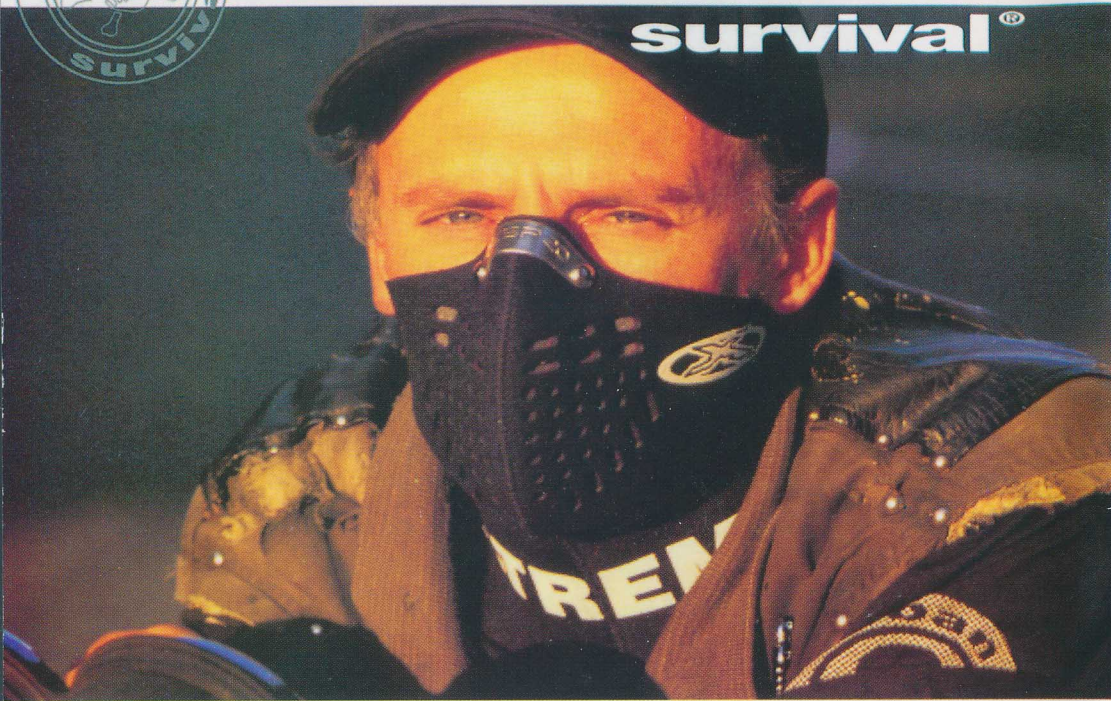




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ISSUE 27



PLASTIC SURGERY

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STAFF BIKES

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Gas

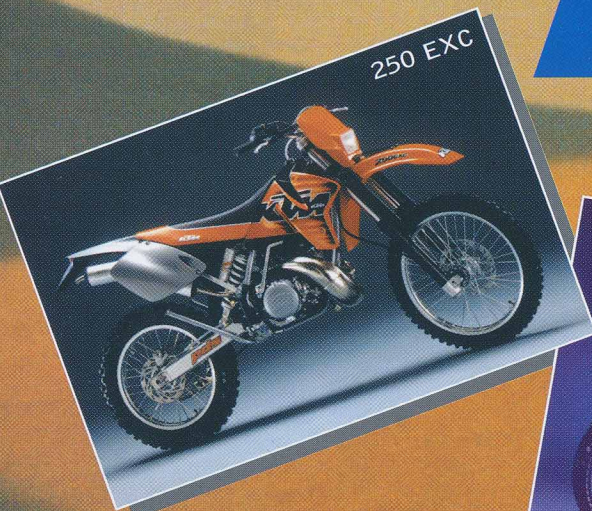
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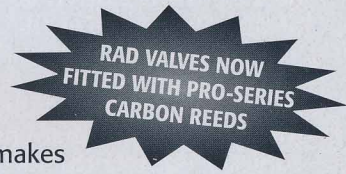
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KTM BIKES: will be on display at the following events:
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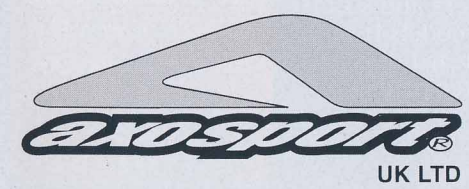
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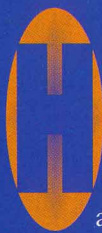
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How many of you have trouble getting hold of a regular supply of TBM? Judging by the number of phonecalls we get every month into our office it's a fair proportion of you I reckon. With a magazine like TrailBike, which sadly doesn't sell in anything like the numbers of something like Woman's Own or Loaded, it's always going to be a problem.

