to contend with.... not to mention our own Paul Edmondson

number of friends in the little town, but most importantly has found the respect of his fellow Farioli team mates. 'All I really get from Farioli is a mattress on the floor and a sleeping bag' says Watts wistfully 'but he organises my transport to practice events as well as the rounds of the World Championship, and it would be impossible for me to do those things without his help.'

Not surprisingly with the ability to finish top three, Watts has found himself on the shopping list of several European teams for 1997, though he's blunt about his current sponsors, KTM: 'I feel from the exposure I have given KTM I don't owe them anything. If a better deal comes along I'll be wearing different colours and riding another brand' he says frankly. 'It's a commercial world and I'm basically in this for the dollars', adding 'I will give KTM the first option [for 97] but if they don't come up with an acceptable deal then it's open season.'

Despite his obvious financial ambitions, Watts is aiming to prove he's the best rider in the world by deposing the current king of the 250s - Giovanni Sala - who's held the title for the past

two years and before that the 500cc title. 'Giovanni is a legend, he's a nice guy and treats everyone with respect, but next year is his last year and I want to beat him. At the end of 1995 I swore I would come back to Europe and break him... I haven't succeeded in doing that, but I have put some serious cracks in his armour, and I aim to finish the job off in 1997.'

Though Sala is hardly running scared of the precocious Aussie, he told Trail Bike that he felt Watts had a great future: 'Shane is a nice guy, he has a lot of talent but he sometimes seems to go very bad[ly]. If he can get better, and it looks like he will, then I will have to watch out for him next year... I give him the respect he has earned.'

The long period in Europe does have its difficult moments for Watts, he confesses he misses his homeland, but finds solace in the thought of achieving his ambition to become world champion: 'I often think why am I doing this? I have friends in Italy, but the language is a problem, I'm learning Italian now and that will make it better, but still I miss hanging out with my friends back home, going camping, doing crazy things, but when it comes down to it, if I had to stay here for five years straight I'd do it.'

The real Aussie is always evident in Watts, his riding gear carries the green and gold colours of Australia, his helmet's painted with the boxing kangaroo, and he's proud of his homeland: 'Australia is the best country in the world' he states emphatically, and like fellow bike-racing countrymen, Doohan and Gobert, his approach has always been give it 100 percent or go home.

The 1996 season has been a good one for Watts. It started with a brilliant result in the first round of the championship in Portugal where he scored an impressive third: 'I love that place' he beams 'it's loaded with gum trees and the conditions are very much like those back home. I've finished well there for the last two years.' Round two in Spain was to be even better for the cocky Aussie who went on to blitz the opposition winning the second day outright: 'I was really worried after last year (when he finished off the pace), I didn't want to go the same way again. Luckily for me it all fell into place and I kicked some ass.'

*Sala on Watts: 'He has a lot of talent... I will have to watch out for him next year'*

# Watts

*in a name*

# Watts

*in a name*

By now  
Shane  
Watts was  
turning  
heads  
quicker  
than a  
Penthouse  
Pet at a  
nudist  
beach

By now the Aussie was well and truly on his way, the European press were on to him like he was already a legend, though the Italian press were more reluctant to acknowledge his achievements. 'He looks good, but he will not beat Giovanni [Sala] again this year, wrote one Italian press agent. What most people that were in attendance that day didn't realise was that the bike Watts was racing was a stock KTM, fresh out of the crate just a week before: 'I was a little surprised myself' says Watts, 'we whipped her outa' the box, did a few slow laps on a practise track then gave her hell.' Try telling the Italian press that their boy Sala riding a full factory-backed machine had just been flogged by a precocious Aussie on a stock bike and they just wouldn't believe you.

By now Shane Watts was turning heads quicker than a Penthouse Pet at a nudist beach. As Watts himself confirmed: Mr Farioli gave me the thumbs up, and for an old guy like him that's the same as jumping up and down and screaming. He's not the most emotional of blokes.' While Watts' luck was to change when he encountered the mud in France, he was happy with a top ten finish giving him enough points to hold onto third place in the championship standings going into the Italian round.

Italy saw another good result for the consistent Aussie, a sixth and a fourth kept him in the title hunt and he backed it up a few weeks later with a second and a fifth in Slovakia to confirm his position as third placed rider in the World Championship behind Paul Edmondson and defending champion Giovanni Sala, with just one round to go.

Unluckily for Watts, a chance ride in the British Championship enduro at Rhayader in July ended in a rare DNF after a collision in the forest. 'I was doing okay until I hit a tree and it busted my finger' Watts told TrailBike, 'so I'm taking a few

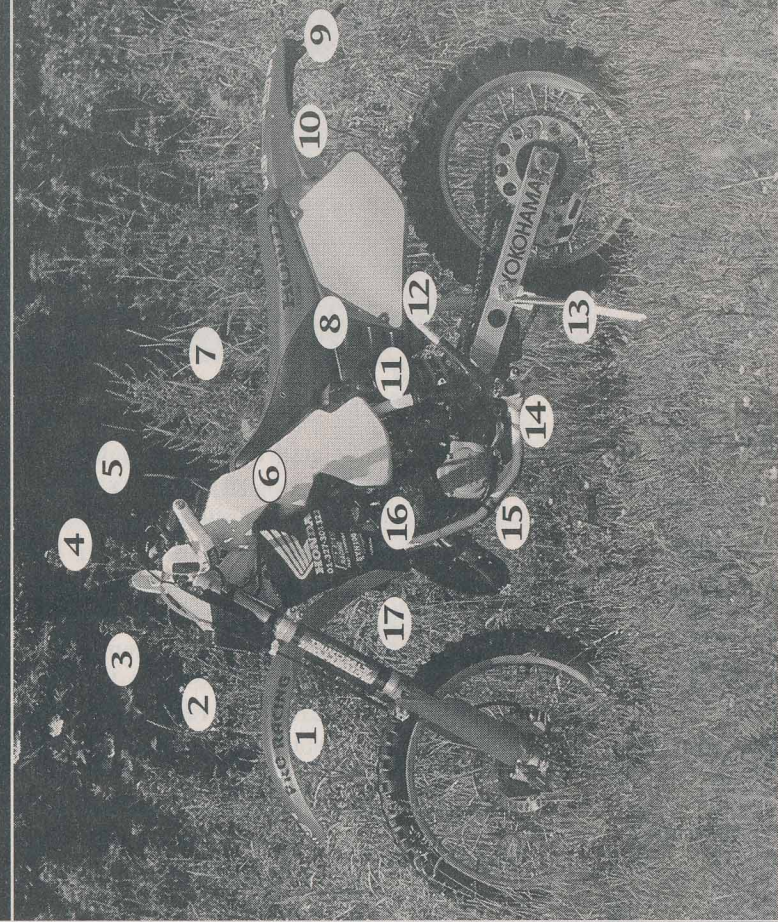
weeks off to recover before the ISDE.' Whilst in the UK Watts made the most of his short stay by shopping for support for the 97 season and may yet be back to take part in further rounds of the British Championship.

Whatever happens next year you can bet the outspoken Australian will be giving it full bore whether it be in the forests of Europe or in the post race interview afterwards. One to watch for sure.

## XC: Cross Country conversions

Pro Racing: 01327 301322

Here at Pro-Racing we've got the experience and ability to build you a winning enduro bike, or a superbly capable trail bike. Whichever your preference we can tailor make a machine to fit your exact requirements for a fraction of the cost of buying new. We only use top quality parts that are built to withstand the toughest of competition use - just ask British Enduro Champ Rob Sarlin. **1.** Pro-Valve Forks: Root and rut-sucking suspension, supple yet resistant to bottoming. **2.** Headlamps: A choice of top quality Acerbis or UFO. **3.** Voltage regulator plus AC horn. **4.** Handle-bar switch: Lightweight & waterproof multi-function on/off, Hi/Lo beam, horn & kill switch plugs direct into loom. **5.** Hand Guards: For maximum finger protection. **6.** Big Capacity Fuel Tanks: 13 litre tank gives extended riding time yet is no wider than stock. **7.** Wiring Loom: Complete wiring loom comes with all electrical take offs and waterproof connectors.



**8.** Force 10 Filters for extended enduro use. **9.** Enduro rear fender extension with stop & tail light. **10.** Super quiet repackable alloy silencers, less noise equals more friends, sneak up on your buddies. **11.** Pro-Valved rear shock gives plush action on square edged bumps and high speed killer hits. Soft enough to absorb the odd rambler. **12.** Hydraulic Brake Light Switch. **13.** Bolt on side-stand manufactured from sturdy aluminium. **14.** Bash Plates manufactured from super tough yet lightweight carbon fibre. Also carbon fibre fork protectors and pipe guards. **15.** 100w/12V generator assemblies give enough power to illuminate the darkest forest and trails. Easy to install. **16.** Pro-Racing Porting, will give you the low-end torque boost you never dreamed possible. More grunt for tight trails and the power to pull taller gearing. **17.** Factory Pipes: Ultra low-end stump-pulling hand made enduro pipe with top end over-rev for fire roads

# E L S I E KTM LC2 Too?

Little LC2 is a surprisingly competent trail bike



**The KTM LC2 is the first of a new breed of 15hp learner bikes. Paul Blezard tried one for size**

It's just what every learner wants. At first glance, anyone could be forgiven for mistaking KTM's new 125LC2 for a 250 or bigger since it's deliberately been styled to look like the larger machines in the Austrian manufacturer's range. All KTM trail bikes share a competition heritage which make them look and feel like enduro bikes that have been modified for the road, rather than designed from the start as road bikes clothed in a set of off road togs.

For all its 'grown up' looks, the LC2 is restricted to comply with the (recently postponed) new learner legislation due to come into force next January. This means that instead of the paltry (9Kw) 12bhp of old, the new models are permitted a whopping great 11Kw (15bhp) instead - though before you get too excited, the new limit is supposed to be measured at the crank rather than at the gearbox as before. In fact the KTM's motor is visually much the same unit as that fitted to

Yamaha's good-looking TDR125, although it's apparently built under licence by Minarelli in Italy and disguised with the Austrian manufacturer's logo on its crankcases. The new law has meant that KTM have been able to give the LC2 not just more power, but more torque as well (14ft/lbs), and I suspect (though I can't confirm) that were you to take it to a dyno you would find that it comfortably outperformed all the current crop of 12hp machines in the vital measurement of torque output.

