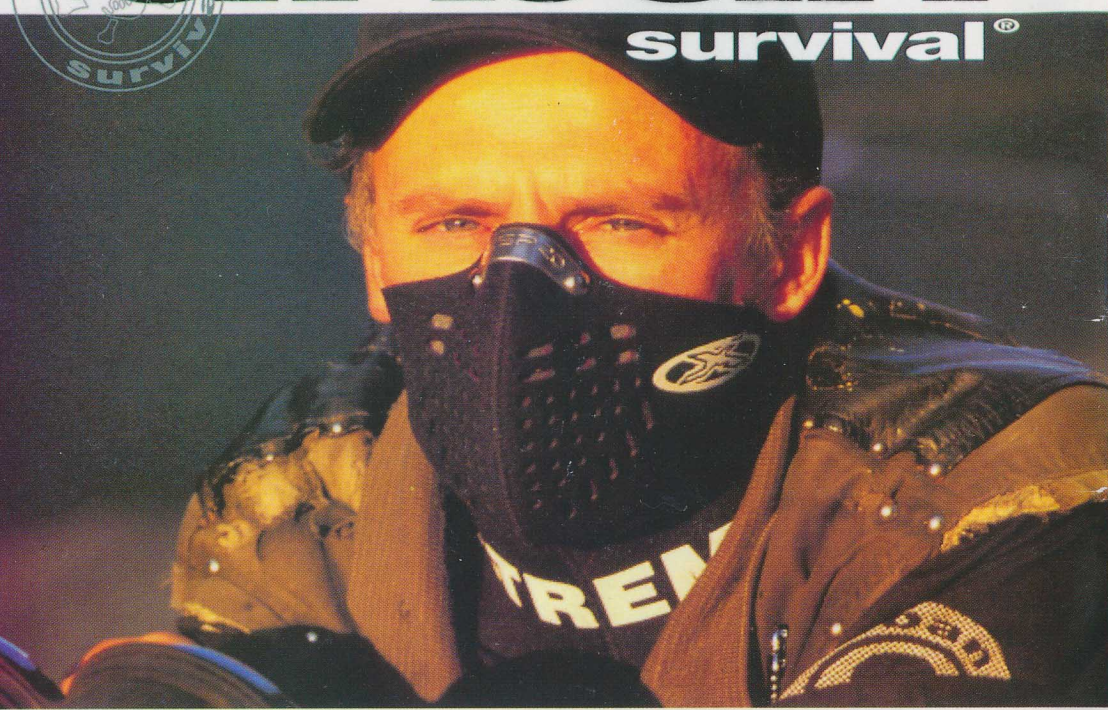




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D I G T H E R T

# TRAIL BIKE

& ENDURO

M A G A Z I N E

AUGUST 1997

ISSUE 25 £1.95

### KDX250SR

LIVELIER THAN  
A BUCKET  
OF FROGS!



### THE 1997

# Always

## RALLY



### PROJECT

## ARMSTRONG MT500

THE ARMY'S  
BIGGEST SECRET

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wenty two miles away - doesn't sound all that far does it? I mean most trail riders wouldn't balk at the idea of riding 22 miles to get to their fave bit of off roading. Say what, about 45 minutes away at the most, depending on how fast you travelled?

But what if I was to say to you that by travelling 22 miles you could earn yourself £1300 (or roughly the equivalent to a free entry in something like the Tunisie Rally) then you'd take a bit of notice wouldn't you. Sure you'd say, how do I get some of that? Well it couldn't be easier really, all you have to do is get on the ferry at Dover, travel the 22 miles over the water to France and order your next new trailbike there.

For instance, fancy a new Suzuki DR650SE? That'll be £3843.60 (in France) at today's exchange rate (all taxes paid) merci. Of course you could always hand over £5149 (inc otr charges) to your nearest Suzuki dealer if you really wanted - but where would be the sense in that? Or how about a new Yamaha XT600E? A quid over £3700 to you squire... er monsieur, or alternatively your local Yamaha dealer has got 'em on the shelf at £4949... but then again he *does* speak English - well sort of!

Want me to continue, or have you got the point by now? Well actually the point is this: we are being ripped off. That's right, we're being well and truly shafted by our own bike importers. And that's before you take the difference in taxes into account. In other words both these prices include VAT, but the French VAT (TVA) is currently about 20% - ie 2.5% higher than our own. But hang on a minute. As you're going to be buying for export, you don't have to pay French taxes - you simply sign a customs declaration form confirming that you are going to be exporting the bike and then ride away with the extra grand in your pocket. Once you get to the UK customs you must pay UK VAT (currently only 17.5%), but now you've saved yourself even more money on the figures I've quoted thanks to the UK's lower tax rate. Couldn't be easier really could it?

Okay I know that the Yanks and the Japs can buy their bikes cheaper than we can here in Europe but hey, they're a bit further away than 22 miles remember, and even if you do find what you want out there then you've got the hassle of getting the bike crated up and shipped over here and there's still import duty to pay. No, buying from France (or anywhere else in the European Union for that matter) couldn't be easier. Jump on the Eurostar, get off in Paris, head to the nearest bike dealers, walk in with your credit card and say: 'Je veux une nouvelle moto s'il vous plait'. Jump on your new bike, sort out the paperwork at Dover and then, depending on where you live in the UK, by the time you get home the bike may even be run in and ready for its first service. Easy-peasy, n'est ce pas?

Okay, not all bikes are cheaper there, some of the savings aren't as spectacular as those I've mentioned above, but then again, some of them are even better! And here's a funny thing. You'd have thought that at least a trailbike that's designed and built in Britain - something like a Triumph Tiger 900 say - would be cheaper in the UK wouldn't you? Well yes you would've thought so!

Finally there are going to be those people who say it's too much hassle buying from France, the bikes aren't exactly the same, and what about the warranty? But of course you know damn well who'll be saying it - the bike importers - that's who.

Si Melber

Edited and produced by:

**Si Melber.**

Contributors:

**Paul Bizard, Dave Cornish, Neil Pidduck,**

**Babs Clough.**

Designed by:

**Andy Riley**

Editorial address:

**PO Box 9845,**

**London W13 9WP.**

**Tel (office hours only)**

**0181 840 4760.**

Advertising enquiries:

**Call: Lisa Doerr**

**Merricks Publishing**

**01458 274447**

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# Dear Trail Bike...

Got an opinion? Then write to:  
**TrailBike Magazine**  
PO Box 9845  
London W13 9WP

## BEEMER BUILD

Dear Si

Thought you might be interested in seeing a picture of my recently completed 'slightly modified' R80GS - I'd be made up if you could print it. It's got a modded sub-frame, CCM tailpipe, stainless brackets and pipes, Hagon rebuilt wheels, DT125R front end, air horns, alarm, radar detector, Acerbis plastics (45 litre tank), in fact it's only the engine

that's untouched. Oh yeah - new shiny mag is ace, I'm going to subscribe.

Steve Thomas  
Wirral

*Cheers Steve.  
Interesting bike, like the exhaust, but do you reckon those forks are up to the job? Hope so*

## OLD CHESTNUT

First of all I'd like to congratulate you on producing such a high quality magazine for our sport, but I feel I must

take issue with your comments directed at Paul Farley in the June issue. You say that for some people 'a cheap converted MX bike is the only way they can afford to trail ride.' This quite frankly is a load of rubbish.

Sure, old MX bikes are cheap to buy, but if they are to be made road legal, and bear in mind we can only use the byways and RUPPS that we do because they are roads, then the would be trail rider is faced with considerable cost in making the conversion. At the very least the machine will require a proper silencer, a chain guard and new tyres. Lights are not a legal requirement, but if fitted they must work and that includes a brake light. All this costs money. Moving on from this is the cost of running the

thing. Fuel consumption is around twice that of a trailbike (20mpg if you're lucky), very expensive racing oil has to be pre-mixed with the petrol, and the close ratio gearbox and abrupt powerband combine to make a machine which is not really suitable for use on green lanes.

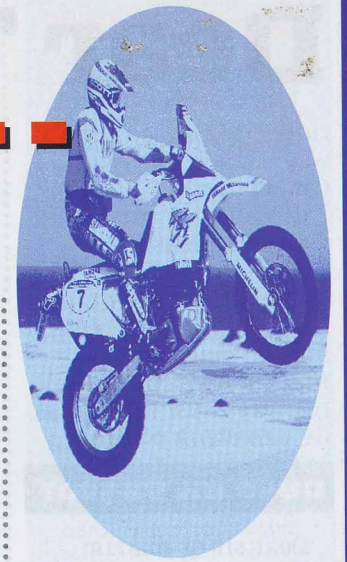
Because converted MX bikes are such brutes, most riders will have to carry them by van or trailer to the start of their ride which is another expense. Then there's the new piston and ring set which have to be purchased at regular intervals because MX bikes are not designed to run at sustained speed for any length of time. That cheap converted MX bike looks like bad value now. In fact any number of cheap trail/enduro bikes are available. An older KMX200, XL185, XR250, DR350 or virtually any 125 will cost little more than an MX bike to buy but be a hell of a lot cheaper to run and more fun to ride on the trail.

Let's keep the trails open for trailbikes and MX bikes where they belong - on the track.

Richard Simpson  
Gloucester

*So how would you feel about a reader who contacted us who got a sorted (road legal) old MX bike that he'd bought for 250 quid, on the trail for well under £100? He didn't need a van because he only rode his local trails, and he didn't bother with expensive racing oil, he just used regular two-stroke oil. That would be okay then would it? Judging by the last line of your letter I think not.*

*While I would be the first to agree that TRAILbikes have benefits over other bikes for trail riding, including softer power delivery, better range, more comfort, stronger subframes, quieter engines and a whole host of other reasons (after all you don't start up a magazine called TrailBike, if you don't believe in their qualities), unlike you I don't seek to prevent riders who want to ride the trail on LEGAL machines of whatever kind - be they KX100s or 100hp BMW K1s (as our own Paul Blezard once notoriously did).*



*Besides, I've yet to find a secondhand DR350 (which you recommend) costing less than about £1500+ (and that's a cheap one) - that sort of wedge was well beyond this particular reader's budget. As far as I'm concerned you can ride what you like as long as you keep it quiet (very important), stick to the rules and ride it sensibly. Take my point?*

## TOP TIPS

Dear Si

What the hell has happened to the bloody 'Riders Tips'? (*Off Road Riding Techniques* - Ed). They were the first thing I always looked at when I got the magazine. Those handy little notes have helped me so much while toddling along on my tidy little DR125 here in good old Wales. Please, please tell me that more

Nice bike, but are you sure those DT125 forks are up to the job?



# Dear Trail Bike...

riders tips are on the way. Diolch Yn Fowr (thanks).

Chris Hill  
Carmarthenshire

*Er... alright then Chris here's a tip: keep reading the magazine as there's more 'tips' on the way - just as soon as we can think of 'em*

## UB40 OR UB400?

Dear sir or madam  
(Madam?-Ed)

I am considering buying a secondhand trail-bike, but I am unemployed and have little money. Can you give me some advice what to go for? I will want to use the bike on the road, also for when I start working again. I have a full driving license, am six foot tall and weigh 15 stone. Any advice would be a help.

David Paxton  
Glasgow

*Start by looking through the classifieds in the back of this and future issues and you should find a few older, cheaper trailbikes for sale which will fit the bill. Given your size and requirements (mostly road work) I'd recommend choosing something of at least 400cc such as an old SP400,*

*XT550 or MT500 etc, which if you look after them should continue to give good service for a number of years. Best of luck*

## GETTING STARTED

Dear TBM

I was toying with the idea of getting a trail-bike and doing some trail riding and didn't know where to start and then I came across TBM - what a result! Thanks to your magazine I will shortly be contacting the TRF, but in the meantime can you help regarding the following:

1) A good starter bike. I ride a CBR600 on the road following recommendations in the motorcycle press and would like to know your recommendations for a good dual purpose bike. Suzuki's DR350, Honda's XR600 and Kawasaki's KLV650 all have good write-ups in the non-specialist press but what do you think of them?

2) Yamaha and Honda do off road 'schools' would you recommend these or any other similar thing?

3) Any bits of clothing or kit that I need to buy given that I already have leathers, water-proofs, winter boots etc.

I'm ordering the TBM video so some of the

above and a lot more will no doubt be covered, but I'd like to know your opinions. Keep up the good work.

Martin Hammond  
Peterborough

*Glad to hear you're getting into the sport Martin. Of the three bikes you mention we reckon the DR350 would best suit a new rider given that you already have a bike for the road. The DR is easy to ride, light enough and makes a great all-rounder. We've never heard about any Honda off road school (and nor had Honda when we contacted them about it), but can thoroughly recommend the Yamaha one run by Geraint Jones in Wales. Alternatively, give some of our specialist advertisers a ring (you'll find their numbers in the advertisers classifieds section of the mag), as a number of them run trail tours where you can use their trailbikes and they'll guide you around picturesque trails while teaching you the basics. As far as clothing and kit is concerned you'll find most of your questions answered on the video, but essentially the biggest mistake most road riders make is to think that trail riding*

*means getting cold. Quite the reverse. Leave the leathers behind, get some proper off road boots (with a strong shinguard), and a few thin layers of clothing (or better still some proper riding gear) and you won't go far wrong. Hope you enjoy it as much as we do*

## A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT?

Dear Editor

I am writing to complain about a recent article in your magazine, I refer to the May issue and the article about a planned route in east Cornwall by Ian Thompson. The ride looked good in the book so five of us decided to follow it. One of the riders knows Ian Thompson so he phoned him and Ian decided to join our group for the day. We were mostly looking forward to the river crossings pictured. However on speaking to Ian he informed us that the pictures in the article were nothing to do with his route and he had no idea where they were. We were all very disappointed by this. I would like to thank Ian for taking us around the route despite the lack of rivers. I am a regular purchaser of your magazine and I am far from impressed by the way this article has been put together.

However, to show there is no long term bad feelings I would be more than happy to accept a TBM T-shirt in compensation.

C Fox  
Westward Ho! Devon

*No rivers eh? I don't suppose when you read the article that you happened to notice the word 'river' was rather absent from the text did you? No? Oh well... here's the excuse: just occasionally the photographs that are sent in are not good enough for reproduction in the magazine. In that case we have to try and illustrate the article as best we can - or not publish it at all. This is what happened with that particular article though we ensured that all the photographs did at least come from Cornish trails and I'm surprised that Ian Thompson didn't recognise them. It sounds like you enjoyed the ride anyway (despite the lack of rivers) which just goes to show that we made the right decision to publish it, even though the accompanying photos weren't up to scratch. TRF chairman Tony Stuart who lives in Cornwall, supplied the pics (for which we're grateful) and I'm sure if you contact him through the TRF he'd be delighted to tell you where they were taken*

## WHAT'S ON

5-6 July,  
British Champs 4th round  
Rhayader enduro (and the  
next round of the British  
Enduro Championship). Good  
(if tough) riding plus excel-  
lent spectating. Starts 9am,  
Rhayader, mid Wales.

27 July,

Tour of Wales Enduro  
Traditionally tough-ish but  
enjoyable clubman+ event in  
north Wales. Starts 10am,  
details from Jeff Edwards  
01978 757751.

19-24 August,

ISDE The International Six  
Day Enduro gets underway in  
August with the best interna-  
tional enduro riders (and  
teams) from each country  
competing in this gruelling  
and prestigious event. This  
year it's held in Brescia in  
northern Italy (details from  
the tourist board), so book  
your holidays near there and  
go watch some exciting bike  
sport.