To put the record straight, TrailBike Magazine is available through any newsagent anywhere in the country - all the newsagent has to do is ask for it from his suppliers - but that doesn't mean that all newsagents stock it. This is where you lot come in. We want to encourage the growth of trail riding in the UK. The more people that participate, the more strength we have, and the greater choice of bikes and accessories available to us as consumers. Equally the more pressure we can bring to bear on the importers to consider us as a valuable sector of the biking market that shouldn't be ignored.

So far we are winning the argument, but in order to keep doing this we need to ensure that TBM is available in newsagents up and down the country. If you don't ask for it, or demand that your local newsagent stocks a few copies every month, how are you (and others like you) going to keep getting hold of the magazine?

Well for one thing you could subscribe. The fact is that our subscription numbers are growing so fast that we already outnumber a couple of the glossy bike magazines I could mention - and you could be part of that with all the benefits it entails.

Alternatively you could do something positive for the magazine and put pressure on your local newsagent (or even your local bike shop) to make sure he puts a few copies on his shelf every month so that the magazine is available in your area. If you are having trouble getting hold of the magazine through local newsagents, why not have a word with some of them and ask them to stock the magazine in future. The newsagent doesn't lose out - he only pays for the ones he sells, so it makes no odds to him. If you do this we can make sure the magazine keeps on growing, keeps working for you and helps keep the sport in the limelight. But without your help it's going to be much more difficult when it comes to making sure that our collective voice is represented nationally. Go on. Help us to help you - okay?

• Everybody must know by now that we are in the middle of a sales war between the official importers and so-called parallel importers bringing in similar models from other countries. The best price we've so far heard of is £3650 for a brand new Honda XR400R all taxes paid... unless of course you know any better!

Si Melber

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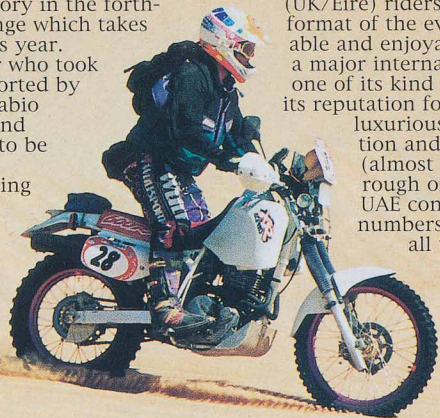
CHALLENGE AHEAD

KTM are reportedly developing a powerful new engine for their rally bike which they hope will take them to victory in the forthcoming UAE Desert Challenge which takes place on 5-8 November this year.

Led by Heinz Kinigadner who took the win in 1995, and supported by top riders Giovanni Sala, Fabio Farioli, Thierry Magnaldi and Richard Saint, KTM hope to be able to wrestle the victory away from last year's winning team of Yamaha Motor France and Stephane Peterhansel.

The increasing popularity of Rallye/Raid events,

means there's a growing British/Irish entry for the '97 Desert Challenge with already 13 (UK/Eire) riders confirmed. The four day format of the event makes for an affordable and enjoyable way of competing in a major international rally (the only one of its kind in the Middle East). With its reputation for superb organisation, luxurious bivouac accommodation and fantastic desert terrain (almost 100% sand with no rough or rocky sections), the UAE continues to attract large numbers of privateers as well as all the top works teams.