The LC2 retains its big bike feel when you swing a leg over the tall and rather narrow saddle. It's not as high and rock-solid as the LC4 four strokes, but at 33.5 inches it's certainly no lowrider either. Once aboard, the instruments are simple and straightforward, with just a rectangular mph speedo, oil level warning light and ignition switch to distract your view of the road ahead and the tall mirrors provide an excellent view of what's behind.

Starting couldn't be simpler; turn the choke lever on the left handlebar, thumb the starter and the Austrian lightweight burbles into life. Yep, that's right, the LC2 comes complete with an electric start which as well as setting it apart from some of its more agricultural opposition, should go some of the way towards justifying its 'three and a bit' grand price tag.

I've ridden all manner of restricted 12hp bikes in the past and to be honest I wasn't expecting the little KTM to feel all that different, but in fact I was pleasantly

surprised. The motor pulls with a nice torque feel and quite a loud induction roar and the feeling of 'oomph' lasts right up to about 60mph when the acceleration levels off. It finally tops out at a little over 70mph which it can maintain with ease even when riding into a strong headwind.

My girlfriend wasn't overly impressed by the narrow seat, but at least the useful little rear rack has built-in handles to hang on to and she appreciated the compliant ride offered by the rear suspension. In true enduro style the seat goes right up over the back of the plastic tank and on the tarmac the plush suspension soaked up the capital's pot-holed roads a treat - even when two up. And talking of two-up, I was really impressed by the KTM's performance which seemed barely affected by the addition of an extra eight and a half stone. With two adults on board it still zipped up to an indicated 70mph and the disc brakes front and rear were well up to stopping the extra load.

Less impressive was the way the sidestand bent completely out of shape when I stood up on the footrests with the stand down. I was obliged to spend the rest of the test leaning the KTM against convenient walls, fences and lamp-posts. The importers have confirmed they are well aware of the stand's shortcomings and say that it will either be modified or dropped completely in favour of a centre stand for next year's model.

Other gripes included an oil-warning light which appeared to

# E L S I E

KTM LC2

# Too?

be on all the time, even when the tank was nearly full. Apparently it's supposed to glow brighter as the level falls, but in fact all that happens is that you end up ignoring it completely. And lastly the steering lock which is not built into the ignition switch like most bikes these days, but instead mounted (in the old-style) down at the bottom of the steering head. This isn't just inconvenient, it's also stupid. Precisely one hour into ownership the esteemed editor managed to snap the key in the lock after turning the forks straight with the key still in place - thus rendering it useless. I wonder how many owners will do exactly the same?

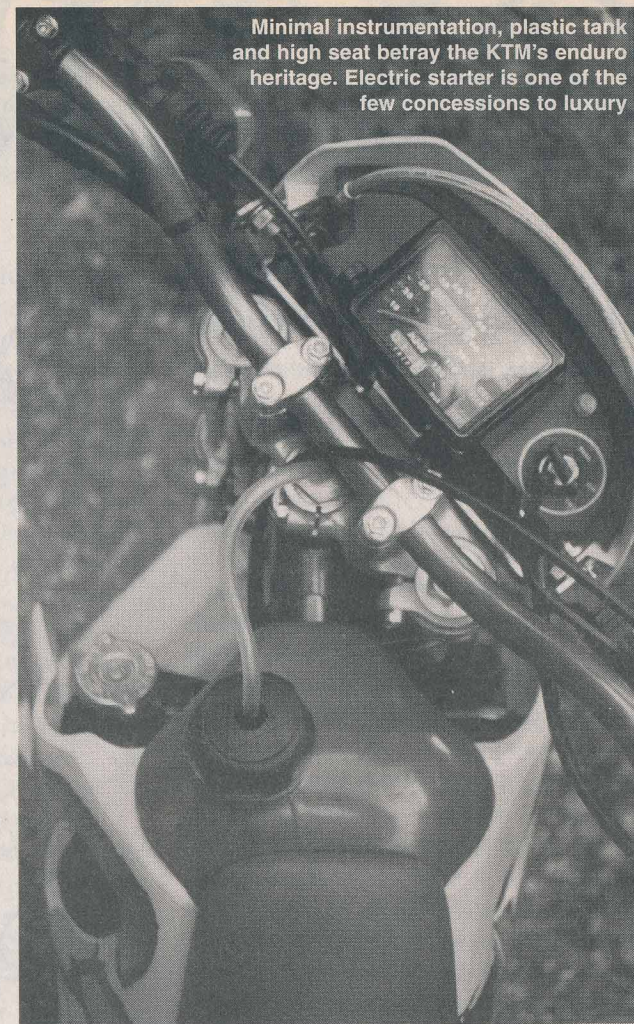
I finally used the KTM the way the makers intended when I got out for some green laning on a balmy mid-summer's evening on an entertaining mixture of Surrey trails tough enough to test the mettle of both bike and rider. Most of them were as dry as a bone, but there was one which had been very badly cut up by 4WDs and had a few patches under the trees which still held surprisingly deep puddles of water. The 267lb KTM took it all in its stride, water and rock-hard ruts alike and it stormed up a really steep escarpment with no trouble at all. The robust 41mm forks could perhaps be a little more compliant but the rear shock was really impressive and the chunky footrests make a stable platform on which to stand.

By the time I started the last trail it was pretty dark but the headlight penetrated the gloom impressively both on the rough stuff and on the A3 as I headed back to Barnes at a steady 70-75mph. Looking back at the bike's off-road performance there was no doubt in my mind that even in restricted form the KTM is capable of getting around a relatively easy enduro course such as this year's Welsh Two day; in full-blown 26bhp form I reckon it would be pretty competitive in the trail bike class.

So the very next day I was astonished to read in MCN's test of the KTM that 'hit any slightly serious off-road bumps and the bike bucks around uncontrollably'. I figured they must have tested a completely different machine to the one I had just taken



Green laning - even with a bit of luggage is well within the LC2's brief. On the road it will comfortably crack 70mph



Minimal instrumentation, plastic tank and high seat betray the KTM's enduro heritage. Electric starter is one of the few concessions to luxury

off road, but the importers assured me that it was in fact the self-same bike which came back from the 'World's Greatest Motorcycle Newspaper' with no sign whatsoever of having been taken off tarmac! All I can say is that despite trying I could find no evidence of 'uncontrollable bucking' when ridden hard, on or off the road.

All in all then the new KTM 125LC2 makes an eye-catching and excellent all-round trail bike for any learner tall enough to get their leg over it without splitting their jeans. It would also be well worth hanging on to after passing your test because with a bit of fine-tuning the chassis and suspension are well up to supporting the full-power of a de-restricted motor both on and off the road.

## T E C H S P E C

### KTM 125LC2

**Price:** £3515 otr  
**Engine:** Liquid cooled, 2-stroke single, with balancer & e/start  
**Bore & Stroke:** 56x50.7mm  
**Capacity:** 124.76cc  
**Frame:** Steel double cradle  
**Transmission:** 6-speed  
**Fuel Capacity:** 10 litres  
**Wheelbase:** 1450mm  
**Seat Height:** 860mm  
**Ground clearance:** 320mm  
**Dry Weight:** 121kg

# OVER THE HILLS

## Off road life begins at 40 - or at least it did for Mike Stevens who decided it's never too late to take up enduros

For as long as I can remember I'd always been a lover of motorcycle sport. I was weaned as a lad on the Grandstand TV Scrambles and every Good Friday my dad would take me to watch the Hants Grand National at Matchams, where I could actually see all those great names from the TV, Dave Bickers, Jeff Smith, Vic Eastwood et al, and then later still it became the Hants Grand International and added to that list of super heroes I saw people like Joel Robert, Silvain Geboers, Bill Nilsson... to a schoolboy they were veritable Gods!

Schoolboy scrambling was still a long way off at that time so my off road experience was limited to riding my mate Alan's NSU Quickly (actually more like an NSU Slowly) around his back garden, which was great until one day the throttle stuck wide open with the pair of us aboard and we demolished the cabbage patch. He got an ACU ban (Alan Confined Upstairs) and I got an earbashing from his mum.

Time rolled on, I hit my teens and



with it came all the usual things that happen to teenagers, such as acne, girls, O-levels and finding a job. Then at 18 came my first bike, a road going 200cc Ducati which I rode to that year's TT and which blew a big end the day before I was due to come home. I pushed it to the ferry, put it on the train at Liverpool and pushed it home five miles at the other end. That was the end of my love affair with bikes, or so I thought.

Twenty two years elapsed and my fascination with off-road sport was limited to

the occasional purchase of TMX, usually upon catching a headline 'Nicol wins GP' or 'Eastwood wins at Canada Heights'. Great I thought, old Dave and Vic are still winning and they're older than me, until I read the reports to find that it was their sons who were winning!

It was whilst scanning through a copy of TMX that I read about a chap in Scotland, Ian Bell who was competing in Enduros aged 65. Hang on a minute I thought, he's that age and having fun, I'm 40. Perhaps I could try this?

A closer scrutiny of the pages revealed that Geraint Jones, multi British Champion

was still riding, and winning at 40. I also noted that most Enduro results carried an over 40s award. That was it, I didn't like the idea of getting blown off by 20 year old veterans at Motocross (whatever happened to Scrambles?) but here was a way I could ride a motorcycle cross country and experience the joy of off-road biking.

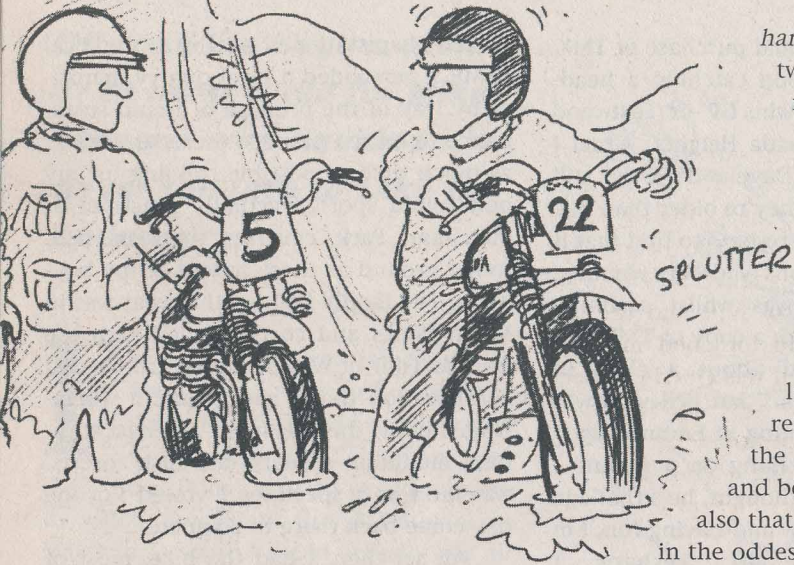
I'd never actually seen an enduro let alone ridden in one, but had a vague idea of what they were about, and after scanning the columns in TMX I found a bike - an Air-cooled KDX200 - which I bought

from a chap stationed nearby at the local REME. I persuaded a local quarry manager by way of the promise of liquid sustenance to let me practice there, and spent as much time as possible training for my new found sport. I actually practised at Matchams Park, covering the same hallowed ground as those heroes of my boyhood. The family holiday that year was in North Wales and corresponded with the Annual Tour of Wales Enduro. If I needed confirmation that I had picked a worthwhile hobby, this was it. Set amongst stunning mountain scenery and lush forests, watching as a spectator I vowed I'd one day come back there to compete.