13-20 September,

Rally of Discovery  
Seven days of biking and  
boozing in equal measure in  
the beautiful south eastern  
corner of Ireland. Aimed at  
big trail bikes, the Rally of  
Discovery is a sort of seven  
day treasure hunt (mainly on  
road), followed by a daily cel-  
ebration of the dark stuff  
each evening. Full details  
from Rally organiser Phil  
Gunn on 00353 21 88 94 62.

TBC October,

Aussie ride-out  
Yamaha Australia in conjunc-  
tion with Australian off-road  
magazine Sidetrack, are plan-  
ning a five day trail ride  
between Sydney and  
Brisbane. They want to  
encourage a few poms to  
make the trip out there and  
reckon they may even be  
able to arrange bikes for you.  
If you're interested, send  
them a fax on 00612 2648  
5119 but remember there's a  
12 hour time difference..

# new stuff

## Lighting-Up Time

**Acerbis DHH  
£63.40 inc Vat**

Following the continental trend for twin halogen set-ups on enduro bikes, Acerbis have launched their DHH headlamp assembly. The flexible plastic surround contains two 35W halogen headlamps one with 10 degrees of spread (for good forward penetration) and the other with 38 degrees of spread (for dipped beam). The unit comes with the usual four mounting straps and costs a cool £63.40. Available in seven different colours including KTM orange from your local Acerbis dealer or direct from Desert Fox on 01985 841184. SM



## En Guard

**Enduro Engineering handguards  
£49.90**

With most hand/brush guards being of the flexible plastic type these days, we were pleased to be sent a pair of sturdy aluminium jobs which look to be a whole lot tougher at withstanding the knocks. Styled on the original Australian BarkBusters, these anodised alloy ones (which are currently all the rage in the US enduro world) are made in the USA by Enduro Engineering and imported by a new company OwenSport UK (see their ad in the Classified pages).

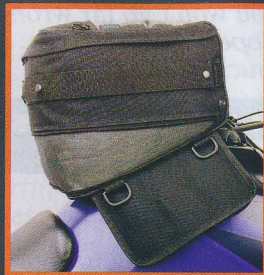
The alloy lever guards come with a simple mounting kit which fits all regular cross-brace bars and cost just £29.99 in plain alloy or an extra fiver in anodised form. But team them up with the optional deflectors (£19.95 or a fiver less if you buy both items together), and you'll have a pair of extremely protective not to mention good looking lever/hand protectors. The deflectors come with their own mounting kit which includes a drill bit to drill the lever guards and a pack of self tappers.

The biggest advantage of these over the plastic type guard is the fact that they don't deform when they hit the ground, and are less prone to get twisted around the bar when you come off. The quality also looks good, and the price is about right - we like 'em. If you do too, you can get a pair by calling OwenSport on 01670 815017, and they'll also tell you about the other stuff they do. SM

## Bags of Room

**Oxford Enduro Bag  
£54.99 inc VAT**

Most tank bags designed for road bikes don't sit very comfortably on the humpy tanks of big trailies. But help is now at hand from Oxford Products who's new Enduro Bag expands asymmetrically thanks to an ingenious zip system, allowing it to sit squarely on the rearward slope on a trail bike's petrol tank. The magnets can then be adjusted to provide maximum grip on the tank, and we've yet to have it let go even when severely overloaded.



Made from Scotchguarded material to resist water ingress, the bag comes with a useful see-through cover allowing you to read a map as you travel. A shoulder strap allows it to be carried when you leave the bike and an outside pocket provides easy access to money for tolls etc. Sensibly, the bag can also be used as a seat pack. Available from your nearest Oxford stockist or by phoning Oxford Products on 01865 841400. IK



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<b>Kawa KLR600/650 85+</b>	<b>£1400 - 1800</b>
<b>Yam XT/Tenere600 83+</b>	<b>£1400 - 1900</b>
<b>Yam TT550 from</b>	<b>£1450+</b>
<b>Yam XT350/600 (Disc)</b>	<b>£1700 - 2500</b>
<b>Suzuki DR600/650 86+</b>	<b>From £1600</b>
<b>Aprilia Tuareg 125 87+</b>	<b>£1300+</b>
<b>Aprilia RX125 88+</b>	<b>£1300+</b>
<b>Elefant 125 from</b>	<b>£1200+</b>

All the above bikes we personally import from Italy. All have new MOTs, tax disc, proper age-related plates, full three months warranty and are fully serviced usually with new tyres batteries etc. Year for year Italian imports are generally in much better condition and with lower mileage than those bikes originally sold in the UK.

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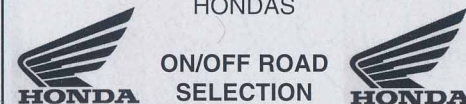
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95 Honda XR600R US model v tidy	<b>£3295</b>
96 Kawasaki KDX200 excellent	<b>£3150</b>
96 Yamaha XT225 Serows as new	<b>£2995</b>
95 Kawasaki KLX650 tidy bike	<b>£2995</b>
P XR200RV full lighting kit as new	<b>£2995</b>
N Suzuki RM250 enduro trim very tidy	<b>£1795</b>
K Honda NX650 Dominat. black v tidy	<b>£3295</b>
H Yamaha XT350 all standard red/white	<b>£1895</b>
P XT600E only 200 miles damaged	<b>£2895</b>
G Husqvarna WR250 tidy example	<b>£1095</b>
G Kawasaki KLR250 useful trailie	<b>£1495</b>
E Kawasaki KDX200 very tidy for year	<b>£1095</b>
Yamaha IT175 v tidy	<b>£995</b>
Yamaha XT550 good condition	<b>£995</b>
Twin shock MXers 89 Maico 440, 74 Husky CR250, BSA B50MX, CZ250... Ring for details	

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THE  
1997

# Atlas

## RALLY

THE 15TH RUNNING OF THE ATLAS RALLY TOOK PLACE BACK IN MAY. SIMON PAVEY RODE IT AND LIVED TO TELL THE TALE...



Eight days, 3000km and it's hot, damned hot...





# A

s we sat above the glory of Lake Bin El Ouidane enjoying a superb lunch with rally organiser and Dakar legend Hubert Auriol, British rider Nick Ashley arrived and parked his bike. 'That track was made by God' he said. Adding 'What a perfect day;

the bike was perfect, the scenery was perfect, and the weather was perfect! That was the best day's riding of my life'. Nick's sentiments were shared by all of us that day in a crazy up and down week of rally raiding that was the Atlas Savanne 1997.

For me it had begun a long time before. I have ridden enduros for years, and like many others, dreamed of going rally raiding. The Atlas appealed from the photos and stories I had read, and most of all seemed affordable. My entry was sent in January and on 6 May I headed to Plymouth Off Road to meet with British team organiser John Deacon and the rest of the British and Aussie contingent. From there we travelled by ferry and road to the start in Valencia. As we all soon discovered, rally raiding is a crazy sport where all your ideas of dirt bikes will change and you will learn, learn, learn.

In rally raiding, days of the week don't exist, only the rally day number is known. Talk to anyone on the event and you can't find out the day, let alone the date. The only answers were 'day three', or 'two days left'. Time similarly is strange: if it's daylight you should be doing something. That doesn't necessarily mean riding. It might be fixing your bike or trying to drink enough to rehydrate your body in order to eat, or search for the medical tent in order to get the maddening spines of some strange plant pulled out of your arm. Whatever it is it doesn't matter, if it's daylight you must do something. If it's dark you must sleep. Easy!

**FRIDAY** was day 0 - At most events, scrutineering is usually where you take your bike off the trailer some guy taps your spokes and you sign an indemnity. Wrong. Rally raid scrutineering happens in the daylight, so everyone had to do something. It took hours and hours of tedium and frustration. When we arrived we were each given a card with various spaces on it. Each space needed to be stamped, and to get each stamp you had to queue and then present the required documentation or answer questions that everyone already knew the answers to. None of us had any real problems, the bikes were fuelled up and left in the Parc Fermé, and we were ready to start day one in Spain.

**Day 1.** Dirt bikes are for riding in the dirt? Wrong. The organisers didn't want us to make any false assumptions here, so they cancelled the first special stage, leaving us only three kilometres of off roading followed by a 550km transport section down the motorway to the ferry in Almeria. The XR400 I was riding turned out to be a great motor-

way cruiser, and with clear skies and great views over the Sierra Nevada to entertain us, it was not a bad ride.

**Day 2.** Was to be a new ballgame. The Moroccan governor laid on a superb breakfast, before we set off on the first stage of 80km. This was a mostly fast winding and rocky trail culminating in a cracking gnarly downhill full of boulders and hairpins - instant grin material for the bike riders, but I'm not sure the car drivers saw it that way. After leaving the

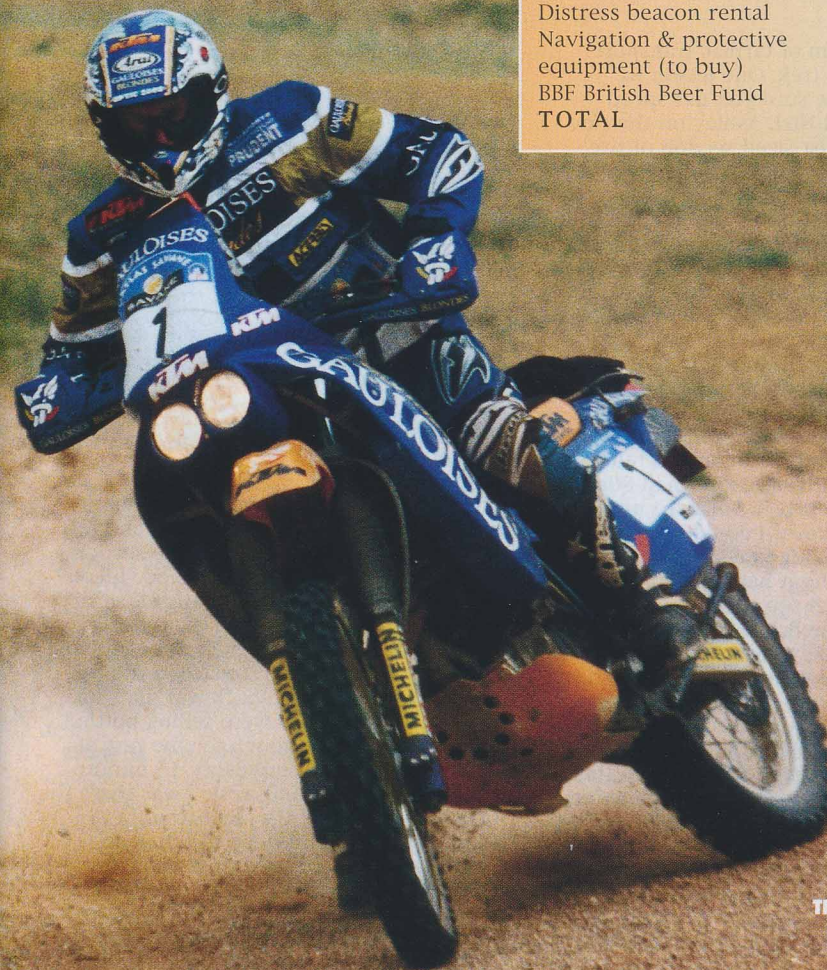
## Getting There

Riding the Atlas rally certainly requires some planning, but is not beyond the average clubman enduro rider. In fact, it was British rider Dave Campbell's first ever event and he finished. You need a reliable bike, money and the ability to make your own decisions.

## Costs

Entry (inc medical repatriation insurance, fuel in special stages, food and drink, bivouac, one night's hotel, and the ferry to Morocco.)	£1200
Tyres	£300
Travel and pit crew contribution	£600
International licence/Insurance	£80
Fuel for bike in transport sections and return travel	£150
Distress beacon rental	£160
Navigation & protective equipment (to buy)	£850
BBF British Beer Fund	£?
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£3340</b>

# THE 1997 Atlas RALLY



The works boys make  
it look easy...

# THE 1997 Atlas RALLY

stage another 300km of tarmac transport seemed like a short trek. One lesson we learned was to make sure you use speed rated tires - I found Nick Ashley on the side of the road with a fist sized section of tire missing from his rear knobby where the mousse had broken up and come out through the tyre. The locals were amazing. They were everywhere, they stand right by the road waving, but don't realise how fast you are going. Unfortunately, this was highlighted in the worst possible way when a young Moroccan girl ran out in front of one of the organiser's trucks and was killed instantly. A sad ending to a great day.

**Day 3.** The first desert stage started from the bivouac. Before the rally, I had thought my XR400 was fast enough, telling people 'I don't want to do more than 80mph off road' Wrong. I loved it. I wanted more speed. All day, wherever I could I was flat out in top gear, braking late for the river crossings and revving it hard through the gears back up to that top speed - it was awesome. One lesson the Brits were learning fast, was that hitting rocks at over 100kmh punctures front tyres. By the end of the day the KTM support truck was doing a roaring trade in mousses (special foam inserts, that can be used instead of tubes). The final transport section was off road as we were now in the northern Sahara, and it gave us a chance to look around. We were on a huge desert plain with the Bivouac situated at the base of a giant Erg (a huge sea of dunes just perfect for playing in). Deacon was fast today, but was given a serious shake up by the flying Aussie Andrew 'Coke' Coker, who finished

the day with a 12th place.

**Day 4.** Some trepidation for some of the Brits as we faced up to the dunes and a long and very hot day entirely off road with some difficult navigation. We've all seen dune footage and watched riders either struggling to get through or launching off the top to certain TV stardom and a massive crash. We all agreed that the best way was to ride slowly over the top edge and gas it down the steep side. British rider Ben Shuckburgh agreed verbally, but inside his own mind decided ballistic TV stardom was the way to go. At the largest dune where the cameras were assuredly waiting, Ben launched his all red 640 KTM into space and end over ended to the bottom of the

dune. Sure enough the helicopter camera crew decided they had a loon here and followed him for the rest of the dune section - look out for him on the next Havoc video!

Today was the true desert rally stage as expected with a little taste of everything African rallies have to offer. It was long hot and tiring. By the time I'd reached the re-fuel at 150km my camelback was dry, but some enterprising kids were selling bottled water and I bought enough for the rest of the day. There is a compulsory 15 minute break at all re-fuels and while I was there the works Citroen rally cars came straight through as they don't need to refuel so often. They were absolutely awesome to watch consistently running at over 170kmh on this day. Works driver Ari Vatanen was one of the nicest guys on the event and



Simon Pavey splashes through a Moroccan stream on his way to 25th overall

seemed to make a point of chatting to everyone no matter what their star status.

Leaving the re-fuel with another 150km to go I was constantly looking over my shoulder expecting the next cars to be trying to pass me, but none did, highlighting how detached the factory cars were from the rest of the field. The stage finished at a proper oasis just like in the old B&W movies with water, palm trees and life in the barren desert.

**Day 5** and strong winds met us as we left the oasis, so we couldn't see the ground clearly because of drifting sand. The wind knocked 40kmh off the top speed of my bike, but fortunately we only had to tolerate this for about 30km. The trail turned to a winding rocky trail with little up and down hills which made for superb riding. Apart from a short break to get my spare tube out

of the rear sprocket I had a great day, loved the riding and finished second in my class. Coke had been having an even better time and was ninth on the day moving to 11th outright. Deacon was up to tenth, and Ben Shuckburgh was also going well consistently in the top 20. Dave Campbell and Kevin Fox were both going strong and still arriving mid pack, but the Brit contingent had had its first DNF when Ian Dunkley had become very ill and been picked up by the organisers course closing vehicle. That night the bivouac was in an old fort which only had three walls. The fourth wasn't needed as the fort sat on top of a cliff that dropped vertically to a lush green inhabited valley. Spectacular doesn't do it justice.