Irishman Phil Gunn took 24th overall on last year's Desert Challenge on his privateer XR600

HEAVY METAL

We thought we'd seen everything here at TBM until pics of this outrageous GPZ550 enduro reached the office. South African bike magazine Redline featured the Whoppa which was built by a crazy African guy called Tony Evans. Tony's bike started life as a 1985 Kawasaki GPZ550 road bike, but he wanted something a little different and decided (perhaps unwisely) to go the enduro route. Tony kept the stock 550 frame, but modified it to give more ground clearance, adding forks off a KDX500 (with a front disc off a GPZ900), as well as a 21 litre plastic tank. Retaining the standard air-cooled, four cylinder lump, Tony built his own four into one exhaust and had the heads gas flowed to enable his special to crack 200kmh (124mph). What do we reckon.....? We reckon you've had too much sun mate!



Make mine a Whoppa: GPZ550 enduro.... seriously scary!

Snippets

MXA International are now offering new graphics as well as replacement seat covers (and foam) for Honda CRM250Rs and Yamaha DT200WRs. The graphics kits (which are of the heavy duty type) cost £40, the seat covers £30 and seat foam £30. All prices include VAT, (but not postage) and if you want them to fit the seat covers for you they can. More details from MXA on 01207 545566.

H-C Travel who specialise in exotic motorcycle touring holidays have just confirmed details of a 6/7 day off-road tour of Baja California using XR600s. Prices start from £1320 (excluding airfare) and the tours will depart on 1 and 18 November. For the even more adventurous rider, there's also a tour to Peru on 4-17 October (also riding XR600s). More details of these two and all their other holidays from David Grist on 01256 770775.

There are still places available for this year's Hafren Rally which takes place in Wales on 27/28 September. The event designed for trailbikes and four-stroke enduro machines will run to a slightly different format with two slightly shorter days and a big social event on the Saturday night. Details from John Edmunds on 01597 840293.

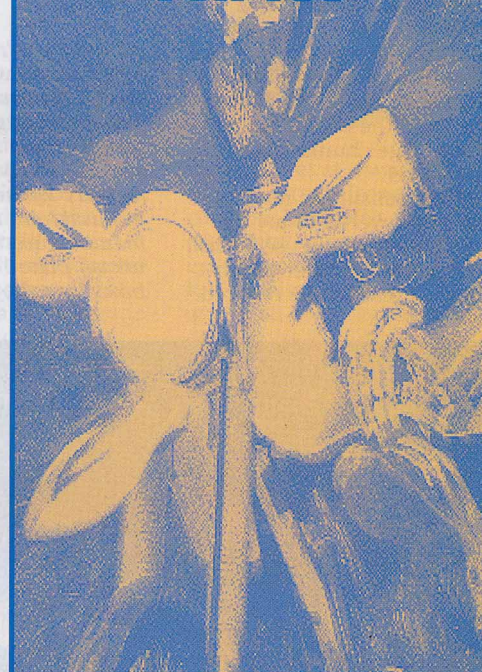
Now under the control of KTM, Husaberg have continued the process of refining their existing range of thumpers for the coming season. From next year all new Bergs will benefit from a number of mods including new camchain tensioners, intake manifolds, friction discs, shiftfork shafts and rocker-arm shafts, plus there'll be various refinements applicable to each of the models. No prices have been released yet.

KTM UK are offering prize money of £200, £100 and £75 for the first second and third KTM or Husaberg to finish in the forthcoming Weston beach race. If you win the event outright on one, KTM will add £500 to your winnings.

Honorary Brit Andrew Coaker (actually he's Australian) was lying in fifth place in the Australian Safari Rally, until his KTM expired. Having won one of the days overall and come runner up in another, he was our best hope of victory in the event - you can read all about his exploits in the next issue of TBM.

DON'T RISK MISSING OUT ON A SINGLE ISSUE OF TBM

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Dear Trail Bike...

Barrel of Laughs?

Dear TBM

I am 15 years old and have been reading your great mag ever since the first issue. I started trail riding three years ago and have had a number of bikes since, but recently I have been denied the pleasures of my local forestry tracks due to a disastrous engine failure on my tuned '91 KMX125 that involved the piston taking some large chunks out of the barrel.

After consulting my manual I discovered to my horror that Kawasaki use Nikasil to coat the cylinder which means it cannot be rebored.