All set then, I had the bike, most of the riding gear I'd need, the rest was purchased at that year's Dirt Bike Show, I was ready to ride in my first event. I remember receiving my first set of regs I'd entered Exercise Southern Cross at Weavers Down, run by the Red Lion Racers. I'd actually done it, I was going to be a competitor.

The great day arrived, I awoke to bright sunshine and clear skies and was one of the first to arrive and sign on at Weavers. I remember the feelings of excitement and trepidation as I sat on the start line that day. I must have looked like the archetypal novice, resplendent as I was in sparkling new kit, but no one seemed to notice. In fact the other riders seemed very friendly. I'd already had a morale boosting experience earlier when former 250cc British Champion Alan Bates

# OVER THE HILLS



bid me good morning as we headed for the Portaroo from opposite directions. He nodded, acknowledging me for what I was, a fellow rider.

At this point it would be great to recount how at my first event I gained major honours in the Sportsman Class, bursting on the Enduro scene as *force majeure*. This however was not the case. Twenty minutes into the event, after several offs I went chest first into a bank - I was later to learn that I'd cracked two ribs despite my chest protector. Adrenaline however is a great pain killer!

In short, what I encountered was totally unexpected, and my respect for other riders increased twenty-fold and this I know; Enduros are bloody

hard work. A further two hours of purgatory ensued, tempered by the odd fleeting moment of sheer bliss, haring along in top, trundling up a forest path, or dropping into a deep muddy rut, legs akimbo and reaching dry land on the far side with bike and body intact. I learned also that deals can be struck in the oddest of places. Stuck in a bog axle deep, I was joined by an

XR250 rider who also stalled. A glimpse at each other, a brief nod, 'Yours first' is all he said. So we dug out the KDX, left it on terra firma and came back for his XR. Soon after that, I fried the clutch on a long sandy hill and had the ignominy of being towed back to the pits by a marshal on a trials bike. My event was over.

Despite the disappointment, despite the pain, I knew I was hooked on this wonderful sport. I'd made the transition from onlooker to rider. True, I hadn't set the world alight, but I'd had great fun trying.

I didn't ride again that year. By the time the ribs had healed it was the end of the season. Christmas came and went, friends and family accepted that this was all down to middle-aged crisis. That was until I went and bought another nearly

new KDX. Gleaming it was, with 150 miles on the odometer and one previous careful middle aged owner.

I entered my next event, the Lambs Lair Enduro, held deep in the Mendips, in Somerset. This one looked a slightly easier prospect than the last. The course was mainly open undulating fields, with a bit of woods, a couple of hills and the odd bombhole thrown in for good measure. Oh, and a bog, which was closely inspected face down, on the first lap. The learning curve took an upward sweep that day, since whilst extracting myself from the gloop I noticed a narrow path around the said bog and thereafter skirted around it. I learnt too how to get up the steep hill at the second attempt and with a bit of advice from the marshal: 'Try it in second', he said. How does he know that I thought? But I tried it and sailed up every time. I then proceeded to fall off coming down the other side, but only once. Pain, I found out is the greatest teacher.

Even an altercation with a large bush which saw bike and rider going in different directions failed to dissuade me from my purpose, to finish, and finish I did, and completed the full three hours. I didn't come first in my

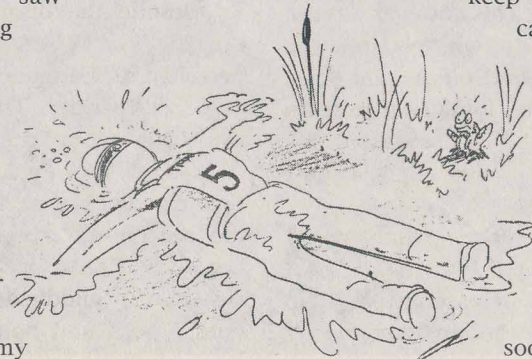
class, but I didn't come last either. I enjoyed the day immensely and above all had fun, which surely is what the sport is all about.

Since then I've done two more enduros, at the Portsmouth Club's excellent Woodberry Lane Track at Emsworth. The closed to club events there are friendly and informal. I've had another finish too, and even got my name in the TMX results the other week. Another landmark.

Out of the blue this week a letter popped through the door and inside was a bronze medal. I've never been so chuffed in my life. I didn't realise it was due, but on checking the regs I found that all finishers get a bronze. I'm no Paul Eddy, never will be, but I imagine his elation at winning his first British Championship or World Enduro Round was only marginally greater than mine at winning my first bronze medal.

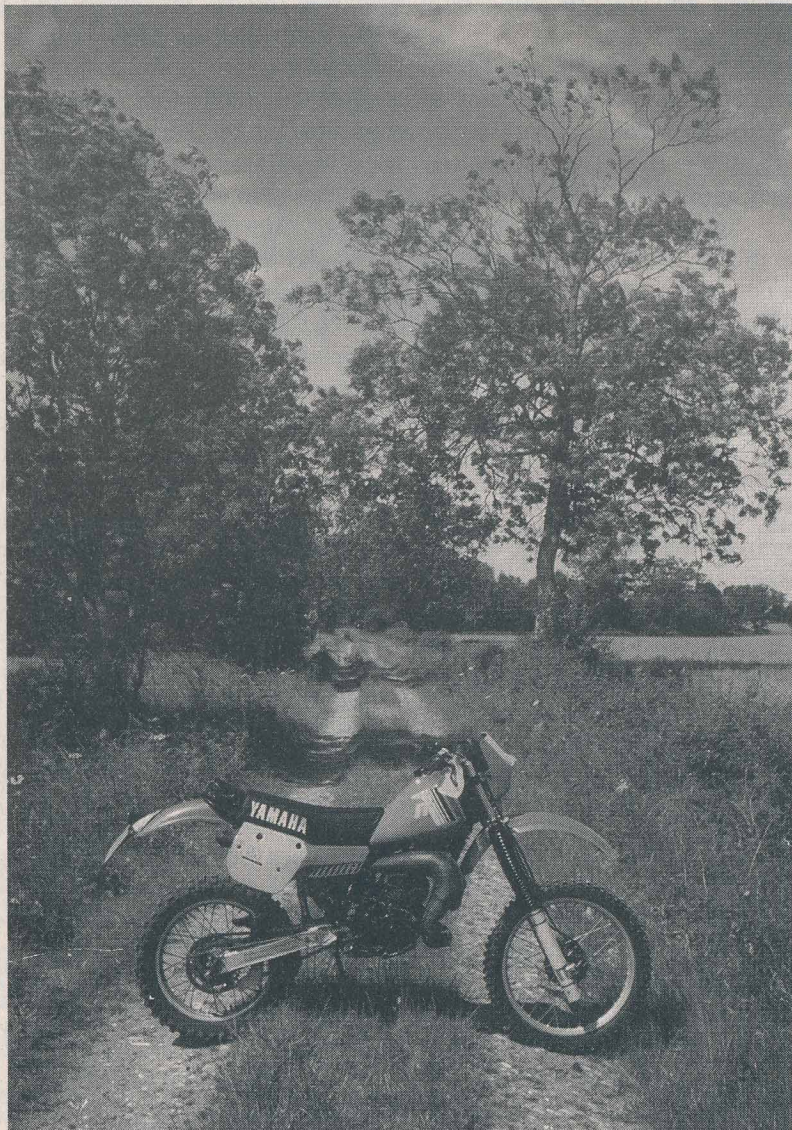
The point of my little story is this, there aren't many sports you can take up and thoroughly enjoy at 40 + and keep up indefinitely. You can this one. Ask Ted Johns, George Greenland, ask Ian Bell. I'm still a youngster compared to those boys.

If you have an itch, scratch it. I just wish I did sooner.



# THAT'S IT

1982  
YAMAHA  
IT175J



Yamaha  
IT175J:  
One of  
the best  
clubman  
enduro  
bikes  
ever and  
still a  
great  
dirt bike

It's funny really, I suppose after all these years of riding and racing dirt bikes I still haven't learnt my lesson when it comes to choosing a suitable off road machine. Maybe it's a desire to be different or more likely just a blinding excuse for finishing well down the field. Way back in 1982 when a glance at the parc ferme at any enduro in the country revealed a veritable sea of blue ITs, I spurned the

obvious choice in favour of a Moto Gori RGS250. The result of that decision and its consequences have been well documented in the pages of this magazine, but inside I have always secretly wanted to try one of the Yamaha ITs just to know what I was missing. Back then it became obvious (to me) that IT riders spent far more time riding and less time pushing than I ever did and even now a well looked after IT175 would still make a competent and reliable trail/fun enduro machine for the financially challenged rider, which is a testament to the bike's design integrity.

**Before dirt bikes became sophisticated, Yamaha's enduro weapon used to be the ever-popular IT. Dave Comish takes a nostalgic spin on one of the best clubman machines ever made**

Norwich immediately brought memories flooding back of previous encounters with IT mounted opposition. The light blue plastics still sported the original IT graphics and the simple steel duplex frame housing the air cooled lump was, despite its age, gamefully hanging on to its black-painted finish.