The lesson for the day was to be careful when navigating. There had been a change made to the road book the night before, Nick

# THE 1997 Atlas RALLY

Ashley missed this crucial turn and continued on for 50km in the wrong direction, met a local family who, invited him in for mint tea, then completely refreshed, he refuelled his bike and returned the 50km to the race!

**Day 6** was the day made in heaven and it was worth all the effort for this day alone. Brit John Richmond learned a lesson the hardest way of all when he won a helicopter ride back home with a suspected broken leg. He'd fallen in a ditch while looking down at his road book. Ironically the next hazard on his road book said 'Danger... ditch'.

My bike wouldn't run over half throttle because of the high altitude (2000-3000m), but it didn't matter to the fun factor. It was

## ATLAS RALLY WINNER

### Richard Saint

At the age of only 27 this year's Atlas winner Frenchman Richard Saint is already something of a veteran of North African rallies. Way back in 1990 the shy bachelor who hails from Montpellier in the south of France, tackled his first ever rally event on a converted Honda CR500 motocrosser. The following year he was one of the youngest riders ever to complete the Dakar course - a feat he's repeated three times since.

Saint landed his rally contract with KTM only last year and was runner up in this year's Tunisian event earlier in the year, but the '97 Atlas is his first big rally win. It didn't come easily either; fellow KTM riders Arcarons, Agradi and Magnaldi were the favourites before the start, but a series of crashes and mechanical failures gradually put them out of contention leaving priva-

also a bizarre day. The road book summary had mentioned it might be possible to straighten out the hairpins on the long zig-zag descents by taking short-cuts straight down the hill. I was looking for these straight from the start and at the top of one mountain I could see bikes at the bottom. The trail led off to the left, but straight on it was a descending ridge that looked like it had a small trail on top. I made the call to go for it and left the main trail. Within 100m the track disappeared and became a boulder ridden mountain with sharp drop offs and generally very steep. There was no turning back, so I had to trials ride to the bottom. In the end it worked, was quicker than the real trail, but left me sweating buckets. Meanwhile Coke was trying the same thing on an uphill section with less luck as he came up against a stone wall!

For the next 100km the trail continued to climb till we reached the top of a high pass at 2900m, by which time six riders had

teer Alain Perez on a home-fettled KLX650 to provide the stiffest opposition to a determined Saint.

In fact it was Perez who took the lead on the first day in Morocco (Sunday) and maintained it right up until his disastrous crash on the penultimate day. Saint however, did it the other way around; he started with a crash only minutes from the start of the first African special test in full view of the helicopter-mounted TV camera, breaking his clutch lever, GPS and road book holder, but fought back to come in fifth on the day. After that he never put a wheel wrong; over the next four days he overhauled Magnaldi and fast Italian Massimo Chiesa and after some serious elbow-bashing clashes with Perez on the piste, had climbed to within two and a half minutes overall of the Pyrennean policeman's lead by the penultimate day of the rally.



It's a bit like the Cambrian Rally... or not

Friday's special test was marred by thick fog and rain with visibility down to only a few yards for much of its 100 mile length. Riding as if guided by radar, Saint had made up his two minute start deficit and had caught and passed Perez on the trail by the first fuel stop. He continued to stretch his lead even further while Perez, already struggling with misting goggles and a dodgy front brake, lost his petrol cap. Trying to make up lost time on the slippery surface, Perez overshot a corner just three kilometres from the end of the special stage and crashed into a ravine. It took him 20 minutes to get back up to the piste and by then it was all over bar the shouting. On the last day Saint just had to cruise round in 12th place to take victory by 13 minutes from a disappointed Perez.

Afterwards Saint said 'I was riding well within myself all week. I went quickest on

Friday but I still had some margin for error. I never scared myself or felt out of control once'. Saint admitted he felt liberated by the experience adding 'I was always quick before, but now I'm no longer afraid to blaze the trail at the front of the pack - it was important [to win] if I wanted to progress'. Watching the shy Frenchman in one of Marrakech's hottest nightspots after his victory, you would never have thought that he'd just pulled off the biggest win of his career. While team-mate Magnaldi larked around and really enjoyed himself, Saint stood quietly looking like the proverbial wallflower.

His disco dancing skills might not be up to much, but when he climbs on a bike it's a different story. I wouldn't be surprised to see him contesting victory in next year's 20th running of the Dakar. One to watch for sure. **Paul Blezard**

# THE 1997 Always RALLY

passed me. I was having a great time, but a little frustrated by my blubbering bike, so I went ballistic using the downhill turbo coming back down the other side despite the sheer drops. By the time we hit the valley floor I had re-passed all six riders. At the finish two French guys came over just to tell me I was crazy.

After the special stage we still had 120km of winding tarmac transport following a gorge with the best views of anywhere I've been in the world. I wanted to stop on every corner for photographs and in the end I did stop three times. Awesome. Kevin Fox liked the day so much, he stayed out riding until dark. All week Kevin, had earned a reputation as the AA man of Morocco, stopping to refuel other riders, start their bikes or fix their punctures. Unfortunately today, he had a few problems of his own - after his fourth puncture he was forced to ride 50km on a flat front tyre until he came to a small village in the mountains. Being an AA man of many resources he found a shop that had a 21"



Finished, now where do I register for next year?

Barum heavy duty tube for sale at a reasonable price - sorted!

For me, however, heaven was soon to end as within an hour of the finish I had succumbed to the illness/food poisoning that had already effected several other riders. Severe diarrhoea and vomiting were the order of the night, and I can't thank our super support crew of Jeff Hicks and Nick Palmer enough for sorting my bike and tucking me into bed. Without them several of us wouldn't have made the finish.

**Day 7** and hell continued with bad riding conditions matching my bad body condition. Ben Shuckburgh was ill as well and had to stop and rip off his helmet on the way to the stage start. Most of the stage was ridden in the clouds with visibility down to a couple of bike lengths, rain and freezing cold. The fifteen minute refuel was spent holding the barrel of my bike between my hands. It was some shock after the hot weather of the desert and the gorgeous weather of the previous days. Some of the Brits, especially those used to riding in Wales didn't seem too perturbed. Deacon, Shuckburgh and Nick Ashley all did well in the British conditions with Deacon now up to eighth outright.

**Day 8** was the end and highlighted our change in thinking over the week. We had to ride 110km on the road and a 90km special stage twice. This was the Marrakech GP. The transport section was like riding from the pits to the start gate and 90km was but a short moto. It was a fast but fun stage, and while most people said they were just riding to finish I reckon there was more leg flapping on that last day than in the whole event as we all tried for one last bit of glory. Time for that 90km moto was just on the hour for the fastest riders, with Ben Shuckburgh giving Deacon a shake up on the first lap by beating him into ninth on the stage. Deacs came out firing on the second lap for a cracking fifth place, before we rode in convoy to the hotel in Marakech for the final presentation.

## RESULTS

<b>Richard Saint</b>	<b>1st</b>
<b>Alain Perez</b>	<b>2nd</b>
<b>Thierry Magnaldi</b>	<b>3rd</b>
<b>John Deacon</b>	<b>8th</b>
<b>Andrew Coaker</b>	<b>15th</b>
<b>Ben Shuckburgh</b>	<b>18th</b>
<b>Simon Pavey</b>	<b>25th</b>
<b>Nick Ashley</b>	<b>42nd</b>
<b>Dave Campbell</b>	<b>71st</b>
<b>Kevin Fox</b>	<b>83rd</b>
<b>John Richmond</b>	<b>DNF</b>
<b>Ian Dunkley</b>	<b>DNF</b>

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### KAWASAKI

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# Army DREAMERS?

**The Armstrong MT500 army bike is considered to be as British as bully beef, but is that really the case? Jim Jones examines the background to this 'British' institution and finds that things may not be as simple as they appear...**

**I**t was a beautiful sunny day, not a cloud in the sky as I left Wales for Birmingham a few weeks ago. I realise of course that most trail riders would prefer to leave Birmingham for Wales on a fine day, but on this occasion I was on my way to the National Motorcycle Museum for a few hours browsing around the old machines that lie there. Located at the same roundabout on the M42 as the National Exhibition Centre, to my surprise I found a very modern building with plenty of parking and a small cafeteria inside, a worthy home for our motorcycling heritage.

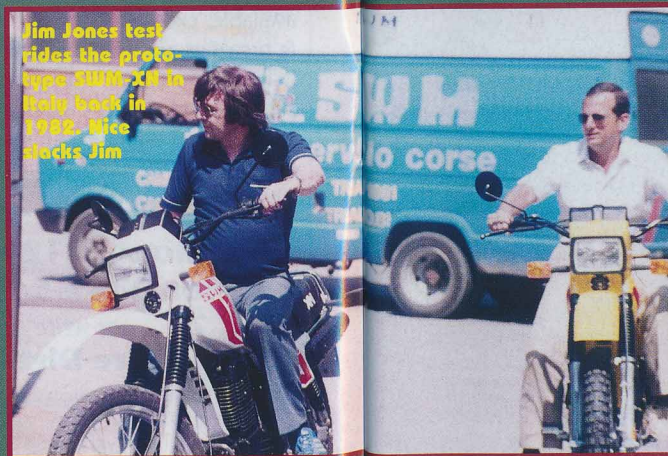
The exhibits are displayed in date order with the oldest bikes first, and it wasn't long before I was lost in the mists of time, coming across bikes I had owned in the past. Seeing them in their original splendour one after another was a moving experience. My first bike a 1939 Velocette was there, as was my Dot 197, my Norton 99 and many others I had owned, but as my motor-



## XN 350 - 506



An early SWM catalogue clearly shows the MT500's ancestry



Jim Jones test rides the prototype SWM XN in Italy back in 1982. Nice sticks, Jim

cycling past has centred around off-road machinery it was to this sector of the display that I headed. I'd always had the impression that off-road bikes were a British preserve, but looking round this exhibition and seeing how few models

there were you begin to realise that it was actually the continentals and latterly the Japanese who have provided us with our diet of off road machinery since about 1970.

At this museum there are no Japanese models so there are few off-rovers, though in truth you could prob-

ably fill another museum with purely trail and off road bikes. I remember reading somewhere that Yamaha invented the trailbike but wait a minute, surely it was the famous Triumph factory with their Trophy model that sold the first true trailbike, available as an on- or off-road? I walked back along the lines and found one, a 1951 example with a rigid frame, was this the earliest model? Obviously well in advance of any Yamaha offering, I went and found an expert who advised me that they had two more machines, a 1959 TR5 and a 1973 ISDT model. He was able to further demonstrate his knowledge by telling me that the Trophy went on sale in 1950 although it was used by ISDT teamsters in the late Forties and was probably the first bike that was sold as a true trailbike nearly two decades before Yamaha launched their DT250. There were apparently many modified road machines that were used by ISDT riders but not sold by dealers as finished off roaders. I accepted his expert knowledge,

# Army DREAMERS?

if you work in a museum, you must know what you are talking about - right?

Continuing along the line of exhibits I came to the last bike, an army model CCM 500cc four-stroke. Surely this shouldn't be here, this museum was only for British bikes. I sought out 'my expert' for clarification. If machines are designed and built elsewhere and subsequently produced in Britain would they still qualify as British I asked him? 'Certainly not' he explained, 'these displays are for 'true' British machines designed and built in the UK, but there wasn't any problem here as this machine was unquestionably British being a product of Armstrong Motorcycles.' My final question to him: 'What year was this one built?' '1982' was the immediate answer. I knew this was impossible, and my faith in museum experts hit an all time low.

I returned home to look for some more information that I had about this model. Back in 1982 I was the British importer for Moto Gori and SWM and that year we launched this very machine at the Alexander Palace Dirt Bike Show as the SWM XN Tornado. Two models were displayed, one a 350 and the other a 506cc, both had white colour schemes. The CCM 500 army bike at the National Motorcycle Museum was exactly the same machine down to the last detail, so how had this happened?

SWM started producing motorcycles in 1972 and had an immediate impact on the enduro scene with their Sachs engine models but quickly switched to Rotax power units. These engines gave them the final impetus that they needed to achieve championship status. They won European enduro titles prior to the start of the world series with riders such as Brissoni, Andreani and Gritti - legends in



It's 1982 again and one of the first XNs in the country arrives in its smart red livery

After the demise of SWM, Puch slotted the Rotax banger into one of their enduro bikes



their time. In the world motocross series Jean-Claude Laquaye reached fourth place with the help of ex world motocross champion Joel Robert, the Belgium SWM importer. During this fruitful period SWM took an interest in trials and as there was no suitable engines available they developed their own trials version of the Rotax unit. Their machines proved so successful they went on to dominate world trials, winning the US, French, Italian, German, Canadian and British national championships as well as the world championships a couple of times. Several makers looked enviously at the SWM-Rotax trials motor and attempted to use it. KTM produced their Yeti, and Armstrong who were using Hiro engines at the time also made a prototype. Both however were still-born following legal action in the courts which demonstrated SWM's grip on the rights to that engine at the time.

Great things were expected from the

SWM XN series of road machines that used the Rotax four-stroke units, an engine that was originally developed for KTM. The XNs were immediately rationed to foreign distributors (the Italian home market soaked up most of them), and I recall early in 1982 going out to the factory in Milan and being asked to select my favourite colour schemes for the UK market from a line-up of different coloured XNs. During this period I rode the prototype and the first production machine. The first machines had drum brakes but in 1983 SWM showed disc brake versions of all models at the Milan Motorcycle Show and even exhibited a 'Desert' version for the first time. Plans were made to enter several machines in the Paris-Dakar Rally and the French distributor Geral Caro and myself talked about riding the rally on XNs in 1984. On a later visit to the factory I found an 'Army' version on display, the Italian

# Army DREAMERS?

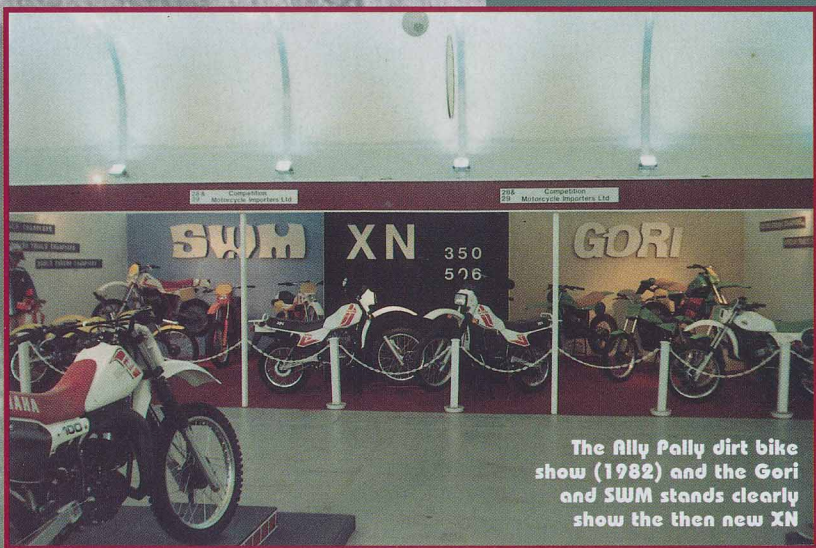
army specification called for a drab grey finish that covered every inch of the machine. 'Do you think the British Army would be interested in such a machine?' I was asked? I will remember my circumspect reply at the time: 'Possibly?'