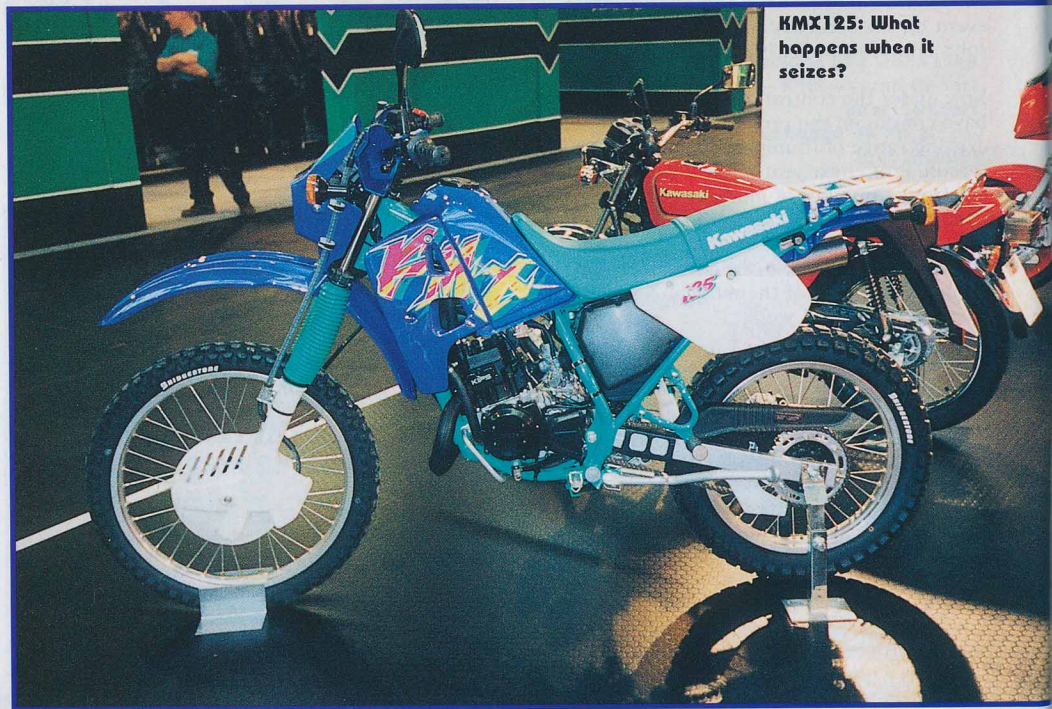
This is costing me on the large side of 200 quid to have replaced with a steel sleeve and I wondered if you had any idea what the big-K are playing at as I see no advantage of this construction.

Steven Thom
Oban

I trust you're riding on private land with permission Steven because at 15 you're still too young to legally take to green lanes which are effectively roads. Anyway lecture over, Kawasaki are not the only manufacturers to use a nikasil plated barrel on their bikes, but they do so for the

following reasons: Developed from motocross, the nikasil coating is a way of increasing the barrel's resistance to wear from the ingress of dust and dirt that gets past the air filter. In addition nikasil coated barrels are slightly better on frictional losses and give a more even heat dispersion.

However, I think this is one of those cases where the advantage of this construction is enjoyed by the first few owners of the machine rather than those that own the bike later on in its life - as you are finding. Although, it's worth knowing that there are a number of companies who offer a cost-effective replating service



KMX125: What happens when it seizes?

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

providing that the cylinder is not too badly damaged - see the classified pages for details

Future Perfect 1?

Dear Si

What a splendid article Chris Evans' Rant was. In a few succinct words he spelled out all the problems which beset us trail riders (and others) and even managed to express a bit of hope for the future.

The sooner the trendy urbanites realise that the countryside is basically an open air factory for mass producing food timber and minerals etc, the sooner we shall begin to see a bit of sense in the way that it is managed and used. If certain areas can be set aside as 'museum land' for those that want to 'tip-toe through it in awed silence' (and there's no doubt that some should), then equally some should be set aside for those wishing to pursue legitimate past-times like trail riding, hang gliding or mountain biking.

It would seem to me that we trail riders don't need large areas set aside for our hobby, all we want is the chance to use the existing long, narrow bits (let's call them green lanes) that often run between field boundaries. Of course they already exist and if the unbelievably archaic system that governs their use can be sensibly sorted out then everybody should be happy.

In the meantime I think it is essential that we use what lanes we've got in a sensible way so that when the time

comes for the sorting out to take place we are seen as responsible users that quite rightly demand a say in what happens.