No power claims for the IT175 were made by Yamaha, but at a guess roughly 25 lively horses are produced by the compact, air-cooled, two stroke mill, which with a bore and stroke of 66x50mm gave the IT a true capacity of 171cc. Running

Fourteen years later and I find myself offered an unbelievably original condition 1982 IT175 for a day's greenlaning, not enough time for a full test, but more than enough for me to find out what might have been all those years ago. Showing a mere 800km on the DT-style speedo, our test bike was in totally standard trim and had obviously had very little off road use.

Picking up the bike from Clive at TrailSport in



# THAT'S IT

## 1982 YAMAHA IT175J

on a diet of pre-mix at a lowly 25 to 1 mixture, the fuel is metered by a reed block mounted 34mm Mikuni carb which features Yamaha's YEIS (Yamaha energy induction system) device. This simple idea involved a 'boost bottle' chamber plumbed into the inlet rubber, when the incoming charge is halted in it's tracks by the piston closing the port, any remaining fuel/air mix is stored in the chamber ready for the port to reopen. Simple, but exactly how effective it actually is is anybody's guess and as it's no longer fitted to any Yamaha stroker you can draw your

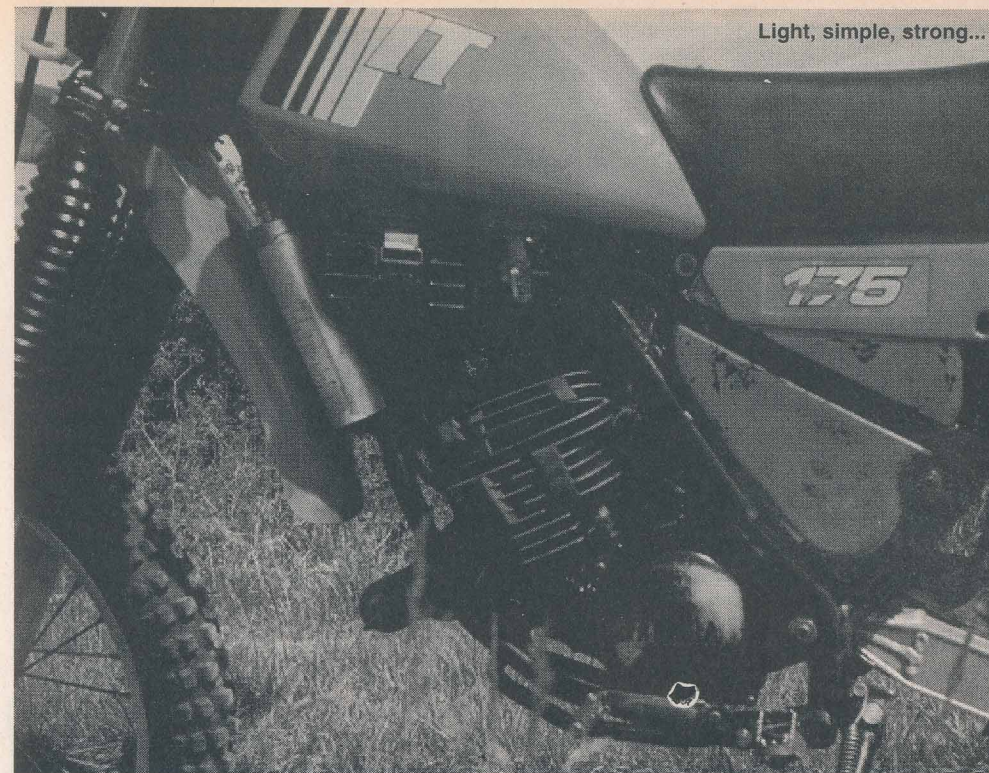
own conclusions. Burnt gases (or lightly singed ones anyway) exit by way of a standard expansion chamber and tiny silencer which by today's standards is unbelievably noisy with a sharp crackle in its note.

Our test bike was the final IT175 version - the J model - launched in 82 which proved to be the definitive IT. Only subtle updates were deemed necessary from earlier versions to keep the bike competitive, the most noticeable being to the 'MonoCross' rear suspension which sported a 'UniTrack' style linkage whilst still retaining the layed down suspension unit.

Other changes for the 82 season included the introduction of a larger street legal headlamp unit with a 25/25 watt bulb, a tiny battery, and an ignition lock which joined the kph speedo mounted on the top yoke. Maybe by this time Yamaha considered the 175 to be more of an all round off roader rather than a fire breathing race bike, after all if you were serious about winning enduros the 250 (or if you were certifiably insane) the 465 models in the IT range could provide all of performance required for a gold medal.

However for the average clubman and trail rider a 175cc was (and in my opinion probably still is) the ideal allround package, combining light weight with enough power for the people. And talking of weight, it was claimed at the time that the IT175 tipped the scales at a meagre 108kg - including fuel and oil! Take a closer look at the photos and you'll see it's not hard to understand why. There's no surplus

Light, simple, strong...



plumbing or watercooling, little in the way of weighty extras (like brake calipers) and even the frame and running gear seem fairly spindly by today's standards. That light overall weight combined with a superb user friendly torquey motor and competent suspension meant that the 175 remained a popular bike right up to its demise.

Throwing a leg over the 36" high seat was a pleasant enough surprise. First of all the suspension squatted down a few inches which allowed my rather stumpy limbs to make proper contact with terra firma, and secondly unlike on a modern bike, the seat actually felt like it could be comfortable for more than just a few laps of

an MX track. Starting up the motor entailed nothing more than a prod on the large kickstart lever and after enduring a few noisy seconds sat stationary the carb mounted choke was dispensed with.

Feeling more than a little self-conscious about the raucous din emanating from the single skin expansion chamber, I eased the bike out of the city (followed by an obnoxious blue fog) and onto a main trunk road. Showing little more than 100kph on the speedo the IT felt as if it was about to self destruct and fitted with the standard low gearing I was only too glad to reach my turn off onto a twisty country lane.

Mind you I almost missed the turn

**Thanks to Clive Hillier at TrailSport for the loan of the IT. Before you ask, this one's already sold, but Clive often has bikes like this in stock. If you're interested give him a ring on 01603 504595.**

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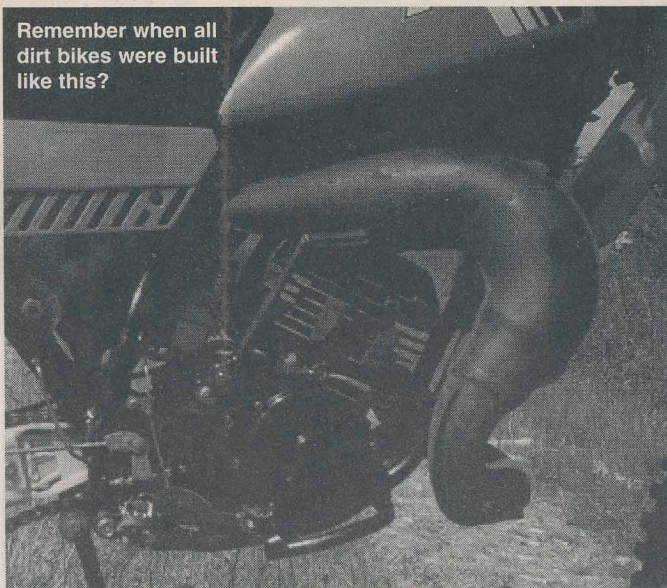
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Remember when all dirt bikes were built like this?



only a few miles I found pins and needles seting in as all sense of feeling disappeared from my feet. Strangely the feet numbing vibes don't seem to afflict the rest of the bike, only a slight tingle finds it's way to the bars and that large well upholstered seat positively isolates your bum from the worst of the vibes, but that said I still wouldn't like to ride on tarmac for too long.

After a quick check of the map, I took off down a badly rutted,

altogether; hauling on those tiny single leading shoe drums soon reminded me why modern bikes are equipped with hydraulic discs. A huge effort is required to slow the IT from any sort of speed, let alone it's relatively modest top end of around 65-70mph. Tug hard on the lever and the bike will (given enough space) eventually stop, but some serious mental readjustments are needed if the rider is to stay out of trouble.

Quite apart from the non-existent brakes, there's another good reason for keeping the cruising speed down to below 50mph, and that is because the vibrations coming through the footrest are (at least on tarmac) unbelievably obtrusive. After

overgrown byway. Suddenly the Yamaha's low gearing and rorty motor began to make sense; the close ratios meant that you're never stuck for the right gear for any given situation, and gassing the light throttle in the lower four gears keeps the elderly Yam on the pipe with just enough power available to keep the front light enough to clear any nasty obstacles. The first five gears are all usable even in tighter off road situations, the fairly close ratio nature of the six-speed box allowing you to make the most of the IT's motor.

Only on faster sections is top gear needed, and consequently it seems to be more of an off road overdrive with the jump from fifth to sixth quite pro-

## Yamaha IT175J

**Price (as tested): £800 otr**  
**Eng: Air cooled, piston ported, two stroke single**  
**Bore & Stroke: 66x50mm**  
**Displacement: 171cc**  
**Transmission: 6-speed W/R**  
**Frame: steel cradle**  
**Kerb Weight: 108kg**

nounced. Getting the power down to the dirt isn't a problem on the IT, the softly sprung and damped suspension is ideal for greenlaning. Giving a plush, well controlled ride, and the early 'MonoCross' rear is perfectly matched to the conventional, no frills leading axle forks.

However quicker enduro type going would have the travel used up fairly easily, and no doubt in actual competition

situations the bike would get out of shape without too much provocation. A certain amount of this can be put down to the bike's age. I've no idea how recently things like the fork oil have been changed, and no doubt fiddling around with thicker oil and rear shock settings would improve matters, but let's not forget this is a 14 year old bike, and considering it's age the IT comfortably manages about 90 percent of what most new enduro machines can do.

Looking back to 1982 I can now see why so many riders chose to ride an IT, the 175 in particular (even now) makes a superb, easy to ride and perhaps even more importantly, cheap to buy and run trail or fun enduro bike. Spares are still readily available and being air cooled, maintaining the little Yam is a cinch. Use a modern synthetic race oil, keep the air filter clean and the venerable IT should give

# THAT'S IT

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TrailBike -51- Magazine

# THAT'S IT

1982  
YAMAHA  
IT175J

years of cheap service.

However actually finding an IT in reasonable nick is going to be your hardest problem. Plenty were sold and many of these were thrashed to destruction, but that said, the IT was designed as a race machine and was meant to be ridden hard. If you can find one that's been tucked away in the back of someone's garage or protected from the elements then there's virtually nothing that can't be put right with the appropriate amount of attention, and like the equivalent

Suzuki, the PE175, owners will quickly grow to appreciate the bike's simple rugged charms.