These thoughts turned out to be academic as SWM ceased production in 1984 and a liquidator was appointed by the 'Commune di Como'. Here in Britain we looked for machines to replace the Moto Goris and SWMs. They needed to be models that hadn't been seen here previously so that we could re-badge them as Goris, though we knew that there was no chance of using the SWM name as there was already talk in Italy of resurrecting it. We settled on 80 and 125cc TMs and 250 and 500 Puchs. The transition wasn't a success and importing ceased a year later. Interestingly Puch also had an enduro machine which used the Rotax 500 four-stroke and I believe that they were the first production users of this engine in an off roader. Certainly production Puch models competed in the 1981 ISDT in Elba and KTM versions appeared about the

same time, prior to them changing to their excellent LC engines.

So what happened to the SWM XN350 and XN506 Tornados? Well quite simply the design, moulds, castings and rights to production were bought by Armstrong Motorcycles

The Ally Pally dirt bike show (1982) and the Gori and SWM stands clearly show the then new XN



Even Puch got there before Armstrong did!



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350 HW

short period of time and with very little changes the Armstrong military bike was born. If you study the pictures of the Tornados you can recognise every feature from the lamp and instrument unit, petrol tank, frame, seat, swinging arm, exhaust - everything is the same. Clearly a number of components were made for SWM by sub-contractors and Armstrong cleverly sourced these very same components from existing suppliers to produce their MT.

They should be admired for their enterprise, they probably made better use of the machine than SWM would have done and possibly earned more money from it. Back at the Dirt Bike Show at Alexander Palace in 1982, Alan Clews and Mike Eathough of Armstrong Motorcycles visited our stand and examined the XNs with interest. At that time Armstrong were still using the Hiro motor in their CMT 310 trials machine but had just moved on to Rotax motocross engines. Who could have

forecast on that day, that just two years later they would have the XN in production in Bolton and be delivering to the British Army?

Of course since that time the story has taken a further twist, as the XN is now produced by Harley Davidson whose only modification it seems is the fitting of disc brakes twelve years after SWM first did so. In true army tradition then, our own army now has the Harley versions which in all respects is 16-year old technology masquerading as an up to date bike.

So where should the XN/Armstrong/Harley Davidson be exhibited, and is it Italian, British or is it now American? Should it be in our National Motorcycle Museum? Only the museum staff can answer that question. One thing is certain though, back in 1981 SWM designed a winner, and in its army form this bike could well turn out to have a longer shelf life than any previous 'True British' army model before it, be it Norton

# War AND PEACEFUL

**In standard form the Armstrong MT500 has a reputation for being about as exciting as cold porridge. But with a little expert help, even MT500s can be made to fly as Paul Blezard found out...**

**I** saw it with my own eyes. Straight up it went, almost vertically. At the top it stopped momentarily hovered there for a second or two before plunging downwards again almost as quickly... It was one hell of a dyno run - 71bhp at the rear wheel - not bad for a Rotax single eh?

Mick Keogh of Sportax has learned a few tricks since he first started dabbling with the Rotax motor in his Matchless G80 eight years ago. Last season the Rotax-based 545cc DOHC engine in his Skorpion sprint bike made 71bhp at the rear wheel at 10,000rpm and revved to an amazing 12,800rpm (the dyno run that I had just witnessed). This season's engine is already giving a reliable 74bhp on unleaded pump fuel and he's confident it will crack the 80bhp barrier before the year is out.

For the last three years Mick's done nothing but strip, tune and re-build Rotax engines for a living and there's probably no-one in the country who knows more about the air-cooled Austrian lumps than him. Whilst he's confident that one of his extra big bore 623cc 70bhp engines will last a season's road racing with only basic maintenance, you wouldn't want one of them in a trailbike, believe me.

What you might well want though is a bit more oomph than the lacklustre 26-odd bhp of the standard 500 Armstrong, and we had a chance to try an example of Mick's handiwork slotted into a bog standard squaddy bike on road, trail and dyno recently. The engine had been bored out from the stock 481 to 572cc, compression was raised from 8.2:1 to 10.3:1, the head

hotter cam fitted along with a 34mm Dell'Orto carb.

To measure the changes we put the Sportax Armstrong on the Ascot House dyno with my trusty XR600R alongside for comparison. The XR went first: 30bhp at 4500rpm with the baffle in place and 33bhp with most of it out (it broke in half as we were trying to extract it).

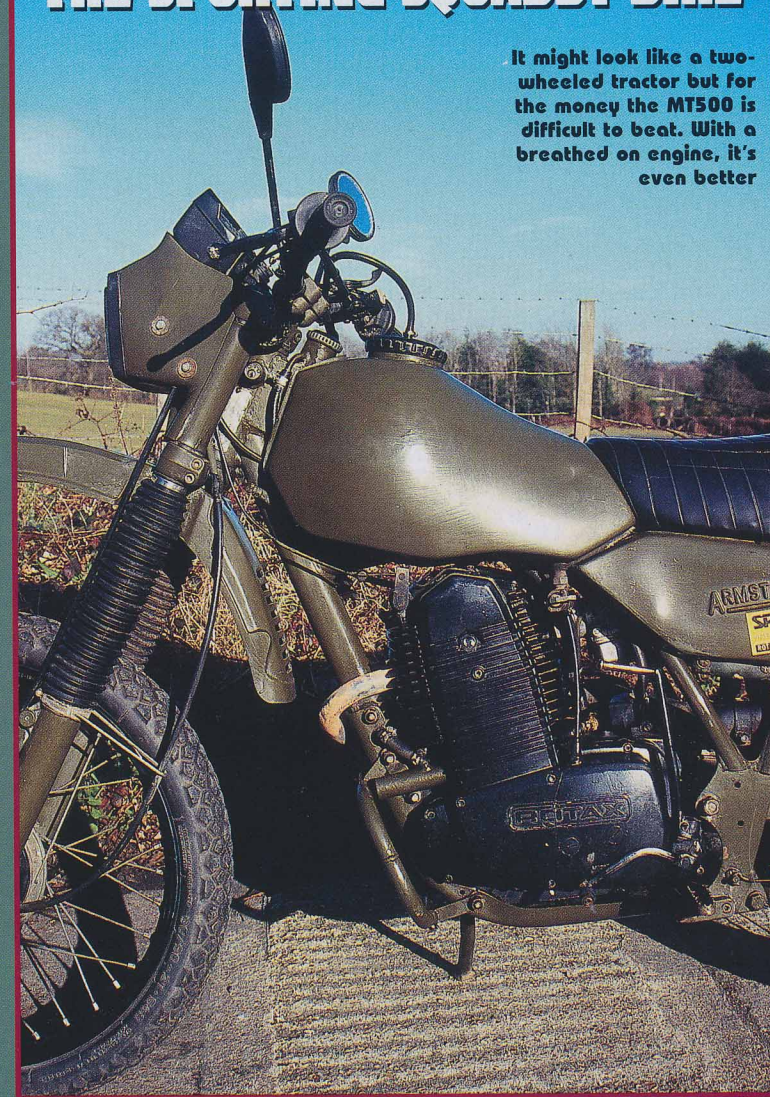
Next up was the breathed on MT: 31bhp at 5000rpm was the result. Not earth shattering, but not too bad either bearing in mind it was still running the standard exhaust and more importantly silencer of a machine designed for only 26bhp, whereas the XR was running with most of the baffle out on an exhaust designed to give decent power in the first place. Looked on in those terms, the MT compared favourably to the larger capacity XR. We all wondered what it would produce with a less restrictive pipe and end can.

As it happened, Mick was actually pretty disappointed with the dyno read-out but acknowledged that the quiet exhaust was

preventing the engine from breathing easily. He recommends upping the bore of the header pipes from 25mm to 28mm as well as fitting an adjustable silencer such as a Supertrapp to unleash considerably more of the available cavalry - though at least as it was it was nice and quiet!

## SPORTAX ROTAX ARMSTRONG THE SPORTING SQUADDY BIKE

**It might look like a two-wheeled tractor but for the money the MT500 is difficult to beat. With a breathed on engine, it's even better**



**Army  
DREAMERS?**



# War AND PEACEFUL

Even stifled as it was, the Armstrong kept up well with the XR on the road and was happy to bowl down the M3 at an indicated 85mph. Out on the trails in Hampshire the squaddy bike provided lots of entertainment thanks to a slippery surface and well-worn tyres. The combination of heavy

bike, plenty of power and minimal grip made for just the kind of challenge I like and I was just beginning to really enjoy myself when the beast suddenly conked out in the middle of our photo session. The problem turned out to be a duff coil - a common problem with old

**Torquier engine improved the MT's rideability off-road**



Armstrongs apparently.

It was a frustrating end to a promising test, but I'd experienced more than enough to know that this was no ordinary squaddy bike but one that had the makings of a really enjoyable all-rounder. You could have a hell of a lot of fun on both road and trail with a modified Armstrong and it would make a damned practical bread and butter ride-to-work machine as well.

The snag is the lack of an electric start on the MT500s, but contrary to what a lot of people will tell you, it is possible to retro-fit them, although it's a lot of work because it entails not just splitting the crankcases and fitting the thing but also modifying the frame to

make the (now) larger motor slip back in. You can't just bore out an H-D 350 either because the bottom end is different - curse the Army procurers who decreed that a 350 was adequate for their needs!

Army bikes aren't the only source of cheap Rotax power of course - there was a batch of about 50 really cheap Jawas imported a few years back and Mick has seen some of those engines with the bottom ends still sound after 70,000 miles. There are also several models of MZ, including the 'Country' trailbike model, which came with Rotax motors in a higher state of tune than the Armstrongs; (9.2:1 compression ratio, 37bhp (claimed - not rear wheel) and slightly bigger bore (494cc). Mick has successfully tuned several of those too - the ones fitted with sidecars apparently benefited greatly from the extra mid-range power! The engines in the Harris Matchless which first got Mick started all those years ago were in a very similar state of tune to the MZs.

At the other end of the scale there are the rather more warmed-up Barigos, ATKs and CCMs which all come ready supplied with electric start Rotax engines in a much higher state of tune, (not to mention a somewhat superior chassis) but that is reflected in their price too. You pay your money and takes your choice. Personally I rather fancy a CCM 604 dressed up to look like an MT500. Now that would be fun.....

## Essentials:

Mick Keogh  
Sportax  
48 Cornwall Street  
Bere Alston  
Yelverton  
Devon PL20 7BG  
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## Sportax Options:

34mm (or 36mm) Dell Orto carb conversion: £120 + VAT

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# Army DREAMERS?

Definitely the most fun for your money, pound for pound



**Kawasaki's KDX250SR is the boy racer of the trailbike world. Dave Cornish packs his furry dice and goes off in search of furious fun**

Photos: Si Melber

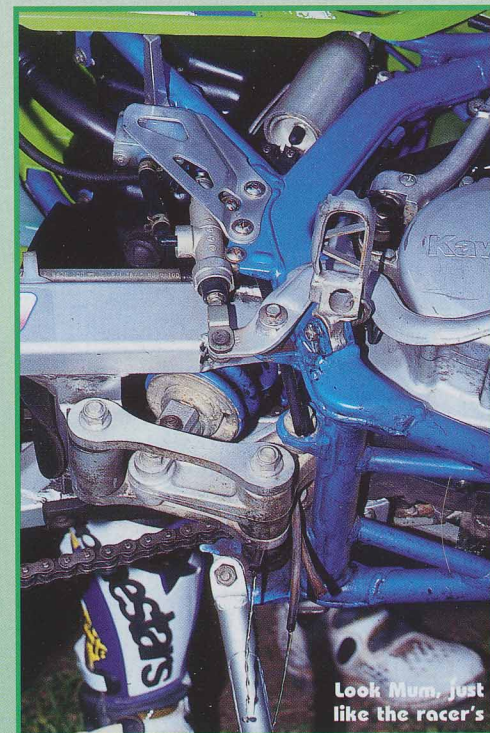
# FURRY MACHINE

**B**elieve it or not, this is the third time we've tested Kawasaki's potent KDX250SR, but thanks to the British climate precluding any decent photos in the past, it's only the first time anything has made it into print. The last time we rode one was at last year's rain-soaked Hafren Rally when we coaxed a slightly sick example into third place in the 250cc trailbike class. Proof (if any were needed) of what we knew all along - that underneath its trailbike civility, the KDX-SR is a racer at heart.

Of all the grey import trailbikes perhaps Kawasaki's KDX250SR is the one which most closely resembles its competition-oriented relative. Eyeballing the bike for the first time you'll believe you're looking at a pure enduro mount rather than a softer, more forgiving trailie. That's because the big-K make no compromises when it comes to the chassis and suspension parts. Unlike with Honda's CRM250R which mimics rather than duplicates the suspension and chassis of their CR racer, Kawasaki's smaller R&D budget means that the KDX250SR has to utilise the same heavily braced perimeter frame, and chunky linkage supporting the rear shock as you'll find on their KDX racer (which is rather more substantial than the one found on the CRM). Not surprisingly however the suspension doesn't offer quite the same range of fine tuning as the enduro bike (particularly with the Kayaba

USD forks), and the linkage ratio is slightly altered to make it more in keeping with its intended purpose, which is as a raceable dual-sporter rather than an out and out racer.

Whether this competition build is an advantage to you, depends upon your point of view and the type of riding you do. Kawasaki claimed a first for their perimeter frame construction back in 1990, and among its many



Look Mum, just like the racer's

If you go to the contents page first, you'll know just what happened next...



## Flying MACHINE

advantages are, a lighter and stiffer chassis and more importantly a slimmer profile. Attached to the back of this chassis is a substantial looking rear subframe and the whole set up (which on this model is finished off in electric blue paint) certainly has a belt and braces look about it. The down side to it however is that it makes for a tall bike with a high seat height (895mm) which some may feel only makes sense on an enduro bike, and certainly won't help

the shorter rider take a steadying dab when the trail starts to degenerate rapidly. In fact the whole bike is rather larger (and heavier) than the more compact opposition, and would certainly be a bit of a handful for any novice rider contemplating one as their first machine.

Wedged into this enduro-inspired rolling chassis is a potent two stroke motor which displaces 249cc from its liquid-cooled, reed-valve and power-valve equipped single cylinder. Like all Kawasakis there's nothing subtle about the way the engine makes its power. A slightly feeble bottom end is followed up by a meaty midrange and a screeching top end. Fast? You betcha.

Minimalist equipment is par for the course with this type of bike; in front of you sits a large round faced speedo and a couple of warning lights, while the traditional K-fare switchgear is

pouch, but otherwise that's it. The seat is hard and narrow but no worse than others in its class - which isn't saying much, after all.

Because of the seat height you seem to sit rather more on top of the KDX than in it (unlike

chunky and slightly clumsy. There are simple pillion pegs which swivel down from the sub-frame, mini indicators (rubber mounted of course) and an enduro style small headlight, as well as a pair of hand-guards and a rear tool

with some of the opposition), and if you reach down and switch on the headstock-mounted key, apply a bit of choke and give the long kickstart lever a single prod, the Kawasaki burbles into life with a surprisingly muted crackle. A double-skinned expansion chamber helps keep the noise down to an acceptable level while an efficient alloy-wrapped



There's nothing subtle about the power delivery, which is what makes it so much fun, wha-hey....

# Flying MACHINE

silencer ensures it shouldn't offend when riding near to houses.

One piece of design which obviously came low down on the list of priorities is the positioning of the two-stroke oil tank which is mounted behind the right hand rad panel. The KDX-SR comes equipped with an oil pump unlike on the enduro bike, and topping up the oil reservoir entails either removing the panel completely, or else using a funnel that resembles your lower intestinal tract. Not too clever really.