Bob Combley
Oxford

Future Perfect 2?

Dear Sir

After reading the rant by Chris Evans about the future of trail riding as we know it (how did he manage to put into words what I have thought for so long?), just a few points maybe worth mentioning. If trail riders are of such little significance and there are so few of us around how many visitors to 'Ruraland™' know who we are or have been disturbed by one of these rare species? As most visitors arrive by car - even rambles - the majority suffer a day out inside the confines of their tin box, and are unlikely to stray far from their car and thus come into contact with us.

If there is to be a battle we must first of all identify the enemy, who will not come from the rank and file of other countryside visitors. It will be the 'incomers' who will be the deadliest enemy. They desert the noisy, crowded, smelly cities to escape to that dream cottage set in a peaceful, picture book landscape to which they seem to want total exclusivity. The reality as they quickly find out, is often quite different; and they are soon complaining about the smell from the muck spreader, the noise of



the cockerel at dawn and the consistent drone of the combine harvester and attendant tractors and trailers. They are sure that the RAF have no right to fly overhead or paragliders to drop in, and all other visitors to their hallowed acre are seen as intruders to be repulsed at all costs.

The real country dweller who lives and works in the rural community understands the countryside and the effects of visitors on it. They realise that far from being repulsed, tourists should be welcomed into the countryside to share its attractions along with everybody else. Besides, tourists bring much needed money into the area and are necessary to help maintain the services that are taken for granted in the cities. Tourism is a growing industry with a very loud voice and lots of money to help with promotion, and maybe trail riders and other motor-sport enthusiasts who depend on the goodwill of the country dweller have to become 'tourists' themselves. With more rural

Dear Trail Bike...

based organisations providing trail riding as a recognised and accepted country activity, encouraging tourism and supporting the local economy, then perhaps we will still be able to enjoy the delights of trail riding well into the next century.

Dorothy Jones
Oswestry

Good point Dorothy. What do other readers have to say on this subject?

Going UP

Dear TBM

Following your feature on the XR400 and its carburetion set-up in the August TBM, what are your thoughts on the Yamaha TTR250? My bike is an imported 1993 TTR, it is totally standard and runs without any problems when green laning here in England, however I will shortly be taking the bike to France where it will get to altitudes of around 1500m, and I would appreciate any ideas on setting up the carburetion for the possible altitude to avoid any problems or disasters with the wrong set-up. I don't want to change the exhaust as I mainly green lane the bike so it needs to stay fairly quiet.

I would also like to say thanks for the Rough Guides, especially Wales which I have now done twice and will hopefully do again later this year.

Neil Dunham
Bedfordshire

Okay, here's what we think. The XR400 is a slightly different case to your TTR in that it doesn't run very well here in the UK on the standard jetting with the exhaust baffle in - whereas your TTR does. Altitude affects all engines for the simple reason that the higher up you go, the less dense the air and thus the fuel/air mix that reaches the engine changes in its proportions - effectively making the bike run rich. This is not all that much of a problem (it's certainly not as bad as if the bike were running lean), and usually manifests itself as a lack of power, or oiling up on two strokes. If you're going to be riding at altitude for some time, or are really worried about it, we recommend that you contact your local Yamaha dealer who should be able to get you some leaner main jets which should help make the bike run better. As you won't be able to test it beforehand it's largely a matter of guesswork really, but if you get hold of the next three leaner jets from standard, you should be alright. Inserting the jet is usually just a matter of removing the carburettor float-bowl, unscrewing the main jet which should hang down from the centre of the carb and replacing it with the next leaner one. If the bike still stutters, move on to the next leaner one etc. There's no need to change the exhaust at all, but you will find that a 250 can feel pretty gutless at altitude.

Glad you like the Rough Guides by the way - there's more to follow including one in this month's mag, and next month a guide to north Wales

Old South Wales!

Dear Si

Hope all is well with TBM, I recently returned to my native Wales and purchased a copy of your splendid magazine and wish to congratulate you on a very interesting read (subscription enclosed). I have more than a passing interest in bikes especially off road ones, having raced Moto-X with the AMCA and ACU, however as I've got older, the interest in riding around in circles has dwindled especially as I now live in Australia where the tracks are like concrete dust bowls.