As for my verdict, well let's just say 'if only'. If only I could have swallowed my pride and followed all the other happy IT owners instead of trying to be different, I may have realised my enduro ambitions instead of wasting my talents aboard various unsuited (and unreliable) European mounts. Still they say you learn from your mistakes, now where are the keys to my Bultaco 370?



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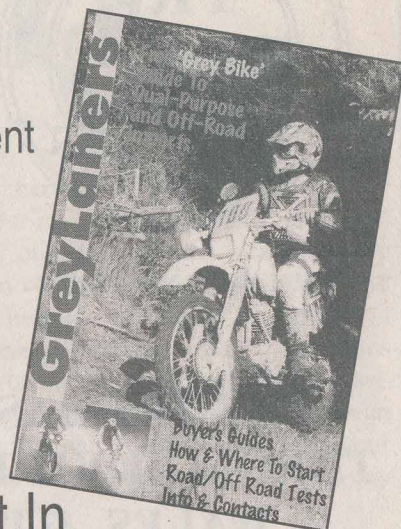
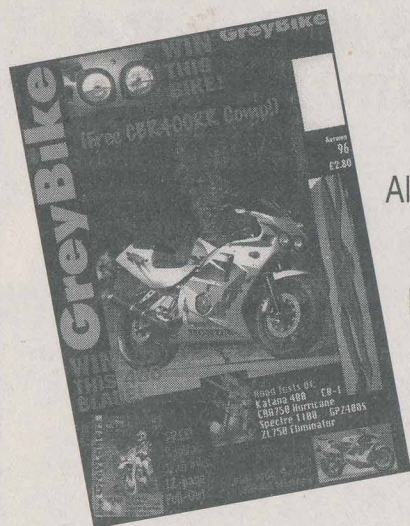
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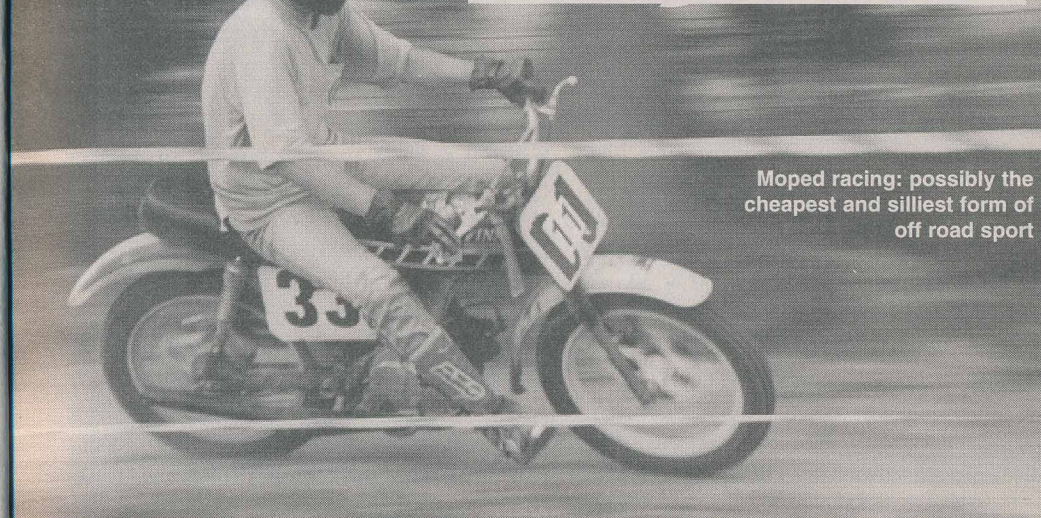
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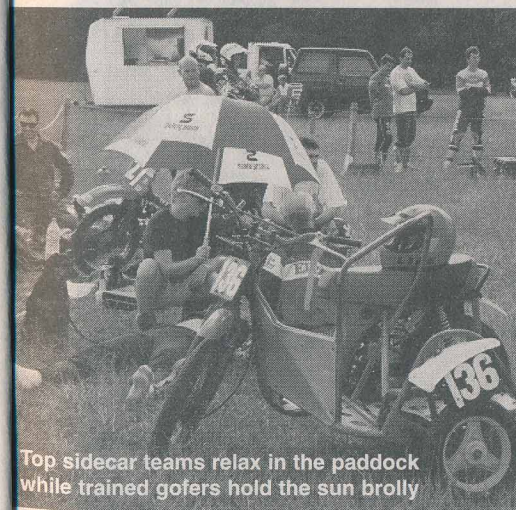
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# MOPED Mayhem



Moped racing: possibly the  
cheapest and silliest form of  
off road sport



Top sidecar teams relax in the paddock  
while trained golfers hold the sun brolly

When I come back in the next life I sincerely hope I'm not a Honda C90. The early years are tolerable enough pottering backwards and forwards to work along the same old route at a steady 40mph. Then, when you're looking a little tired but still able to make it away from the lights just quick enough to avoid being punted up the rear by a company Mondeo, you get sold to a merciless slave driver (aka taxi learner) to do the London Knowledge. Now you get ridden all day, seven days a week and servicing means giving you the occasional drink of unleaded and a quick kick of the tyres. Finally after about 20 years, when you're really down on your luck, all your bodywork is cracked, your winkers are dangling from the wires, and your shredded L-plates are fluttering in the breeze, along comes some spotty teenager clutching the regs for the Crazy Moped 5, and before you know it you are being prepared

*Moped enduro racing anyone?  
You must be joking. Simon  
Fenning went to see what  
happens in this crazy sport*

# MOPED *Mayhem*

for your final mission, a time and reliability trial for mopeds deep in the heart of rural Surrey.

The event is a fund-raiser for the Leatherhead and District Motor Club, and to keep costs down there are no awards, the regs stating rather primly: 'the fun of riding should be enough reward'.

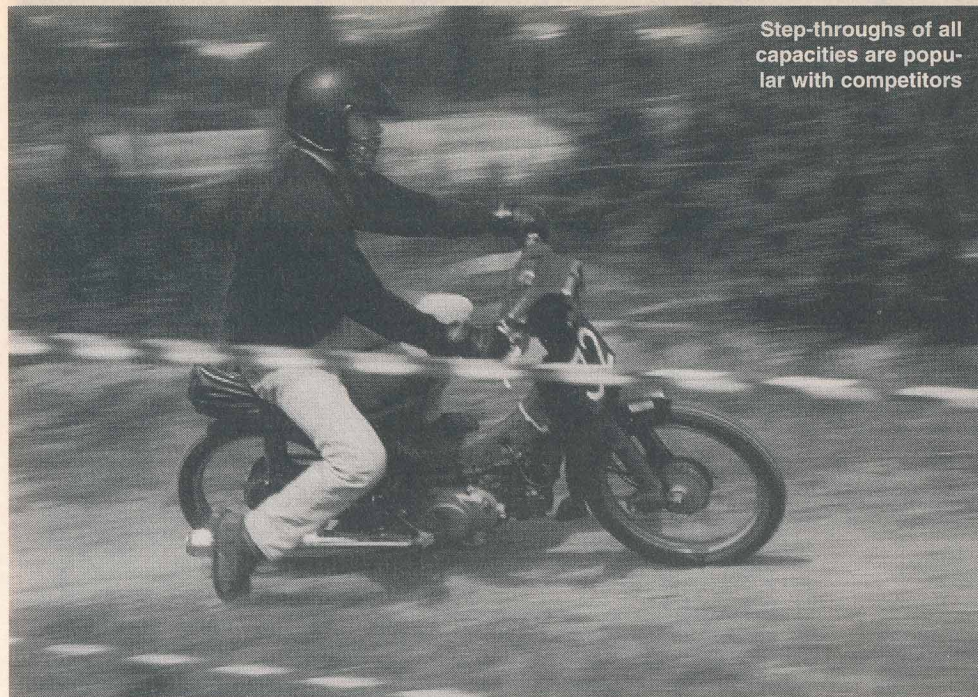
Machines run in three classes, Expert: 50cc mopeds with manual gears; Fun: step-throughs up to 95cc with auto-clutch; and Sidecars: either of the previous two with a sidecar attached. The chairs showed

the most ingenuity in their modification. How do you attach a sidecar to a bike without a front down-tube? No problem, you attach a couple of strips of Dexion to the cylinder head bolts, add a plywood floor and a third wheel and away you go... occasionally in different directions.

The course ran along the perimeter of a couple of adjoining fields and passed through the middle of the paddock to speed up team rider changes and running repairs. The whole event looked like great fun both for the competitors, some of



Now that's what I call barmy. Sidecar moped racing, what a crack



Step-throughs of all capacities are popular with competitors

whom interpreted the clothing regs rather liberally with their bone-dome helmets and wellies, and for the crowd as they watched the pit crews shamelessly bodging all manner of breakages.

After three hours of sweat and dirt the winner emerged; G Lucas, having completed 41 laps with no marks lost on the nadgery bits, a fine achievement, almost but not quite matched by step-through specialist G Thomas. R and G Wheeler won the chairs.

As for the C90s, and there were several, some survived and some didn't, but either way if you are unlucky enough to be reincarnated as one look on the bright side. At least at the end of your days you'll die laughing.

If you are of unsound mind and want to have a crack at moped racing, then you need to contact Martin Ward on 0181 390 8308 for the full SP

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# Mr Nice Guy

Dave Taylor 1943-1996



TrailBike -58- Magazine

On August 9, Dave Taylor MBE, 'The Wheelie King' passed away peacefully at his home in Bexleyheath after a heroic 13 year struggle against cancer.

Dave made his name as a motorcycle display rider in the mid-1970s, after a chance meeting with a promoter who saw him wheelie-ing his trials bike across a field. He quickly developed a spectacular show with which he toured the grand prix circuits of the world for five years, and he also performed most of his amazing repertoire of stunts on grass, shale and even ice.

Dave was a 'late developer' in dirt-riding terms, he was 27 before he ever ventured off road. As a teenager he'd been one of the original 'ton up' cafe racers who frequented Johnson's cafe on the A20 near Brands Hatch, but once he took to the dirt he had success at both trials and motocross almost straight away and also discovered the joys of trail riding. He loved riding the Pilgrim's Way in Kent and his annual visit to the Isle of Man TT festival was almost entirely devoted to trail riding.