If you like your trailbikes to have a bit of zip about them then the KDX certainly won't disappoint. The motor pulls like a train from about 4000rpm and thanks to tall gearing the SR will cruise past 90mph on the road leaving bikes like the CRM struggling along behind. On the trail you can ride the SR's strong midrange and thanks to very effective suspension

(stiff but with well controlled damping), the KDX will push along at a healthy pace where the trail allows. In fact the suspension is one of the best things about the KDX, sucking up rocks and roots without a worry. Over a series of sun-baked ruts and mid-sized whoops the KDX would crest the top of them without too much 'chop' from the front end. The rear is equally supple, allowing you to get away with things which you might not otherwise try on a trail-bike. Stick the bike into a fast and bumpy bend and the Kawasaki will come powering out the other side without the rider having to back off the throttle or worry too much about maintaining grip.

One trail which had only recently been graded by the local farmer, contained hardened ruts

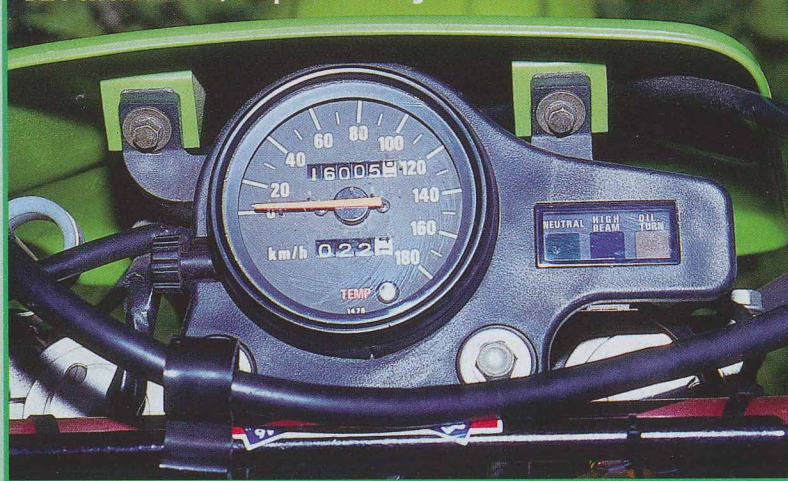
underneath a deceptive coating of fresh soil. The KDX oblivious to the bumpy substrate found controllable grip even when heeled over in the turn and felt stable no matter how much throttle the rider applied. Deep mud, water and slippery trails aren't quite as easy however.

Attempting to

Vivid paint scheme catches the eye, but won't appeal to everyone



Bare essentials here, but you'll be having too much fun to look at the clocks



pick a line through some wet rocks the SR suffered from a combination of too much high up weight and not enough flywheel effect. The tall gearing means the bike has a tendency to snatch at low speeds while the firmish suspension doesn't really get a chance to work properly until well on the move.

In fairness just by looking at it you can tell that the KDX250SR is the sort of trailie you'd choose for competing on rather than trundling down nadgery green lanes. Sure it can comfortably turn its hand to regular trail riding duties, but it's such a nice tool on which to enter a trailbike rally or enduro, and feels so comfortable at speed that you just want to give it the berries all the time. Entered in the trailbike class of an enduro, the KDX would get the chance to best display its combination of stable handling and rapid-fire power delivery - yet after a

quick wash down would still be capable of taking you to work the next day.

On last year's Hafren Rally the bike felt supremely stable in the turns, confident on the rough stuff and quick enough on the flat out specials to turn a few heads, though the gap between third to fifth gears meant that the bike could sometimes struggle for power on long fast uphill - necessitating a downchange. On long downhills however, I was thankful for the KDX's powerful anchors which hauled the bike down from well over 140kmh without giving any cause for concern. They work well time and again and offered a decent level of feedback so that a firm, two-fingered squeeze is all that's ever required to halt fast forward progress.

What was concerning was the bike's appetite for fuel: 35mpg is about the best you'll see if you push it hard, so

# Flying MACHINE

an 11 litre tank isn't going to take you all that long to drain - though IMS make an optional 18 litre tank should you require it. Fuel consumption aside the SR makes a perfectly adequate short-haul roadster; there's very little

in the way of vibration to trouble you and the taught (read stiff) suspension as well as pokey motor makes it fun to hustle along on the backroads.

## Conclusion

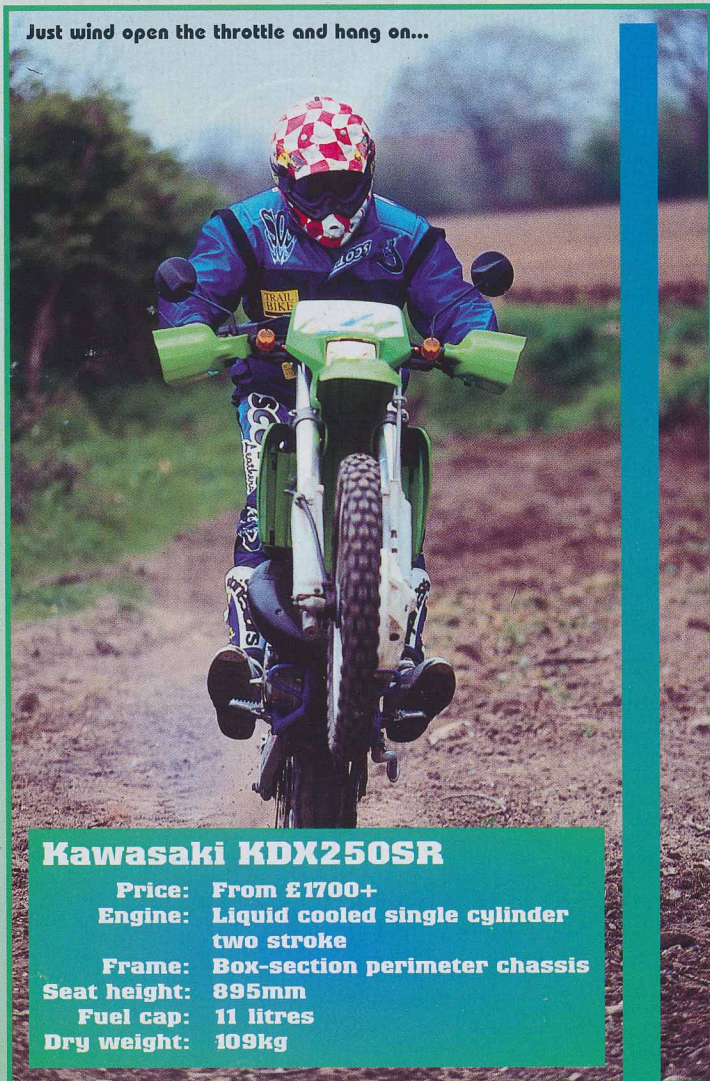
There's no doubt that the KDX lacks the subtlety of something like the Honda CRM250R especially when it comes to slow and nadgery trails, but get it up onto a fast fire road and the Kwacker will streak away in typical fashion with a sparkling top end.

Compared to the KDX enduro bike (a favourite green laning tool among the cognoscenti) the SR feels less pokey and much more civilised (though not at all sanitised) and of course it's much better on the road.

On standard gearing it will make a comfortable green laner as long as your riding doesn't require hours of feet up nadgery stuff, and there's no doubt it feels a much superior package to its smaller 200cc brother. The fly in the ointment? Well you can no longer get a KDX250SR brand new and only a few have been imported secondhand. It was superseded a year ago by the KDX220SR which combines the compact dimensions of the 200 with the speed and handling of the 250.

Secondhand examples start from as little as about £1700 for a tatty one, but as ever, pay a little bit more for a cleaner example and you will be rewarded with a lot of bike for not a whole lot of money.

Just wind open the throttle and hang on...



## Kawasaki KDX250SR

**Price:** From £1700+  
**Engine:** Liquid cooled single cylinder two stroke  
**Frame:** Box-section perimeter chassis  
**Seat height:** 895mm  
**Fuel cap:** 11 litres  
**Dry weight:** 109kg

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Sophisticated engine management systems have been commonplace in the automotive world for well over 15 years but on two wheels (and on dirt bikes in particular) the high tech world of computerised ignition/injection control units is still the exception rather than the rule.

It's easy enough to see why the multi-billion pound four wheel market is ahead of the two-wheeled game in this particular field. Worldwide emission regulations for cars (in a much larger car market) are becoming ever more stringent, and in order to return decent fuel economy without com-

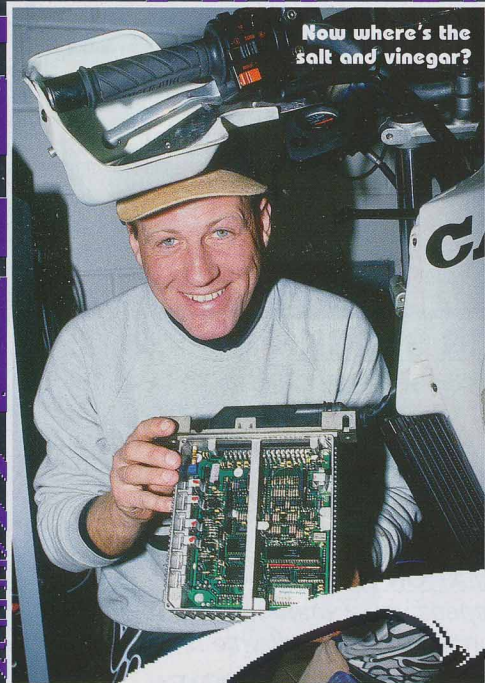
promising on performance, requires the sort of precise fuel monitoring systems that only fuel injection can bring. Fuel injection in return requires a certain amount of sophisticated electronic componentry in order to function and quite simply costs alone have ruled it out for the majority of motorcycles except those at the upper end of the cost spectrum.

There are many people who will tell you that they much prefer a simple carburettor to a system of pipes, wires and printed circuit boards. That's because the home mechanic knows his way around a carb - but the prospect of tackling a fuel injection system scares them silly. Sadly for them, anti-tamper legislation is heading our way, and with ever stricter emissions laws for bikes (as well as cars), it may well be that pretty soon you won't even have a choice whether your bike comes so equipped or not.

My own Cagiva 900 Elefant ie, is one of only a handful of trailbikes produced in the last ten or so years that run an injection system though for certain it won't be the last - the days of good old fashioned carburettors must surely be numbered. Of course it's unlikely that fuel injection will be making its way onto the average £4000-5000 trailbike in the next couple of years, but within the next ten? Who knows.

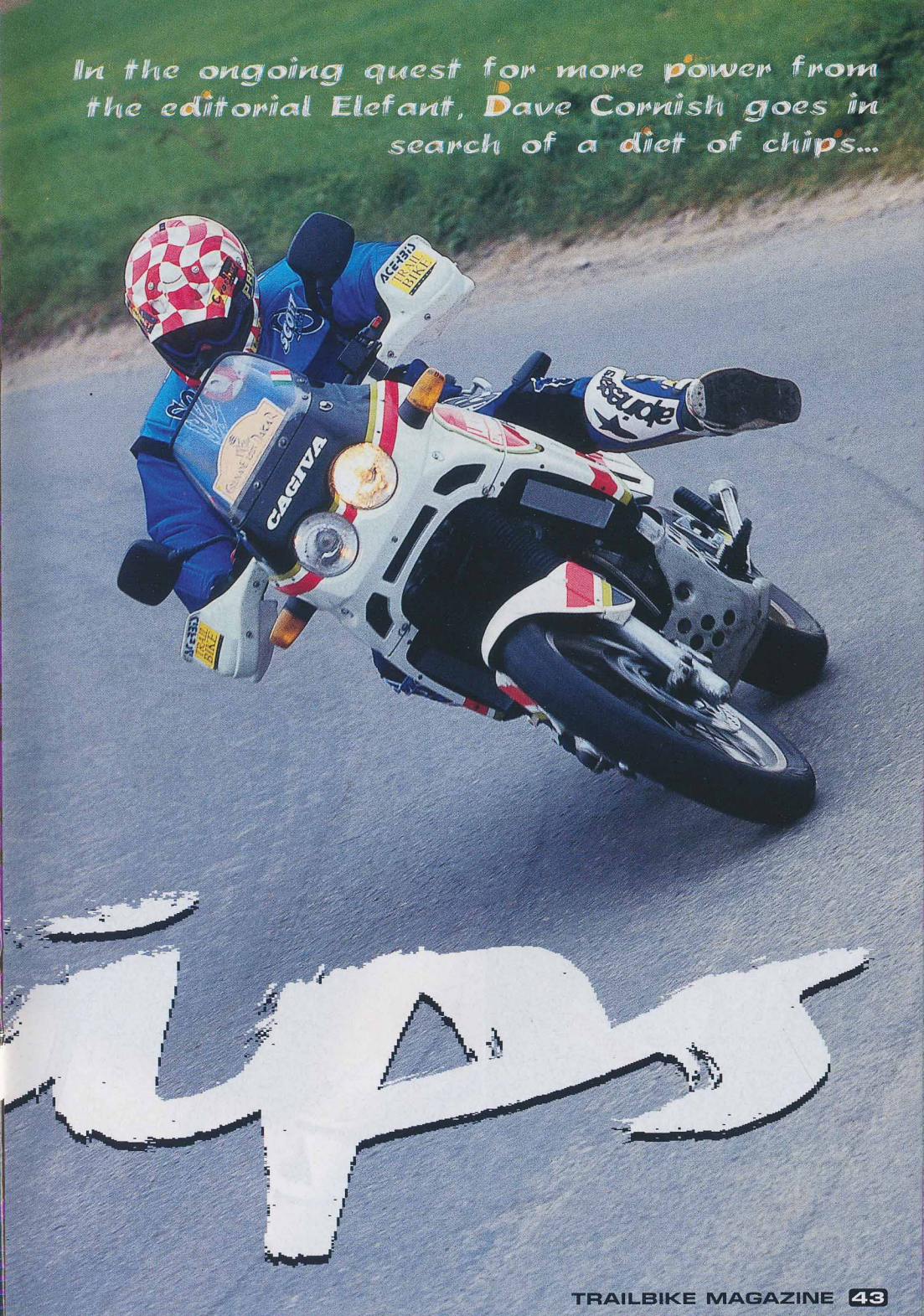
Looking on the bright side however, fuel injection brings with it fewer emissions, greater power, improved efficiency (in terms of power output and petrol consumption), easier cold starting, quicker and lighter twistgrips, and far more reliability with less in the way of maintenance. It can do this because the engine management system (the

*In the ongoing quest for more power from the editorial Elefant, Dave Cornish goes in search of a diet of chips...*



# CAGIVA

with everything...



electronic componentry which controls the injection's operation), accurately monitors (and responds to) the fuelling requirements for any engine at a given throttle opening/altitude/engine temperature many times a second, and the injection's computer can even make allowances for things like a blocked air filter (just the job for a long day's off roading).

Needless to say any tuning work (on an injection motor) also requires a remapped ECU (electronic control unit) to alter the fuelling and ignition systems to suit the tweaked motor's new demands, and make best use of the engine's new power. As you can imagine, playing around with high tech Efi set up requires rather more than a set of vacuum gauges and a screwdriver. In fact at the moment there are only a handful of companies in the UK who specialise in re-chipping vehicle ECUs and no one who deals specifically with bikes. So when the decision was made to investigate the black art of re-chipping the Cagiva's

ECU (to match the K&N air filter and open pipe we'd recently installed), we contacted Britain's best known company in this field - Buckingham based Superchips.