However, where trail riding is concerned there is nowhere on earth like Australia. I currently ride a DR350 bored out to 405cc with a Cosworth piston and pumper carb etc. I'm also the secretary for the DSMRA (Dual Sport Motorcycle Riders Association), an organisation fighting the closures of National Parks to trail riders and promoting trail riding in general. We are also a corporate member

of Tread Lightly Australia which caters for all the off road sports like 4WD, canoeing, fishing etc. Are there any similar groups in the UK that we can swap ideas with?

I have included a report from the first round of the SSARS which was held out here recently. The event is basically a non-competitive rally using a roadbook, and is open to anyone with a registered trailbike and riding licence for the low sum of £15.

Keep up the good work.

Dylan Hughes
Sydney, NSW

Thanks Dylan, sounds like you're doing a good job out there. We have a number of access and RoW groups in the UK such as LARA and the TRF though none which are quite as specifically targeted as yours - perhaps we should. We liked your story and readers can read it for themselves as we have included it in this month's issue. By the way, if you are reading this, it means you've already got your subscription. Cheers mate.

Good Answer

Dear TBM

As a member of the 'weaker sex' (?), I pick up TBM and read it to pass the time - you know in between ironing and washing up!

At last, a magazine that isn't afraid to answer a reader's letter honestly. Most editors wouldn't even print anything they don't like, or else print it and apologise. I refer of course to your answer to the letter 'Dumb & Dumber in issue 26. Well done!

Keep up the good work, I enjoy the mag. I've been laning for 20 years or so - on and off (mostly off in a pud-

dle of mud actually) - and find TBM very interesting.

Mrs Payne
Northants

Thanks a lot. If you liked that one, check out the next letter

Kiss my Ass!

Dear editor

I wrote to you nearly two months ago regarding a planned route through Cornwall in your May edition. As I said in my last letter, the photos you printed were nothing to do with the article. I know this for a fact. Despite my letter to you, I have heard nothing in return and would have expected an apology from you at the very least.

We are a newly formed group of about 15 members so far, and the six of us who attended this run were very disappointed. Anyway the group and I discussed this at our last meeting and 11 of our members have decided not to buy your magazine any more as there is no point if we can't believe what we read in it.

I also intend to bring this up at our next TRF meeting, and I shall be writing to the national TRF magazine as well.

C Fox
Bideford, Devon

Oooh you bitch! I suppose you're going to stamp your little

feet as well if you don't get your way. Well as a matter of fact we did reply to your last letter back in issue 25, directly after receiving it. Bearing in mind that we are a magazine and not a letter answering service, that's exactly what the letters pages are for, are they not?

Frankly, I can't believe you've actually got ten mates, let alone ones that want to go riding with someone as petty minded as you. Anyway, just to show the contempt we have for you for not bothering to check to see if your letter had been responded to - here's a picture of my butt - you can kiss it if you like. Bearing in mind that you say you no longer buy the magazine, we can't wait to see the faces of the others when you bring up this subject at the next TRF meeting!



TRAIL TIPS

You know how it is.

Virtually everyone has got a neat tip or trick tucked up their sleeve which costs next to nothing but can save you a fortune. These Trail Tips range from the simple to the complicated, from the obvious to the obscure, and from the sublime to the downright ridiculous.

They may be applicable to your machine, an aspect of your clothing, the way you transport your bike or even your preparation before a ride.

But whatever it is, we want you to tell us about it.

Jot down those labour and cost-saving devices which you use and send them into us (preferably accompanied by a clear photograph or two) and we'll publish them and publish your name alongside 'em.

Fame, if not fortune will be guaranteed, and you can impress your mates with your lateral thinking.