Dave was haunted by the death of two of his best friends whom he saw die on their bikes when he was still a teenager. While at the height of his fame he started doing a unique 'road safety road show' to teenage schoolchildren which started with him pulling wheelies in the playground and riding a trials bike over his van, but ended with dire warnings about the dan-

gers of riding and driving without proper training or protective clothing. Over a period of nearly 20 years he talked to over a million teenagers and was still running his schools campaign right up until a few weeks before his death.

Dave was convinced that learning to ride on the dirt was not only safer, but



In reflective mood on the Isle of Man

made for a more skilful rider when he or she took to the tarmac and had to battle with the traffic. He put his money where his mouth was in 1977 when he opened the first trail park in the country at Darenth Wood near Dartford in Kent. Then Transport Minister Kenneth Clarke made a televised visit and praised Dave in a House of Commons debate on Road Safety.

As a fellow speccy four-eyes, Dave Taylor had inspired me with

his wheelie exploits and when I heard about the trail park it gave me a good excuse to go and meet him because by that time I was studying for an MSc in town planning and I thought trail parks might make an interesting subject for my final year dissertation. Dave welcomed me into his house as if he'd known me for years and we talked for hours about the problems he was having getting planning permission for a new trail park in Tottenham Marsh in the Lea Valley.

One of the first things I did after meeting Dave was to go and hire a bike at his trail park and I was hooked immediately. That simple thrash around on a Honda

TrailBike -59- Magazine

# DAVE TAYLOR

XL125 led to a host of off-road adventures all over Europe, many of which have been recounted in the pages of this magazine, so Dave's got a lot to answer for!

In 1982 I worked for him in the second of the two Michelin-sponsored temporary trail parks that he set up and ran for the duration of the first two NEC motorcycle shows. Dave was a great person to work for; he treated everyone as a friend, almost never lost his temper and never asked anyone to do anything he wasn't prepared to do himself. He was much stronger than he looked, with a handshake like a sumo wrestler.

In 1983 Dave was diagnosed as suffering from stomach cancer and nearly died in a botched operation which punctured

his bowel but left his stomach intact. The doctors gave him only a few months to live but they had reckoned without the indomitable Taylor spirit and little over a year later Dave invited me to join him in the back-up team of the Imps ATC expedition to cross the Grand Erg Occidental in the Sahara. It was a far from smooth trip but we had some great laughs together despite getting sand in everything we ate. The expedition suffered from a lamentable lack of organisation and a multitude of mechanical hassles but we had three great days riding the ATCs across the desert together after the official crossing had ended. Living in enforced intimacy for a month could have ended many a friendship but happily ours survived stronger than ever.

In 1985 and again in 1986 I went trail riding with Dave on the Isle of Man where he demonstrated he had lost none of his skills on a bike. It was typical of his enthusiasm for dirt riding that he turned up at one of the very first trail bike enduro club meetings at Matcham's Park in 1987. He also helped me obtain a part-time consultancy with the MCIA to research and promote off-road sites nationwide. In return I managed to get the planning permission renewed on his trail park in difficult circumstances and helped him with many of his articles and speeches.

Dave could get on with absolutely anyone in any circumstances - whether it was receiving his MBE from the Queen, giving a cheque to Princess Anne for the Save the Children fund, or meeting a penniless Algerian family living in a deserted French Foreign Legion fort in the middle of the Sahara. He put his natural teaching

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Dave Taylor 1943-1996

skills to good use in 1991 when Riders for Health invited him out to Lesotho in Africa to help train health workers to ride trail bikes. While there he helped devise a scheme which enabled men and women who had never even ridden a pushbike to have enough skill and confidence to ride a trail bike across all sorts of terrain in a matter of hours. Dave came back really impressed by the pluckiness of the Lesothans who got back on their bikes after crashing time and again.

Back in 1977 Dave had lapped the Isle of Man TT course at an average speed of 60mph - just on the back wheel; and in

1993, having not done any display riding for years, he re-enacted the TT lap in aid of Riders for Health... and with a broken wrist. It's an awesome sight to see someone lean a bike into a turn at high speed with the front wheel three feet in the air. Dave assured me that it could only be done with a trials tyre at exactly 8psi, and that if he hadn't learned to wheelie on a trials bike he would never have known it was possible. There's some great footage of Dave doing the stunt at Brands Hatch in the 'Living Wheels' video which he made with Martin Shaw (of 'Professionals' fame) in 1984.



Dave performs his spectacular no-handed wheelie back in the Seventies

TrailBike -61- Magazine

# DAVE TAYLOR

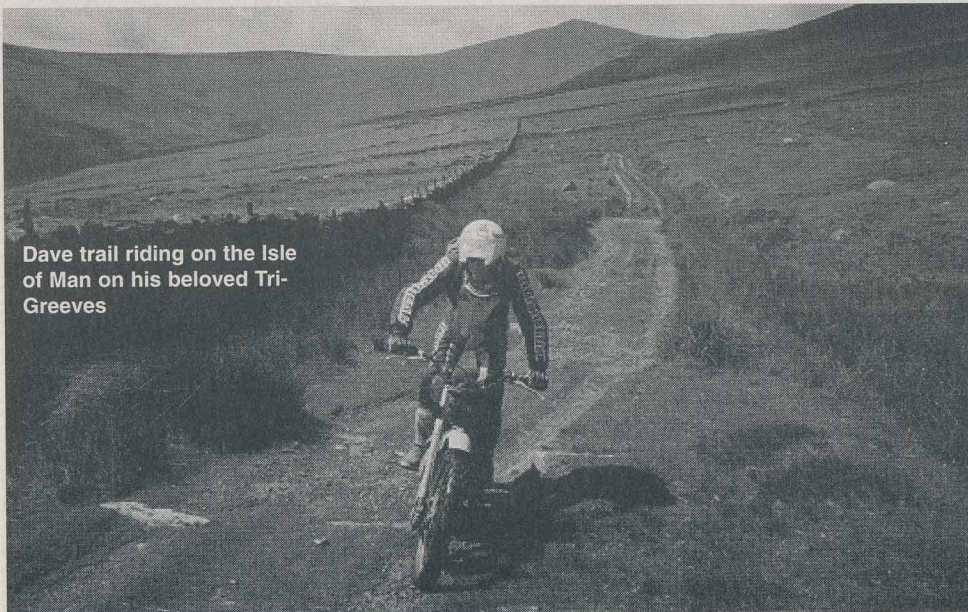
For trail riding Dave progressed from a twin-shock XR250 to a monoshock KMX200, but then in recent years opted for a Greeves-Triumph 500 which he described in the very first issue of Trail Bike. Dave had lost some of his former strength and stamina by now, so you would have thought that he would want to ride something really light and well-suspended, but Dave loved that old Tri-Greeves and regarded even my XR600 as too easy to ride. And as he recounted in Trail Bike, when it came to climbing the steepest hill in the island, Dave and his Greeves were the only ones in our party who chugged straight up it at the first attempt.

We last went trail riding together with Dave's sons and friends in the ice and snow last Boxing Day. Out on the Pilgrim's Way, Dave was still riding the tractor-like Tri-Greeves with as much enjoyment as

ever and afterwards we went to Farningham village which was packed with motorcyclists of all types and persuasions, many of whom came up and greeted Dave.

I last saw Dave Taylor three days before he died and even though he was dosed up with morphine his great spirit and humour still came shining through. He knew he was near the end and was far better prepared for it than most. In his 53 years he achieved far more than most people who live to be 100. I'm not ashamed to admit that I dissolved into tears when I said my last goodbye.

Dave Taylor was a great motorcyclist who triumphed many times in adversity but above all he was a great human being whose honesty, integrity and spirit was an example to us all. I'm proud to have known him and to have been his friend. I shall miss him terribly, and so will motorcycling.



Dave trail riding on the Isle of Man on his beloved Tri-Greeves

Win! Win! Win! Win! Win! Win! Win! Win! Win! Win! Win! Win! Win!

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# 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 5 & 6 this month, other pages to follow.

**XL100:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, 99cc, single, 6-speed. Very basic, cheap to insure learner trailie. Later versions were smaller all round with more basic instruments. *Verdict: Good starter machine.*

**XL125:** 231lbs, a/c, 4-str, sohc, 123cc, single, 6-speed. Basic, twin-shock learner bike used by legions of beginners in the 70s & 80s. Usually badly treated, unusually they still survive.

**XL125R:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, 123cc, single, 6-speed. Monoshock version of above, analagous to 250R and 500R. Later, Italian-built monoshock Dakar version with big tank and electric start can be found as grey import.

**XL185:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, 185cc, single, 5-speed. One of the definitive original green laners. Twin shock version only, but can be upgraded with later 125R parts, including chassis!

**XL250:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Started life way back in the 1970s with the Motorsport, a basic twin-shock trail bike not unlike Yam's XT500. *Verdict: Capable plodder.*

**XL250S:** 1978-on, 261lbs, a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 248cc, single. Which sported a four-valve, twin-port head pumping out all of 26bhp, but still with 6-volt electrics at first; twin shocks and crappy SLS front and rear brakes and an unusual 23 inch front wheel, giving little tyre choice. Later versions adopted the Honda Pro-Link rear end and 12-volt electrics. Good all rounder, but better on the road than off it. Comfy saddle and decent build quality make this a good second-hand buy if you can find one. Because this was the bike from which the legendary RS250 despatcher's tool was derived it means you can bolt the complete 12-volt RS250 flywheel, generator and engine cover straight on to any of the 6-volt XL or XR 250s and 500s. The accelerator-pumped carb of the RS will also give a useful power increase to the 250.