Superchips' main business is supplying ready mapped chips for just about every Efi car made in the last ten years, and though they do have a few bike chips suitable for injected BMWs and Ducatis

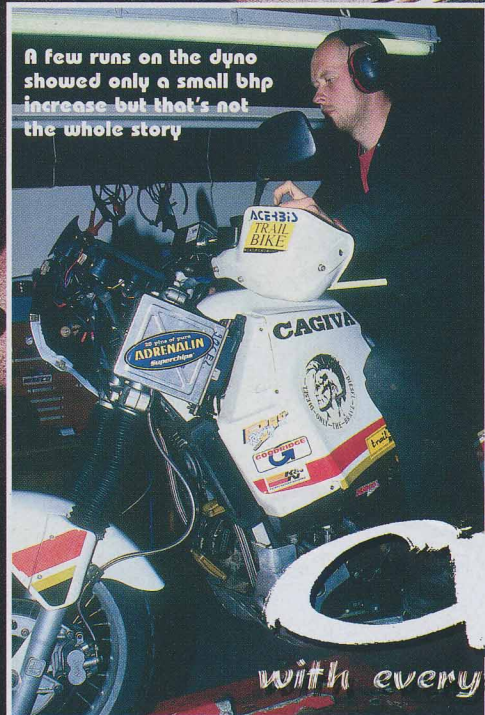
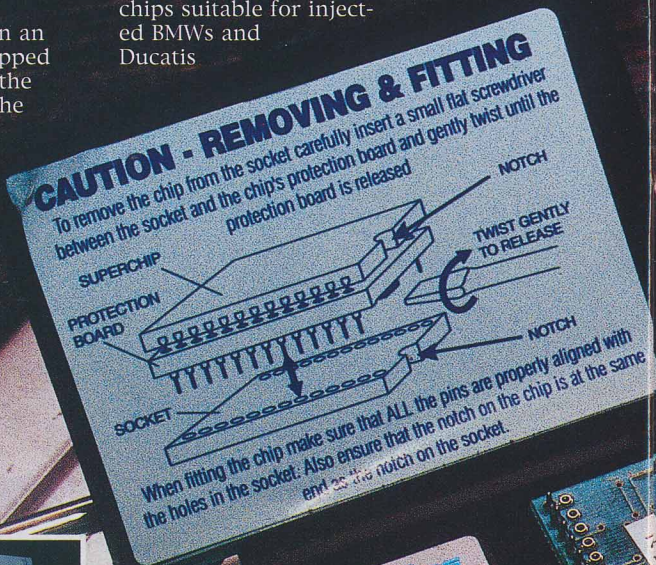
available off the shelf, generally speaking they don't see very much in the way of bike trade. Nevertheless Superchips' bike-mad boss (ex trials rider) Ian Sandford confirmed on the phone that the Cagiva runs the same Magnetti Marelli system used on all injected 'Dukes' (not to mention Fiats, Alfas, Fords etc) and 'chipping up' shouldn't be too much of a problem.

Within ten minutes of arriving at Superchips HQ, the Cagiva's fairing had been striped off, the ECU opened up and it's original factory 'chip' plugged into a computer to download the 900ie's injection/ignition program. Once the chip had been decoded, a lap-top computer was plugged into the bike's ECU, and by pressing a few keys here and there, crucial elements of the map-

ping could be subtly altered. First of all the motor was fired into life and the tickover evened out to a steady burble from the once cobby idle by altering the ignition timing. Next it was decided that an increase in fuelling of around three percent throughout the rev range along with an altered ignition curve to suit the extra gas would be a good starting point for improvements and this was dialled in. Then it was just a matter of inserting a temporary chip with the changes made and road testing it.

Ordinarily, once re-chipped, a customer's vehicle would be driven onto the Superchips dyno and power tested for improvements, but since the majority of their work involves cars they don't currently own a bike dyno, so for our purposes it was down to a good old fashioned, seat of the pants test ride to gauge any performance gains with a view to sticking the bike on a dynamometer back in Norfolk the following day. Sneaking quietly out of the industrial estate and onto the bypass I gunned the big Cagiva (without its fairing) through the gears and into top. The bike certainly seemed to be making more power at the bottom end, but more importantly the lumpiness which usually afflicted the Ducati motor had been replaced by a much smoother progression of power, along with a greater eagerness to pick up revs (particularly in the mid range).

Back in the workshop questions were asked, keyboards rattled and another chip soon found its way into the Cagiva's forward mounted ECU. This time we were after more top end power - fuelling was upped by plus five percent and the rev limiter ceiling was put up to around 9500rpm - a simple change achieved on the keyboard. After several more test rides (and several more rechips) I had to admit that I couldn't really detect



A few runs on the dyno showed only a small bhp increase but that's not the whole story

**Chips**  
with everything...

# Chips

with everything...

much improvement at the top end of the scale and the only way to really check how much extra power the bike was making (if any) required a trip to a bike dyno. So we settled on a chip which told the fuel injection to increase fuelling by three percent, to raise the rev-limit, and smooth out the power delivery at the bottom end. That information was then downloaded from the keyboard into a new Superchips silicon chip, and the chip plugged into the bike's ECU. The whole process took just a few hours.

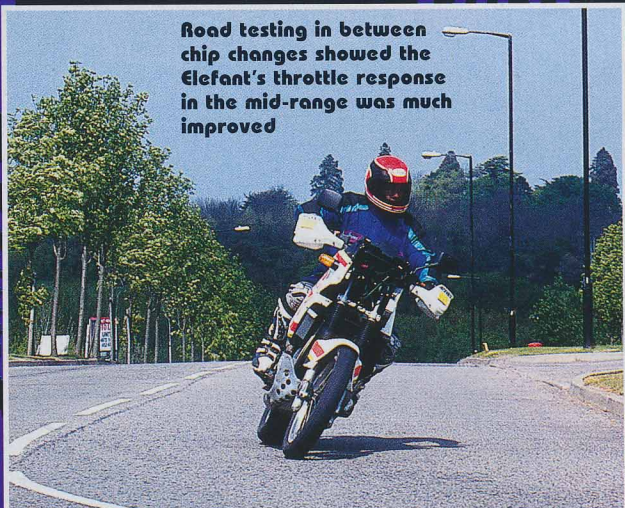
The next day we arrived at the Smiler Racing dyno in Norfolk and strapped the Ele on for the first of a few test runs. Making sure the Cagiva's oil cooled lump was up to normal operating temperature, Dean (Smiler's head honcho) ran the bike up through the gears as we watched the red

trace that monitors the power curve. The results of the first run more or less confirmed my previous days 'seat of the pants' test sessions - at the bottom end the power curve was much more even and from about 3000rpm all the way up to the red-line at 9000rpm the motor was making a couple of extra horsepower to record a peak of 70bhp. Playing around with a selection of other chips we'd programmed the day before as well as one of Smiler's slip on alloy cans saw little improvement on the first run, and after a morning on the dyno the best power curve came from a combination of the K&N filter, Smiler Racing can and a plus three percent (extra fuelling) chip.

We were perhaps a little disappointed that the maximum figure of just under 72bhp at around 7250 rpm was only a couple of bhp up on standard, but what the dyno can't show is the lightning quick throttle response in the mid range and the impressive eagerness to pick up revs that the motor now exhibits. And it must be remembered that

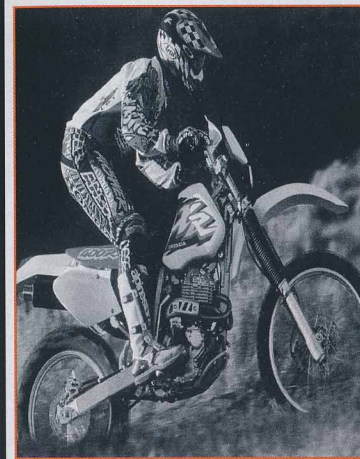
this was the first attempt at re-chipping the Ele - to be fair to Superchips, to get the best results they would ideally like to spend several days working in conjunction with a dyno operator, and had we been able to spend that time trying all sorts of altered chips we feel sure that the gains would have been even greater particularly at the top end.

Nevertheless we reckon the changes are a considerable improvement over standard. The bike now runs even smoother, carburetes (if that's the right term) much cleaner and makes a little dollop of extra power from the bottom end right through the midrange - just where you need it most for overtaking performance. Whether you think this is worth the £223.25 (incl VAT) that Superchips ask for a (fitted) remapped and re-chipped ECU depends on you and the state of your finances, but having ridden the Ele before and after the alterations we're convinced that the changes are worthwhile. Can't wait for the next track day...



Road testing in between chip changes showed the Elefant's throttle response in the mid-range was much improved

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# PROJECT

## PART II

The continuing saga of the TBM project bike, will it ever roll under it's own steam again ...

**I**n the best traditions of project bikes, it was no great surprise that our plan for the project XL250RF to be all finished and plying the tracks and trails of Britain by late spring was... er, slightly optimistic. Nevertheless in between compiling issues we somehow managed to find time to start fiddling with the thing again, and before I bring you up to date on the state of play, here's a short reminder of what it's all about for those who may have missed the first part of the story.

The idea was simple: to attempt to get a small four-stroke trailbike on the road for as little outlay as possible and without blagging a whole load of freebie parts. We decided on a tight budget of £500 then set about finding a suitable bike which would fit the bill. After a bit of searching we came across a mechanic selling a box of bits (masquerading as a

partly assembled XL250RF) which we acquired for the princely sum of 250 quid. Most of the engine rebuild had already been completed (apart from installing the kickstarter assembly and clutch), which we did before re-installing the motor into the newly cleaned frame.

The majority of the subsequent work (and expense) has centred on sourcing a growing list of consumables and cycle parts that needed renewing. So far this



The seat, expertly re-covered and resplendent with TrailBike logo

# PROJECT

has included: a chain and sprocket set (£71.50), battery (£15), folding tip gear-leaver (£9.95), two footpeg bolts (£4.96), a pair of decent fork gaiters (£20), a new clutch cable (£10.50), and a new spark plug (£2.50).

The seat was badly marked and though fully serviceable, we reckon most owners would probably invest in a snazzy new seat cover to improve the bike's appearance. After all, having spent a load of time and effort on a bike, the last thing you want is for it to look all shabby when you've finished. The original seat was despatched to Danger UK who re-covered it with a smart new cover (cost £45), and if you want them to do a similar job on yours you can call 'em on 01603 755293.

With the engine back in the frame it was time to check and then begin to attach all the cables. In order to stay within our budget we decided to renew only those cables that were broken or missing,

though perhaps renewing all the cables (in particular the front brake cable and twin throttle cables) would be the sensible (and safest) option for those of you building up bikes of your own. Of the cables that came with the bike, the speedo, front brake, throttle and automatic decompressor cables were all still serviceable, but a missing nipple on the end of the clutch cable meant it needed replacing. The choke cable was also missing, as was the rear brake rod, and these last two items are still to be sourced.

Before attaching the speedo cable we took the opportunity to drop the front end out of the yokes and slip on a nice new set of fork gaiters. These were not the cheapest gaiters we could have bought, but experience has taught us that cheap gaiters tend to fade badly in strong sunlight and get ripped the first time they encounter a thick bramble bush. Once the forks were back in we drained them of oil and re-filled them using some existing fork oil we happened to have lying around (cost nil - because we already had it) and made sure there were no leaks from the fork seals before securing the gaiters with cable ties.

Next it was time to tackle the exhaust. First the header pipes and silencer were cleaned up using a wire brush to loosen all the rust and flaking paint, then we needed to weld up a small rust hole in the silencer with a piece of scrap steel plate. I have to confess that my welding's not the most professional work you're ever likely to see, but then again

since most of the silencer is tucked away behind the side-panels I'm not too worried as long as it seals the hole. With the exhaust back to bare metal we're going to have to invest in a can of heatproof paint (more expense) to prevent rust from taking a hold once more, but once it's finished, it should look pretty smart.

The next job we tackled was to attach all the hoses; on went the carb overflow tubes as well as the crankcase breather, air-box drain tube and fuel line, but there's still a bit of spare tubing kicking about which may or may not be off this bike - I've yet to suss out what it's for. The footpegs were attached using the new bolts (unfortunately we didn't have any bolts kicking around that fitted, so another fiver departed from the rebuild budget).

By the time we'd managed to get all that done we were out of time and so the remaining jobs will have to wait until next month before we can begin tackling them.

Just a few more bits to bolt on and we should be rolling, we hope...



We still haven't filled the engine up with oil yet, and we've no idea whether it'll even run, but at least the rest of it is coming together nicely now and we're currently still within our budget despite the high cost of some of the spares. Watch this space for the next gripping instalment of the project bike story, when we may even have a go at starting the thing... but then again, don't hold your breath!

## Costs (so far)

<b>Bike (in bits)</b>	<b>£250</b>
<b>Chain &amp; sprockets</b>	<b>£71.50</b>
<b>Battery</b>	<b>£15</b>
<b>Gearlever</b>	<b>£9.95</b>
<b>Footpeg bolts</b>	<b>£4.96</b>
<b>Welding</b>	<b>£0.00</b>
<b>Fork gaiters</b>	<b>£20</b>
<b>Clutch cable</b>	<b>£10.50</b>
<b>Spark plug</b>	<b>£2.50</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£384.41</b>

# TUNING TIPS



It's a great engine in the XR400, but a few simple mods help clean up the carburetion

# Cough MIXTURE

Even with a brand new bike there are some things that will need sorting out to get the best out of them. Honda's XR400R is typical: it may have a nice punchy motor, but the carburetion as standard needs work. John Rushworth reckons he's found the cure for the XR4's occasional cough, hiccough and stutter, and believe it or not it came as much from sweating over a hot computer as it did from late nights spent in the workshop...



Make sure the filter's clean and well oiled before you start, and that there are no tears or air gaps. Note the cotter-pin fail-safe

**B**uy any new model of trail or enduro bike and you take a risk. What sort of risk? Well, for one thing you may well find yourself at the sharp end of development work for the company that sold you the product in the first place. Back in the 1970s this sort of practise was typical, especially with the low volume European bike manufacturers who often sold bikes with all manner of inherent problems and let the customers work out the finer details for themselves. It worked like this: The company launched a new bike and then customer feedback and warranty claims slowly filtered back to the factory via the dealers and importers until they reached a critical mass, or there was enough information to warrant a manufacturing change. Then (if you were lucky) the bikes got changed and the next batch went out with one fewer glitch.

With some of the smaller manufacturers who only sold bikes in very small numbers or whose profitability was dependent on some pie-in-the-sky sales figures, this meant that during the short lifespan of a model, the bike might never evolve enough to eradicate all the problems and once again owners were

left to fend for themselves.

Fortunately, these days this scenario is rarely, if ever true. Most bikes are so good they work straight out of the crate with hardly a glitch, but that doesn't mean they are perfect. Take Honda's excellent XR400R for instance. Sure it represents the future of compact, modern, powerful and lightweight four-strokes, but as it comes delivered as standard, the carburetion sucks (pun very much intended). In stock form the engine won't tick over smoothly, it stutters at certain revs, and bogs down at the bottom end. So how the devil do you get it carbureting cleanly and where do you get any information on the bike from in the first place? Having bought one brand new last year, I set about finding out.