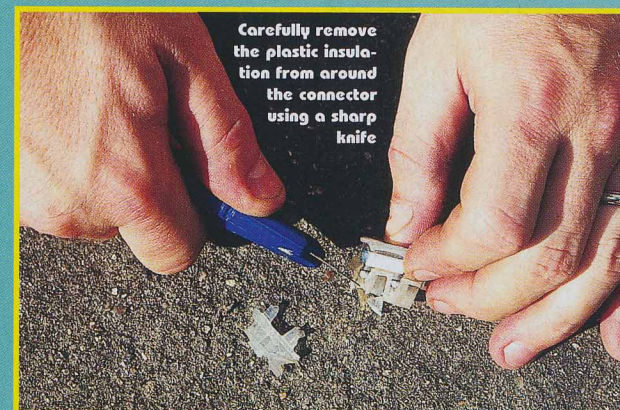
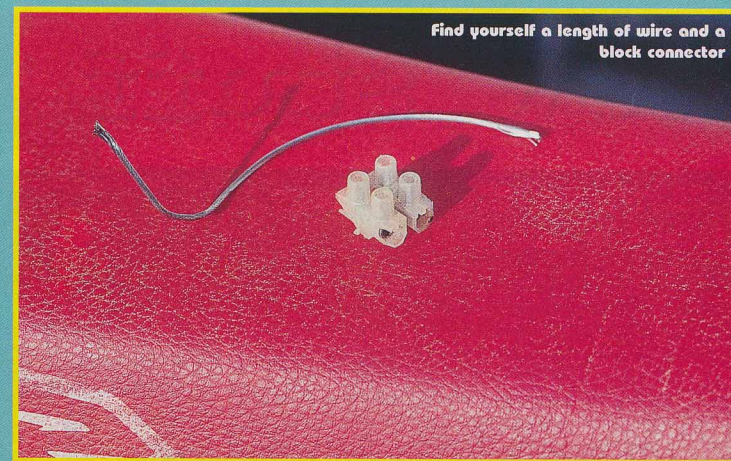
Not only that but all trail riders (including you) will benefit from the shared knowledge we can bring to the subject. To start the ball rolling we thought we'd share a little tip of our own with you. How to make a brake saver for virtually nothing:

How many times have you fallen off and found that the flimsy rear brake lever has dug into the ground and then been peeled back like a banana skin? If it hasn't happened to you yet then count yourself lucky. At some stage it almost certainly will - even if you've got a folding tip lever it can happen - leaving you with at best a brake pedal that's bent or snapped off, or at worst a rear brake that's jammed on solid. One easy way of preventing this from happening is to make yourself a brake-saver or brake-snake. These anchor the front end of the pedal to the frame with enough freeplay so that the pedal can move up and down freely, but not so much that the pedal can get bent away from the frame. You can buy these little things in some off road bike shops - they only cost a few quid, but here's a way of saving your money and making one for free.

Decide what you are going to anchor the pedal to whether it be the bashplate (like we've done), a lug on the frame or a handy bolt such as an engine mount, but remember this must sit level with, or forward of the front end of the pedal itself. Find yourself a length of flexible wire such as an old throttle or clutch cable and cut a length two and a half times as long as the distance between the front of the pedal and the anchoring point. If you're not sure how long then cut a decent length of wire - you can always trim it off afterwards. Next take an old wiring block connector (the sort you use for joining household wiring - the bigger the better), and chop or twist one of the single blocks off it. Then, using a sharp knife cut away all the plastic surrounding the metal insert until you are left with just the insert itself (with two screws attached). That's the easy bit done.

Now you need to secure the brake pedal

to the frame or bashplate using the above pieces. With a bashplate it's a simple task to drill a hole in it and pass the wire through the hole. If you don't have a bashplate you may well have some sort of lug on the frame or an engine mounting bolt, around which the wire can be passed. Once you have done that, loop the wire through the brake pedal (using pliers) and back to a



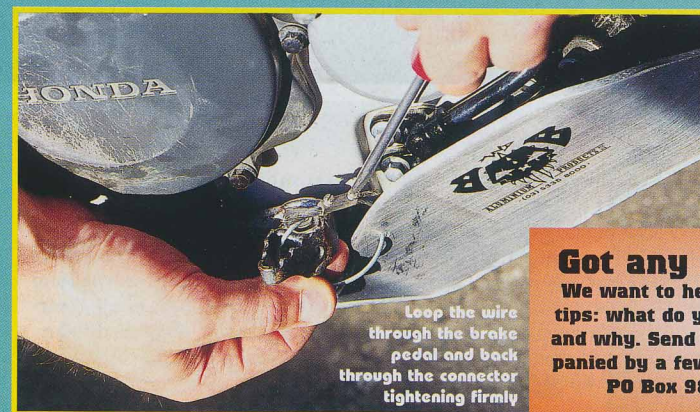
by both retaining screws for maximum strength.