**XL250 Degree:** 119kg, w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, 249cc, 25bhp, single. Nineties style version of the venerable no-frills XL250, now water-

cooled and with a four valve head, but still with rear drum brake. *Verdict: Nice little stylish trailie.*

**XL500S:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Practically identical to the XL250 apart from the bigger cylinder and head and a longer frame although it is possible to squeeze the bigger engine into a 250 chassis. Only 32bhp, but loads more stomp and the same crappy front brake - green racing linings help a bit, but beware low-speed lock-ups! Fortunately the 23 inch wheels can be re-laced with 21 inch rims which actually improves the handling and provides a vast increase in tyre choice! Beware starting problems and low revs misfire caused by furring of the alloy earthing plate - solution is to take a lead direct from engine to coil. **One careful owner TBM No.s 11 & 12.**

**XL250R/500R:** 1984-on, a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. The cylinder heads were now blessed with Radial Four Valve Combustion (RFVC), vastly superior Pro-Link mono-shock suspension, beefier forks and much better TLS front brake in a 21 inch wheel, and 12-volt electrics - a much better bet all round than the 'S' models if you can afford them. Only snag with the TLS front brake is that it will not stop you from rolling back on a hill! The CR motocrosser front end will fit straight into the XL headstock so long as you use the whole assembly. Beware top end seepage of oil between head and barrel. The XL250R finally lost its metal tank and was developed into the XR version. Early XL500 engines were very popular in single cylinder road racing, so second hand spares are hard to come by. Frequent oil changes are essential to avoid the dreaded knackered head syndrome caused by the camshaft running direct in it although bearing conversions are available. Some 250s suffered from dodgy gearboxes and frequent top end problems. *Verdict: Cheaper than an XR.*

## TRAILBIKE GUIDE

**One careful XL500R owner TBM No.13.**  
**XL350/400:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Grey import originally built for French and Japanese markets - a big-bore version of the 250 rather than a sleeved down 500. *Verdict: Very rare.*

**XL600R** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Larger version of 500R later swapped its drum front brake for a disc.

**XL600LM:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Paris-Dakar version of above with big tank, flashy twin headlights, red painted engine, tube-less gold spoked rims and glory-be, electric start. Unfortunately it didn't go as well as it looked - one of the magazines put one on a dyno at the time and got only 26bhp at the rear wheel. *Verdict: Nicely individual.*

**Honda XRs:** Most not officially designed for road use (except for the XR-Ls), but virtually all have been registered for the road by owners, with varying degrees of legality.

**XR75/80:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Small wheel mini-bike with poky engine for teenagers, but we know of at least one street-legalised one used as a fun green-laner after modification with big wheels.

**XR100:** 68kg, a/c, 4-str, sohc, 99cc, single, 6-speed. Mini off roader based on XL100 engine but with 19 inch front and 16 inch rear wheels. Great, fun bike on which to learn basics. World champion road racer Kenny Roberts uses them to teach sliding techniques to GP hopefuls.

**XR200R:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, single, 5-speed. Early twin shock bikes (originally based on the XL185) made brilliant green laners. Still fairly popular though later monoshock versions are better and more plentiful. Drum bakes let it down though some late Japanese spec models come with discs. Light enough to pick up if need be. *Verdict: Still a great trail bike.*

**XLR200:** 112kg, a/c, 4-str, sohc, 18bhp, single. Japanese-spec trailbike version of above with drum rear brake.

**XLR250R:** 113kg, a/c, 4-str, sohc, 249cc, 28bhp, single. Japanese-spec trailbike version of above with drum rear brake.

**XLR250-Baja:** 116kg, a/c, 4-str, sohc, 249cc, 28bhp, single. Japanese-spec trailbike version of the XR Baja, but with slightly lower spec and a pair of smaller headlights.

**XR250(R):** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Based on both XL250S and 250R with identical frames but more suspension travel, disc front brake and slightly hotter cam giving small power increase. Early monoshock with twin carbs could be a sod to start when hot - go for

the later single-carb model. The XR250 makes a very good off-road all-rounder - light weight and adequate power (30bhp claimed) makes it perfect for trail riders and clubman enduro riders alike, and tolerable on the road. All Honda 250s need to be revved hard if you want to get a move on. New ones come with electric start and there's now a Baja version available with huge twin headlamps, among other detail changes. *Verdict: Popular and versatile trailie.*

**XR250L:** 113kg, a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 249cc, 28bhp, single. Grey import with road-legal lights, speedo and indicators. Slightly heavier than R. **Compared with Yamaha TT-R 250 in TBM No.1**

**XR350:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Mid Eighties (monoshock) version, only imported for a very short time and now rare in UK. Much the same as the 250 but with extra poke and unfortunately extra weight.

**XR500:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. bigger version of XR250, as used by Eddie Kidd for wheelies. Early version was developed into the XR550RR on which Cyril Neveu won the 1982 Paris-Dakar rally.

**XR600:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Several versions since 1984, mostly imported from USA until Honda UK started importing in 1994. Early versions easy to tell by drum rear brake and twin carbs. All are great off roaders, with pukka suspension and lightweight chassis. Not much fun on the road because of the vibes, lack of creature comforts, and twitchy handling. And some can be real pigs to start. Often the bike of choice for overlanders but beware, rear sub-frame is not built to take a lot of weight. Honda UK have not homologated the latest continental-spec version even though it comes with proper speedo and head and tail lights (but no indicators) so they're still not officially road legal and sold by Honda dealers 'for off-road use only' - but it's easy to road-register as an individual so can still be ridden away from the shop. Great wheelie-pulling ability, and very light compared to something like an XT600. Has become the privateer's desert rally bike by which all others are judged - light, relatively simple and very robust. The best noise/power compromise is to keep the main body of the original baffle, but take out the inner core - this looks and sounds 'kosher' but liberates most of the power. Official HRC hop-up kits with big bore (630cc) and hot cam are available but not recommended for off-road use or long-distance reliability. Tons of other tuning parts available. *Verdict: Definitive 'pukka' big banger.*

# free Classified ads

## BIKES

**Suzuki DR350**, 1996, N-reg, as new, road use only, 5000 miles, one lady owner. Tel 0181 590 8476 (Essex)

**Honda XR200R**, 94/M, taxed, new tyres fitted, excellent cond, £1800 ono. Tel 01282 817332 (Lancs)



**Yamaha XT350**, 1990, T&T, 11,000 miles, original cond, reluctant sale, £1750. Tel 01703 892705 (New Forest)

**Cagiva Elephant**, 750cc, 1987, E-reg, Lucky Explorer colours, good cond, 20,000 miles, one owner last five years, the original nimbler Elephant, ideal rally off road tourer, £2000. Tel 0114 2666413 (Sheffield)

**Yamaha Serow 225**, G-reg, T&T, electric start, brush guards, bash plate, rear carrier, 9000 miles, £1750 ono. Tel Penny, 0181 866 0112 (Middx)

**KTM 400EGS**, N-reg, immaculate, road mileage only, £4100 for quick sale. Tel 01920 871988 (Herts)

**Honda XLR250 Baja 2**, 1990, vgc, long T&T, frame stoved, many extras, excellent dual purpose bike, £1695, may p/x for two stroke trail or enduro. Tel 01603 787933 (Norwich)

**Husqvarna CR390**, 1979, enduro spec, T&T, new crank and seals, spare tyres and mudguards, clock bar pad, tool bag, excellent cond, £750 ovno. Tel 01824 702994 (Peter, North Wales)

**Suzuki DR200**, E-reg, 12V, T/cover, knobblies, MoT, all good but smokes hence £600. Tel 01604 832162 (Northants)

**Yamaha XT350**, stolen & recovered, used as a field bike, White Power USD forks, Excel rims, good well maintained bike with complete bike for spares, £600 no offers. Tel 01484 866549 or 01484 863574 (Hudds)

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**Kawasaki KDX200 A1**, 1985, T&T, good clean reliable bike, recent rings piston & small end etc, V good bore, lights etc, genuine reason for sale, £675 ono. Tel 01622 735829 (Kent)

**Yamaha IT175**, 1981, T&T, original, reliable, classic, incomplete second bike for spares, genuine reason for sale, may p/x for dearer bike, £495. Tel 01622 735829 (Kent)

**Yamaha WR250**, 1991, H-reg, T&T, new liner and piston, front disc and hose, silencer, h/light, chain & sprox, £1500 ono or will swap TDR250 or similar. Tel 01270 665649 (Cheshire) before 6pm  
**Suzuki TS185**, registered 1981, Mot 1 year, lovely unmarked cond, £525 ono. Tel 01246 273662 or 0831 281828 (Chesterfield)

**Yamaha XT600 Tenere**, 1984, T&T, new tyres/chain, spare CDI, manual, good starter hot or cold, good allround cond, £875 ono. Tel 01243 607896 (West Sussex)

**Suzuki DR650**, 1996, latest model, as tested in April issue TBM, six weeks old, 22 months warranty, unmarked condition, very sad sale, £4,400 (£800 saving on new). Tel 01344 843929 (Surrey)

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**Wanted** big tank and stainless steel exhaust for KLX650 C1, also wanted Rally Brush Guards. Tel Ian on 01782 315087 (Stoke On Trent)

**Wanted** desperately, complete power valve kit for DT125R, must be complete with servo, pulley, cables, etc, cash waiting, someone out there must have one! Tel Nick on 01483 724847

(Woking)

**Wanted** spares for Yamaha DT250MX, T-reg, seat, airbox & filter, flywheels, coils or willing to sell whole bike or p/x on running mx or enduro, no smaller than 175cc. Tel 01373 474043

(Somerset)

**Wanted** Honda Sales brochures for Honda XR250R models 1985-96, also honda XR500R sales brochures etc.

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# TRAIL TALES...

CHRIS SCOTT TACKLES HIS FIRST  
WELSH ENDURO

**M**onday morning and no way could I face going to work. I lay curled up like an armadillo with rigor mortis then when I finally emerged from my bed, spent the rest of the day hobbling around like a mugging victim. I had been mugged you see; mugged by my first Welsh enduro.

Two days earlier I'd looked at my bright green KLX250 (the early Eighties model, not today's zippy four-valver) with pride. Tiny mods set it apart from your run of the mill trailie: axle wrench strapped to the swingarm for blink-and-you'll-miss-it wheel changes, bore and stroke Tippexed on the crankcases as required by the ACU and those rrrrracing numbers - one-one-two. Did it mean I was rated a hundred and twelfth? - probably. Later that day me and the snazzy KLX caught the train bound for Aberystwyth.

Eight trail bikes in 18 fun-filled months and I'd already tired of feeble local enduros having ridden all the nearby woods, bomb holes and wasteland to death. Now, after months of 'dare I' scanning the regs in the back of TMX, I decided to take the plunge and enter my first proper Welsh enduro on my 14hp mut-ton-dressed-as-dirtbike.