The first XR400RTs (the T suffix model is '96 - V is the '97 which apart from the clutch lifter, clutch springs and colour, oh, and a couple of extra O-rings in the forks are identical) came in Spring last year. Assuming you have an ED type (European direct sales) model then this is what you need to do. Firstly, check the frame numbers. It's not a well known fact, but Honda have already supplied in-house bulletins to main dealers

# TUNING TIPS

The XR's carb is difficult to work on in situ. Most jobs require removal of the rear sub-frame to get at the carb



*Cough*  
**MIXTURE**

to put two glitches straight. For owners in the frame number range: JHN2NEO3A\*VM100095 to JHN2NEO3A\*VM101476, you should get down to your dealer and get the tappets changed for the non-toffee variety. It seems a soft batch of metal got through quality control and if yours is one of these bikes then that's the first thing to have sorted. Secondly (but actually prior to that) came the Honda Wrench report back in January 1996 entitled 'Carburettor Tuning Tips'. This is exactly what it says it is - a whole host of tips to help put your carburetion back on the straight and narrow.

However, back in the early days of last year it was the Internet and not Honda which provided the necessary information to effect these changes long before anyone in the UK could. To be fair to Honda UK and

their dealer Network, it isn't possible to have a knowledge base until there is one (obvious, if frustrating), and so it was that the 'Super Highway' came to the rescue.

Exchanging views with a dozen or so Americans and latterly an Irishman an Englishman and a Scot (a recipe for disaster if ever there was one), plus the odd sheep lover (NZ naturally - not Wales) and a Four-X drinker, has at least proved that no two riders have the same view. This is not to say the bike does not suck and blow correctly it's more that we all have differing levels of riding ability, riding style, terrain and knowledge. What feels right for one may feel completely different for another.

Notwithstanding the exhaust system, air intake and foam filter, the bit that does the business is the carb. That's all down to a guy called Bernoulli. A carb works because it is a venturi giving rise to a pressure drop in the inlet due to the air flow which lifts the fuel out of the bowl and then various components within the carb affect how that fuel and air behave. Each calibration part of the carb controls fuel flow at differing throttle openings, and changing any one of those controls affects the way the bike runs.

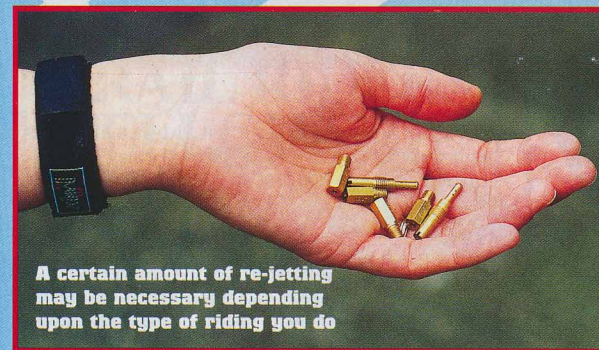
Back to the 400. It's a good example of how carburetion can be affected by corporate self-preservation. As the XR comes from the crate it is jetted far too rich to run properly. This is because the bike is usually delivered with an insert/baffle in the exhaust, and a snorkel-cum-baffle arrangement in the air box. These removable components restrict air flow when in position, and with both of them out, (according to Honda), the bike should be jetted correctly for an ambient temperature of 68°F and at sea level. The trouble is that with the exhaust baffle out (or diffuser as Honda refer to it) it's way too loud to be acceptable for anything other than closed-course competitions.

It's easy to see why Honda jetted the bike the way they did. If they had jetted the XR correctly with the two restrictors in place, then on removal (which is what everyone

does in the first five minutes of ownership in order to liberate more power) the engine would run too lean and the potential would exist for burnt pistons at the crucial running in stage - with the subsequent warranty claims that would imply. So that's Honda's way of protecting the owner (and themselves) from the inveterate fiddler, yet at the same time it's been causing consternation among owners

because of the need to fiddle with the carburetion to get things right. Besides even with both restrictors out there's still a bit of carb tweaking to be done before it all works perfectly. So what is the answer?

Well first of all disregard anything you

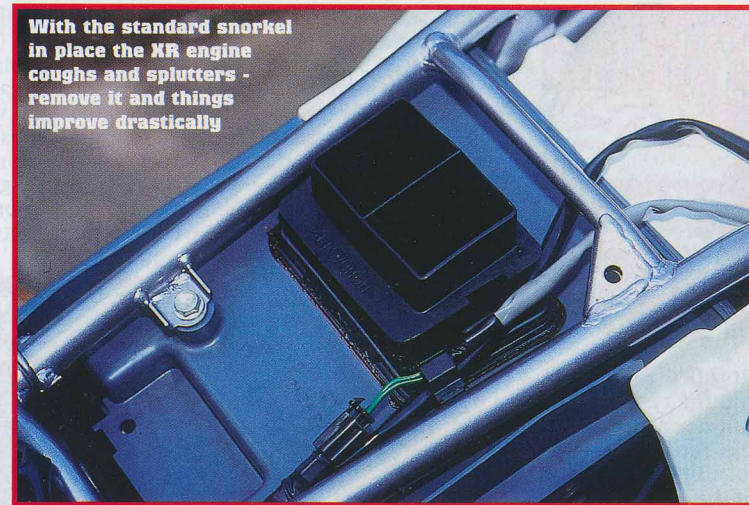


**A certain amount of re-jetting may be necessary depending upon the type of riding you do**

may've read in the US dirt bike mags, unless you're planning on riding your XR over there. Stateside trail riding conditions are so different from our own as to invalidate any tuning tips they suggest. In other words a hot dusty and altitudinous California trail is about as far removed as you can get from a wet and misty lowland fen bog. And, the general consensus among the trail and enduro riding fraternity over here is to run the bike with the snorkel out and the baffle in.

This compromise addresses the power/noise problem and allows the bike to be ridden in a variety of conditions from

With the standard snorkel in place the XR engine coughs and splutters - remove it and things improve drastically



sensitive trails to balls-out enduro use. Some folk have tried fitting a Thumper Racing insert exhaust baffle (I'm one) which allows more flow and thus liberates a little extra power, but the trade-off in power gain doesn't seem to be worth the extra ear-ache!

It became clear early on that the carburetion suffers from an annoying stutter when cruising steadily on the road at 50-55 mph. Leaning off on the needle (ie raising the clip one position) helps improve matters and more or less eliminates this though perfectionists might like to try the optional HRC dual taper needle (part number 16012-NKK-000) fitted with the clip set (the number-three (middle) position, which makes things even better.

Then as folk got more miles and terrain under their belts, a bogging down was noticed on

jumps and stutter bumps. The problem is that with rapid upward changes of direction (ie when tackling hills or exiting bomb-holes), the float level drops too low allowing a huge dollop of unwanted fuel into the inlet causing the motor to bog. The solution here is to limit the downward travel of the carb float to 19.5mm instead of the stock 25mm by carefully (and I do mean carefully) bending the metal tang which limits this (measured from the edge of the carb body on a centre-line of the main jet to the edge of the float). This effectively shuts off the fuel intake earlier and gets rid of any bogging problems. The shut-off travel (upward stroke

# TUNING TIPS

is set as standard to 14-14.5mm and works perfectly well at that.

With these mods done you should find your XR running a lot cleaner. Now all that is needed is to work out your jetting taking into consideration

altitude, temperature and the type of riding you do. Warm air is less dense compared to cold air which means as the temperature rises you'll have proportionally more fuel (making the engine run rich). Likewise the higher up you go, the thinner the air becomes and the richer your carburetion gets also. For average riding conditions in mainland Britain you're better off sticking with the standard jetting (ie 62 pilot, 162 main), even though this isn't exactly perfect, but once again it's a good compromise. I've tried all sorts of jet changes and found stock jetting works the best for normal riding conditions. That said if your riding takes in long uphill sections or lots of fast flat out work then Honda recommending going up one size on the main jet. And alternatively, for those riding in humid conditions, or if it's raining and you do a lot of low speed work then going down one size on the main jet is the ticket.

If you want to be even more technical about it then follow this formula for correction factors to work out your jetting exactly:  $CF = \frac{\text{The sum of } (1.0778 - 0.00111 \times T = 0.000000000238554 \times A \times A - 0.000010777 \times A)}$  where T is the temperature in degrees Fahrenheit and A is your altitude in feet. Multiply the CF by your standard main, and pilot jet size and you have the correct new jetting. Of course using the graphs supplied with the Honda bulletin may be easier!

Bear in mind that a compromise for the conditions you usually ride in is best unless you want that final winning edge on the day.

Alternatively put the bike on a dyno and measure the CO levels (Carbon Monoxide). The best theoretical mixture ratio of air and fuel is 14.7:1. In this case you will, (theoretically), get no CO. Real world bikes are jetted somewhere around this figure. Jetting at a 12:1 mix would give a max power mixture, whilst say 18:1 would give you the best fuel economy. It's a question of what you want and what the manufacturer intends you to



The Thumper insert baffle is less restrictive than the stock jobbie, but it's also a lot noisier

*Cough*  
MIXTURE

have in the first place. Most riders will do as well using a good old fashioned plug chop and seat of the pants test ride to determine the jetting. Dynos are not necessarily the real world and combining the two may well be preferable.

So finally an example set up for the XR4 may be:- having cleaned the carb and cleaned and oiled the air filter, checked the plug and assuming a usual elevation of 250 feet (asl) and an average air temperature of 50°F then: Airbox snorkel removed; standard filter and cage; Honda baffle in exhaust; 62 pilot; 162 main; air screw 2.25 turns out; float height standard; float height downward travel adjusted to 19.5mm; needle one groove leaner. There's one other thing for you (presumably well off) 400 owners to contemplate and that is an air slide mod. Machining 20 thou off the base of the carb slide apparently improves throttle response and cures the slight pick up lag when opening the throttle off the bottom end. I've yet to try this but I'm assured by those in the know that it makes all the difference. Me... I reckon a new graphics kit probably works just as well. Happy trails...

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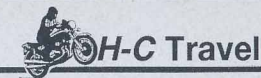
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Tap the cones from the head stem using a drift

# BEARING UP

**Keeping your bike's steering head bearings in good condition is one of the most important aspects of dirtbike maintenance.**

**Dave Stuart talks you through the process of checking and replacing your worn-out head races**

**A**s I wheeled the bike from the workshop I heard a distinct 'crack' come from up around the headlight area. I popped the bike up on a stand and turned the handlebars again and nothing happened. It felt smooth enough as it went from lock to lock, so I dismissed it thinking that the cables might have been

caught up behind the headlight. After all, the bike had come in for some suspension work, not to have the steering head bearings replaced. The trouble was, the noise was niggling away in the back of my mind. When the owner arrived to pick up the bike I questioned him about it and as we pushed it over to his trailer, it happened again.

'Oh that noise! It only happens now and then and mainly when I land off a jump. I think it's the cable hitting the head light.' He said

This time we turned the handlebars lock to lock with the front wheel on the ground, and sure enough, the noise got worse. The lower steering head bearing must have been just on the verge of collapsing. The reason it felt okay on the stand was that the upper steering head bearing was fine. With the front wheel off the ground, the weight of the front end was supported by the upper bearing and conversely, when the bike has both wheels on the ground, the lower steering head bearing takes the weight of the bike.

Like most of the bearings in a bike, the steering head bearings come with very little grease in them from new. With time what little grease there is can be washed out, or it can dry out over a period of months and consequently leave no lubrication in the bearings. This causes them



**LEFT:** The grooves in this cone show why a worn bearing gives notchy steering



**ABOVE:** Brute strength is the way to remove the bearing roller from the lower race

to wear prematurely and become loose. Once they have play in them it's only a matter of time before they start to get notchy and fall apart.

When you buy a bike new or second-hand it's a good idea to pull the steering head apart to check and regrease or replace the steering head bearings, especially if you're planning some major adventure riding. If you have a bike that holds the oil in the frame, like the XR600, or some of the DRs, then this is a must, even from new. The extra heat created by the oil around the steering head dries the grease out even faster than normal.

To show you how to grease and replace the steering head bearings, I'm going to replace the bearings in my Yamaha TT600 Belgarda. In the 3000km that I've done,

the TT has developed some play in the steering, and I reckon it's better to replace them now and be done with it. I've got to be honest, this is not high on my 'fun jobs to do' list, but here we go regardless.

### From the top

First support the bike so the front end is off the ground. Remove the front wheel, brake caliper, and any other clamps that hold things to the forks. Now remove the forks themselves. Unbolt the front mudguard, and remove the headlight surround. Next unbolt the instrument panel from the triple clamps - if you have instruments that is - and make sure the triple clamps will come away from the

bike once they're undone. Undo the handlebar clamps (though you can probably get away without having to remove the cables, master cylinder, etc). Now undo the nut securing the top triple clamp and remove it - this will leave the locking plate and adjustment nut or rings. Remove the plate and ring, and the lower triple clamp should fall out. The top bearing should stay in the frame, and you can lift it out by hand to expose the bearing cone.

### Fetch the hammer

Now the real fun begins - removing the lower bearing from the stem and the bearing cones from the frame. The condition of the bearing when you pull it out will determine how hard it is to remove. If it's really worn the bearing rollers and cage on the stem may fall on the ground leaving you with the

inner bearing race still in position. If not, then you'll have to break the cage with a cold chisel and remove the rollers to get to this stage.

Depending on the shape of the lower triple clamp, you may be able to get behind the inner race with a cold chisel and knock the race off the stem. If you can't get at the race then it becomes a little more difficult. The easiest way I've found is to grind the inner race with a small angle grinder as far as you can, then support it on something solid and hit it with the chisel. This will either crack or

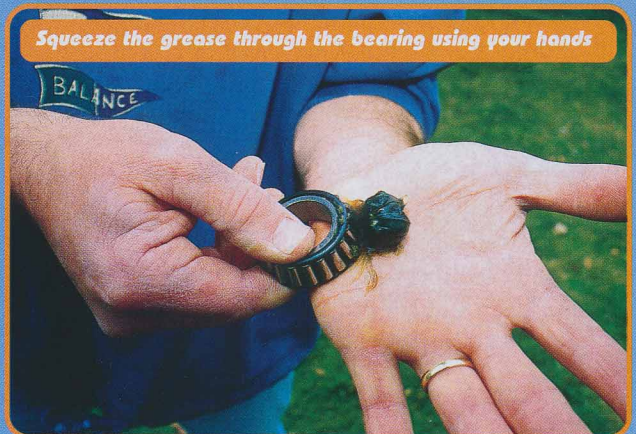
spread the race and it will fall off. Don't worry about damaging the lower seal; if you have purchased an after-market bearing kit there should be a new seal in it. If not, you should replace it anyway, so get one.

Getting the bearing cups out of the frame can be a real bear. Place a long drift, punch, or whatever you have, through the steering head part of the frame and tap in even thirds around the cone until it comes out. If it's tight keep persevering. Don't apply heat to the frame, and use the same method for top and bottom cones.

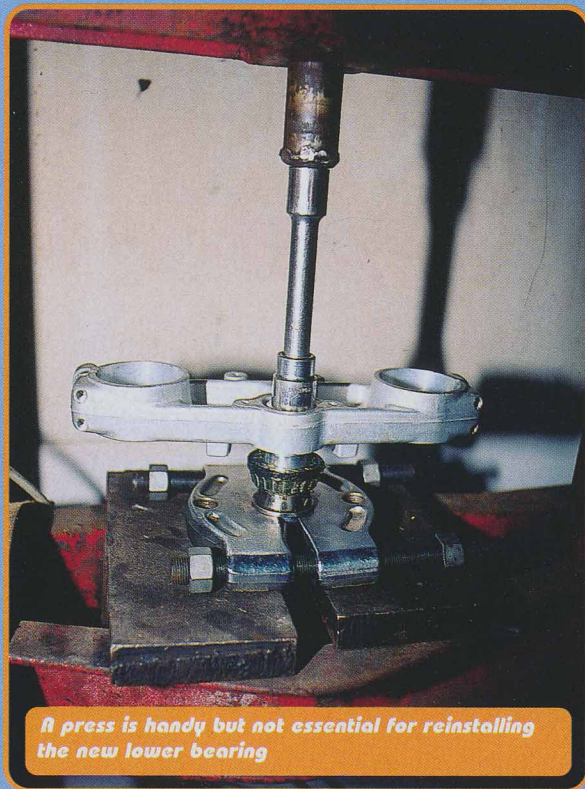
Fitting the new cones is easy. Clean out the frame, make sure the seating area is not damaged and place the new cones in the frame with the tapers facing outwards. You may find them easier to seat if you stick them in the freezer for a couple of minutes beforehand, but don't leave them in there too long or they'll get overly brittle. Now using a hammer and punch, tap at even thirds until the cones are nicely seated.

### Grease Ball

Time to get dirty. If you have a bearing greasing tool and a grease gun packed with waterproof grease then it's easy. If not, you're going to have to do it by hand. The grease has to get right through



**Squeeze the grease through the bearing using your hands**



A press is handy but not essential for reinstalling the new lower bearing

the bearing, so place a fairly hefty amount of grease on the palm of your hand and with the bearing taper facing up, force the grease through the bearing until it comes out on the top side of the bearing. Do this all the way round the bearing, and do both bearings.

Now, place the new lower seal on the steering head stem, and then the bearing with the taper facing up. If you have a piece of pipe that fits over the stem and on to the inner race then use this to knock the bearing home. Otherwise, support the lower triple clamp on something solid and use a small pin punch around the inner race to knock the bearing down. If you have access to a press you can use the old inner bearing race to press the new bearing on, as I've done in the photo. Now that the new bearing and seal is in

place you can start to reassemble the triple clamps. Feed the lower clamp up through the frame, slip on the top bearing and seal, and then the adjusting rings. Tighten the adjusting rings as tight as you can by hand and then just crack it round a couple of notches more with a hammer and punch. Be careful not to over-tighten them as this can be just as damaging as leaving them loose. Check the bearings move freely by rotating the lower clamp. Before fitting the locking tab, then fit the top clamp, washer and nut.

Now slip the forks into the clamps, but only tighten the lower clamps. Check that there's still no play in the steering head, and that the whole set-up moves freely. If everything feels okay you can now tighten the top nut and top clamp fork bolts. Remember that with USD forks you can cause stiction in the fork travel by over-tightening the triple clamp bolts so use a torque wrench set to the correct pressure.

With those bolts tight it's time to reassemble the rest of the front end. All that's left then is the headlight, front wheel, instruments and front mudguard, and then it's time to go roosting. Good luck.

### Tech tips:

- Always use plenty of waterproof grease.
- It's extremely important that the lower bearing goes on straight. If you're having problems at this point take your time and get it right.
- Double check the bolts holding the brake caliper. You don't want that coming loose!
- As always, if you're not sure of something, consult your owner's manual or seek professional advice.

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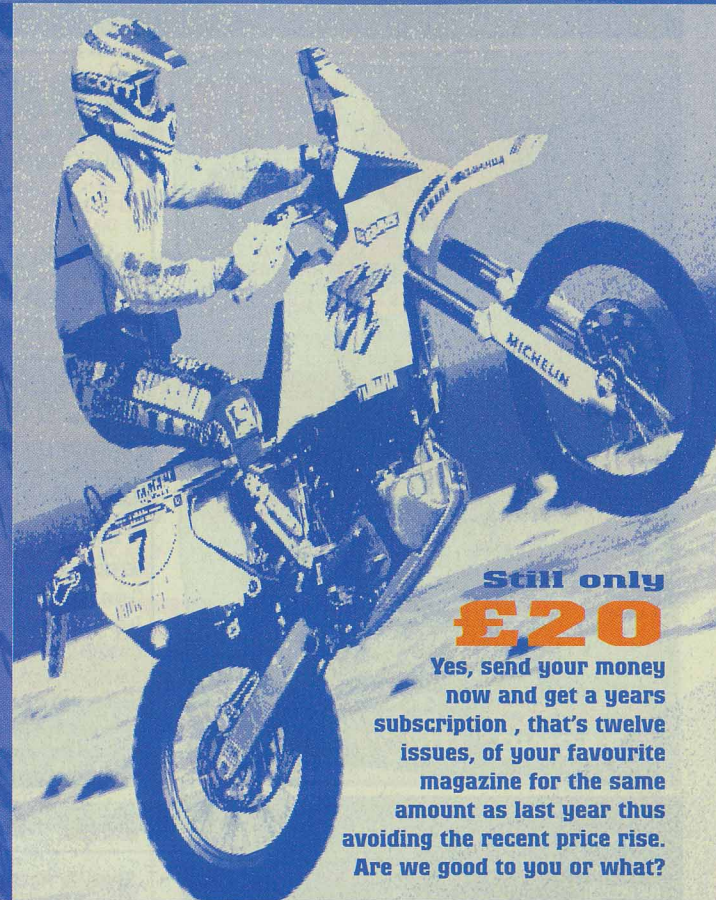
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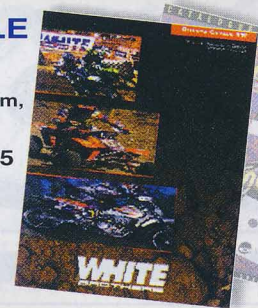
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**Yamaha** DT125R, G-reg, 14000 miles, red, excellent cond, quick sale req'd, £850. Tel 01603661385 (Norwich)  
**Honda** XR500R, Pro-Link model, 1982, USD front forks, disc brake conversion, recent tyres, c+s, rear shock rebuild, vgc and easy to start. Tel 01262 606510 after 6pm (E Yorks)

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**Suzuki** DR350, white/blue, K-reg, 1993, 12,000 miles, T&T, MT21s, just serviced, green lane use only. Tel Neil on 01438 832418 (Herts)

**Honda** CRM250, T&T, 6000 miles, Renthals, hand guards, recent c+s & rear tyre, 2 owners, green lane & commuter use, job forces sale, £1700. Tel Angus on 0181 898 1179 (Middx)

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**Yamaha** TT250R, '94, T&T, 13,000km, Renthals, Acerbis/normal tanks, bash plates, many other extras, perfect cond, enduros & green lanes, £2700 or p/x enduro bike. Tel Tim on 01473 831086 (Suffolk)

**Honda** CRM250R, Mk 2, 1991, 8000km, the ultimate trail bike, superb cond as Japanese import, standard bike with DEP silencer, also new clutch, only a few in the country, £2500. Tel Gareth on 0976 850265 (Swansea)

**KTM** 250, Six Day, M-reg, Magnum forks, Ohlins, rear shock, lots of new parts, vgc, first to see will buy, £2350 ono. Tel Roland on 0973 436041 or 01480 431371 (Cambs)

**Yamaha** XT250, imported 1990 from USA, MOT, clocks in mph, immac cond, F-reg, none better, identical to XT350 but lighter, drum brakes f/r, £1595. Tel 01580 764498 (Kent)

**Kawasaki** KMX125 2-stroke trail, 1991 model, stolen/recovered, now rebuilt for registration, blue, liquid-cooled, autolube, vgc, £850. Tel 01233 624576 (Kent)

**Suzuki** DR600SF, 1987, 21k, T&T, new Hagon shock, CDI, f/tyre, brake pads, £1595 ono. Tel 01392 252732 (Exeter)

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**Honda** CRM250R-2, H-reg, 18,000km, T&T, vgc, USD forks, extras include alloy bark-busters, sump guard, big fuel tank, performance carb & pipe, £2100. Tel Tony on 0181 384 0582 (Middx)

**Honda** XR500R, 1983, T&T, good cond, new O-ring c+s, good tyres, barkbusters, enduro r/mudguard & t/light, new brake pads/shoes, w/bearings, fork springs,

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**Suzuki** TS125X, 1987, vgc, T&T, mono-shock, very reliable, recent tyres, £625 ono. Tel evenings 01394 283468 or days 0802 222327 (Felixstowe)

**Suzuki** DR650 Djebel, 1991, T&T, excellent cond, new tyres, chain etc, £1895. Tel 01322 341142 (Kent)

## PARTS

**Honda** XL250, Q-plate, in bits, offers. Tel Mark (work) on 01727 827507 or (home) 01923 850424 ((Herts)

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**Honda** rear shock to fit XL/XR 250/500 Pro-Link, £45 ovno. Tel 01262 606510 after 6pm (E Yorks)

**Yamaha** DT175MX, loads of engine and electric parts, £40 the lot. Tel 0161 343 6287 (Staffs)

## WANTED

**Wanted** Trailbike, 175cc or bigger, will pay up to £1000 for right bike, must have MOT, will travel. Tel (after 6 pm) 01702 711867 (Essex)

**Wanted** XT350 mirrors & the castings they screw into on the handlebars, must be new or vgc, also inlet stubs so that I can de-

restrict my bike, so must be early ones. Tel Tim on 01582 492758 (Luton)

**Wanted** Yamaha IT250/IT465/IT490, must be in very good orig cond, pref model with indicators fitted as standard, willing to pay good price for right bike; also wanted Suzuki TS250ER or Yamaha DT250MX, must be in good orig cond. Tel David on 01904 490764 (York)

**Wanted** XR400. Tel 01664 857427 (Mids)

**Wanted** rear wheel or hub for Suzuki DR650/350, also Supertrapp silencer for DR650SET. Tel Gev on 0116 2702442 (Leics)

**Wanted** XR600R bits, kick start lever (not worn), orig owners handbook, exhaust system (header pipe & silencer), interested in any reasonably priced parts. Tel Chris on 01258 459601 (Dorset)

**Wanted** Dirt Bike, DBR, TMX, Dirt Rider, pre '92 magazines, especially twin shock era, also Frank Melling's Enduro bike test book. Tel Robin on 01243 513243 (W Sussex)

**Wanted** air cooled 50cc MX engine, EG, RM or YZ etc, PWS spares, would consider complete bike. Tel Les on 01384 822074 (W Mids)

**Wanted** manual for KLV650, also bash plate. Tel Rick on 01485 600833 (Norfolk)

**Wanted** Suzuki DR600 tank, plastics, rear wheel & any other parts, originals or alternatives, also regulator/rectifier for Armstrong MT500. Tel David (eve) 01656 665208 (Mid Glamorgan)

**Wanted** workshop manual for XT350, also other XT350 riders around Luton, to explore green lanes and villages, novices & slow riders welcome, no lunatics! Tel Tim on 01582 492758 (Luton)

**Wanted** magneto stator and flywheel nut for 1991 KTM 350, 2-stroke, fair prices for working parts. Tel 01623 454453 (Notts)

**Wanted** orig sales brochures & genuine workshop manual for Yamaha IT465J & IT250J, also wanted Honda XL250SB/XL500S/XR500S, must be in exc original cond & well looked after. Tel David 01904 490764 (Yorks)

**Wanted** f&r wheels for Suzuki DR200/DR350, also Acerbis 16 ltr tank for same machines, 1990 on, fitting kit as well if possible. Tel 01268 403117 (Essex) or 01732 461530 (Kent)

**Wanted** wheels for XR600, '94, standard or Supermoto. Tel Jon on 01204 690171 (Bolton)

**Wanted** KDX125 rear wheel, r/hand s/panel, r/hand rad cowl, front sprocket

cover and exhaust front pipe, plus any other parts for spares. Tel Colin on 01604 764130 (Northants)

**Wanted** Honda XL600RH seat, will pay top money for top quality, must go up the petrol tank or WHY, looks like XR seat. James Cooper, Celandine Close, S Ockendon, Essex, RM15 6JA

**Wanted** Krauser K2 fitting kit for '93 Africa Twin, also r/h/s pannier bracket for same. Tel Vince on 01628 34065 (Berks)

**Wanted** Yamaha IT250 parts or complete non-runner. Tel 01179 426824 (Bristol)

**Wanted** XR600 bits, kick start, exhaust system or any good condition bits. Tel Chris on 01258 459601 (Dorset)

**Wanted** Yamaha XTZ660 crash bars, centre stand, w/shop manual. Tel 01623 644354 (Notts)

**Wanted** kickstart to fit 2-stroke Rotax engine, anything considered. Tel 01299 270493 (Worcs)

**Wanted** Alloy tank for Cheney Yamaha, 1982, mono-shock model. Tel 01273 882986 (Brighton)

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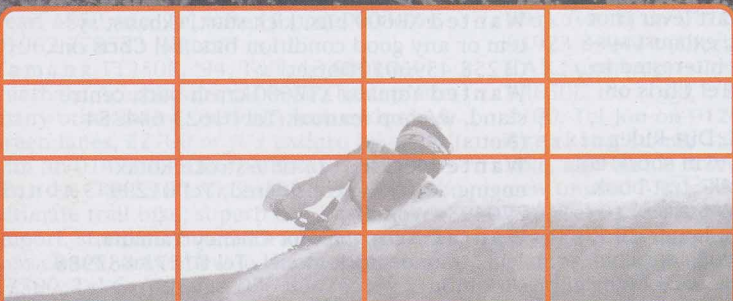
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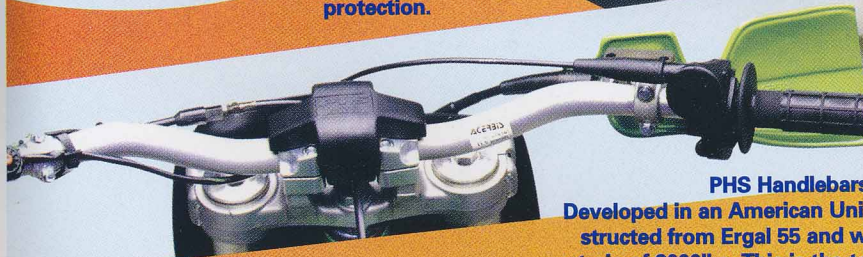
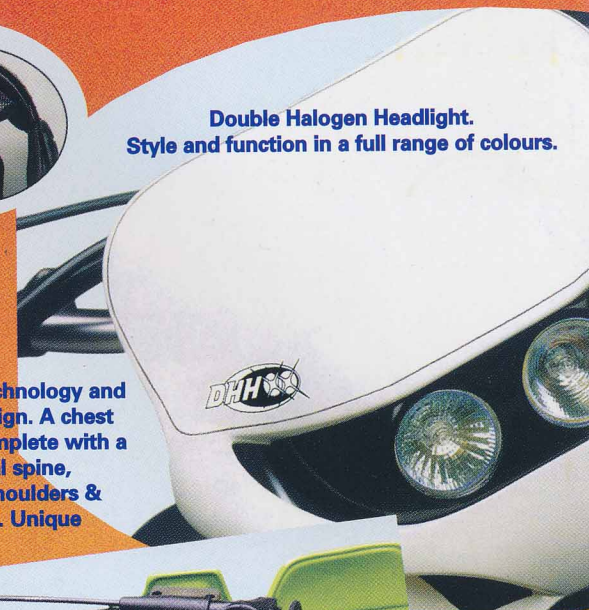
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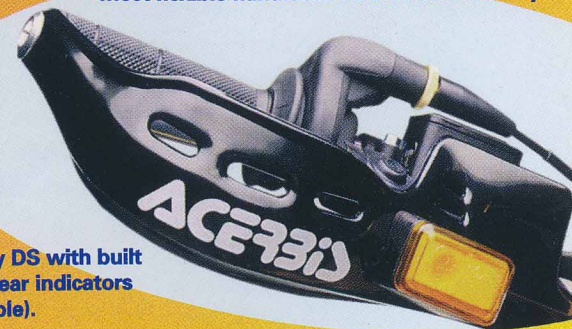
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