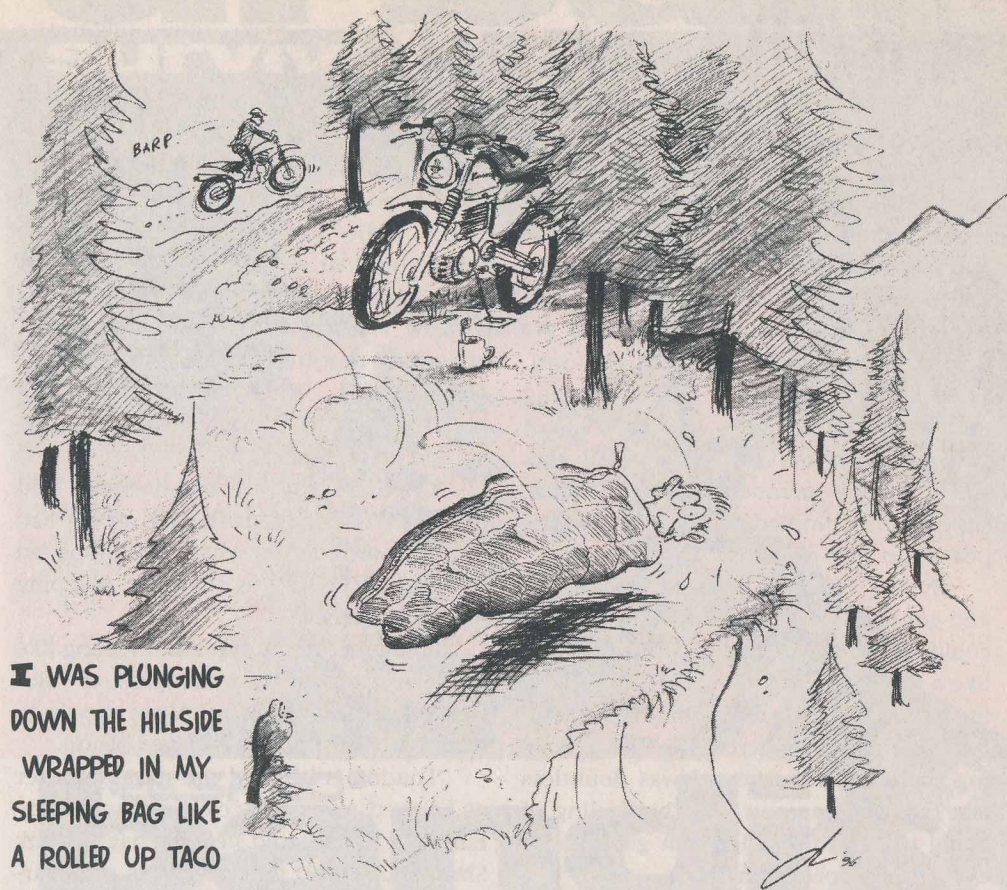
I knew all about the big ones; the Welsh Two Day, the Brecon, the Rhayader and the Beacons, events I'd never survive,

but here was one I might, the Cwm Owen: it wasn't a British Championship round which meant that I might stand a chance of getting to the end. I sent off the entry forms and promptly got my racing number, final instructions and a list of local B&Bs.

As the sole member of Team Railcard, B&Bs were out of my budget, and on arriving at Aberystwyth late that Saturday evening, I bought some Lucozade and a tube of Toffos from the local garage and rode out to the B2121. Around midnight I figured a roadside plantation was as good a place as any to kip, and killing the lights I rode down into the forest, unrolled my sleeping bag on a bit of a slope and promptly dozed off.

The next morning I was woken by the din of a rorty stoker tearing past on the road above. Dying for just a few more minutes of dozing, I turned over and dreamt I was free-falling, spiralling gently through the clouds..., when suddenly I realised I wasn't dreaming after all. In my weary haste to pass out the night before, I'd pitched my sleeping bag at the top of a huge slope and now I was plunging down the hillside, trapped in my sleeping bag like a rolled up taco. I fiddled frantically with the drawstring as sky, trees and pine needles spun past. A tree caught my feet and swung me headfirst down the slope like a toboggan just as I managed to get my arms out and kick off the sleeping bag. A few somersaults later I slithered to a halt against a fence.

Dazed and confused though unhurt, I staggered back up to the bike, got dressed and 20 minutes later was signing-up for



**I WAS PLUNGING  
DOWN THE HILLSIDE  
WRAPPED IN MY  
SLEEPING BAG LIKE  
A ROLLED UP TACO**

three 20-mile laps in the four stroke club-man class. In those days monoshockers like KDXs and ITs were beginning to make an impact on an enduro world previously ruled by twin shock Maicos, KTMs and the odd yellow PE which rang-dang-danged around the muddy fields. With my minute due, it was the turn of lip-chewing one-one-twelve to push my bike up to the starting line alongside a purposeful looking XR250. 'GO!' shouted the starter, and I fair broke off the KLX's kick-starter to get the holeshot on the XR rider.

Take it easy now, watch those ruts... I

warned myself as I neared the first bend where the track swung uphill. Within a minute the XR passed me and was gone, never to be seen again, leaving me, a breathless, rigid-limbed, goggle steaming learner bouncing from rut to rock as I struggled to get the feel of the Kawasaki at 'racing' speeds.

Up on the moor top I could see a long boggy section ahead where several bikes had floundered. With no obvious line to left or right I aimed it straight at the middle, dropped a gear, rolled open the throttle and plunged into the bog handle-

bar deep. Twenty miles of moorland hammering on a handful of Toffos was already taking its toll, but at times like these you don't think about how knackered you are or your multitude of aches and pains - you just do what must be done. I heaved the front wheel up to one side of the bog and after much cursing, managed to get the back wheel onto firm ground. Crawling out of the mire and straddling the bike on my tiptoes to attempt - I'm not sure what - some kind of fanciful kick start wheelie manoeuvre? - one foot slipped and I toppled back into the slushy peat soup with a splat.

By the time I'd dragged myself out and got back on course, finishing was all I could think of and I hung onto the bars like a wet sheet. But a few miles later having got my breath back I found myself riding blissfully alone across the hills following the Castrol markers. I was doubtless last but who cares, it was this feeling of being truly in the wilds that gave Welsh events their special flavour.

Coming to the bog next time round I thought I'd be clever and try a firmer-looking route to the left. I soon realised why no one was going this way; the ground was broken up and full of treacherous peat troughs and eventually the KLX dived into one such trough about the size of Surrey.

I must've been in there for hours, trying to stand up, holding my breath and diving down to try to find my bike. In the end I eventually extracted the poor machine but it was a further 40 minutes of kicking and cursing before I could provoke it back into life.

Coming back down the hill leading to

the starting area I lacked even the wit to ride off the easy drop offs: instead I'd brake hard at the last minute tipping myself over the handlebars again and again while formations of low-flying Maicos on their sixth lap flew over the top of me like a squadron of bombers.

The last lap was a lonesome fog of agony and repeated prangs at the slightest obstacle, and I finally dribbled into the parking area just as everyone was packing up and going home.

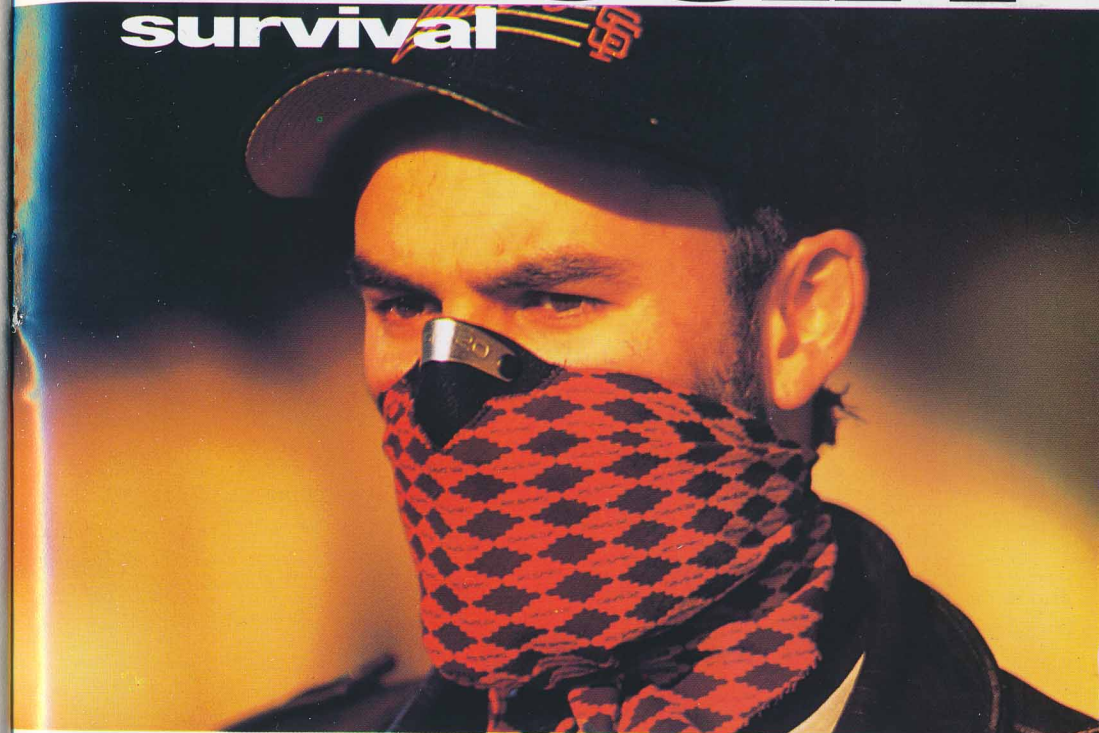
'Oh there you are one-one-two' said the nice Welsh lady, ticking me off her list. 'We were wondering what had happened to you. By the way, is that your sleeping bag by the fence?'

I pumped up my tyres and feeling like I'd been run over by a stampede of yaks, weaved wearily back to Aberystwyth to find that a train strike had just begun.

'London is it?' Said the station master as he eyed my scruffy clothes, my muddy hair, and my tattered sleeping bag. 'I think Shrewsbury (140 miles away) is the nearest station that's still operating, but you've just missed the last train.'

Months later, with bruises healed and the KLX long gone, a weighty packet dropped onto my doormat. Inside was a bronze medallion centred with an enamelled bike monowheeling majestically across the sky. My name was stamped on the reverse and as I thought hard to see if I could remember even the slightest second of monowheeling an accompanying note dropped out of the packet. On one side it stated 'Finisher, Cwm Owen Enduro, 1980' on the other was written by hand 'we hope you enjoyed yourself - be sure to apply early for next year's event'.

# urban survival



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