If you don't have a brake pedal with a hole in it then you may need to drill the pedal tip in order to attach the wire, but however you do it, the most important thing to remember is to leave enough freeplay in the wire so that the brake pedal can move up and down through its full arc of operation - even under panic braking! Remember that as the rear brake pads or shoes wear there may be more movement on the pedal and you should allow for this.

point where both ends of the wire can pass through the joining block (best kept on the frame side) and secure it tightly using the clamping screws. It's a good idea to make sure that both ends of the wire are clamped

pedal operates fully by standing on it a few times before you ride the bike - and then trim off any excess wire sticking out more than about one centimetre either end. If you need to remove the saver you can do that

easily by loosening both the screws and simply pulling the wires free. So there you go, one brake saver. It's cheap, easy and it shouldn't take you more than 20 minutes to do the job - so good luck.



Got any good Trail Tips?

We want to hear from you with *your* trail tips: what do you use on your bike or gear, and why. Send your tips (preferably accompanied by a few clear photos) to TBM Tips, PO Box 9845, London, W13 9WP.

new stuff

Giving Evo gear some stick

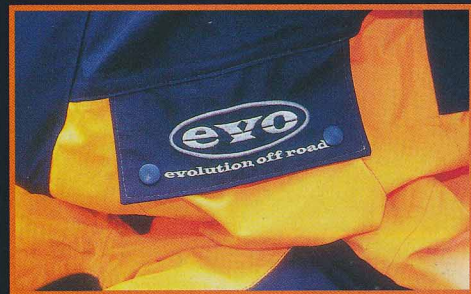
We were delighted to hear about a new range of British manufactured clothing that's just burst onto the trail and enduro scene and even more pleased to be sent a sample to try for ourselves.

The Evo range of gear is claimed to be waterproof yet breathable, hard wearing and best of all affordable for the average enduro rider. Manufactured in the north of England from Porelle (which is a posh name for a type of nylon made in the UK), Evo clothing certainly looks and feels a little different to your average gear. Let's start with the styling: if you're into flashy graphics, bolts of lightning, acid-trip colours and flashing broadswords, you're not going to like the Evo range which combines a simple, and I reckon rather smart, two tone colour range, mixing black with either KTM orange, Honda red, Yamaha blue, black on black or a black/purple combination (with black/green to follow). The Evolution name is picked out in smart silver embroidery on both jacket and trousers and gives the garments a quality look.



Predominantly designed for enduro use, both jacket and trousers are relatively light-weight; constructed from (in the main) a single layer of fabric with (in the jacket's case) a simple aertex lining. From a material point of view the clothing feels soft and comfortable (like a microfibre garment), yet resistant to tearing with patches of Kevlar reinforcing the vulnerable elbows and inner legs.

It's clear that much thought has gone into the design of the Evo range with a double storm flap on the jacket, full width rear vent, time-card holder in the sleeve and a drawstring hem. The jacket's cut is generous allowing it to fit over body armour with room to spare (perhaps a bit too generous in fact as it doesn't have any kind of waist belt to stop it ballooning out). Though bizzarely the sleeves are too narrow to accommodate elbow guards, and I would've liked to see a couple more pockets in the jacket (including an internal one). The jeans are really nicely styled with a comfy fit, but could do with incorporating removable thigh pads for extra protection.



Wraparound Protection

If you haven't already got a bashplate fitted to your XR400R then you should think about getting one. Those exposed oil lines on the right hand side of the engine look ripe to be removed by a sawn off tree stump, and the cost and hassle of cracking a casing from a rock or lump of concrete thrown up by the front wheel makes a sumpguard a sound investment. There are numerous companies that make them to fit the 400, but B&B is the latest. Their guard (now residing on the long-term editorial XR4) features good side protection, a simple mounting system and best of all a narrow design which keeps the engine width down to a minimum and helps prevent the guard from filling with mud. Quality construction and decent alloy plate combine to make this guard good value at £75. SM. Details on 0181 840 4760.



All seams are taped to prevent the ingress of water, and I can vouch for the waterproofing qualities of this gear having been

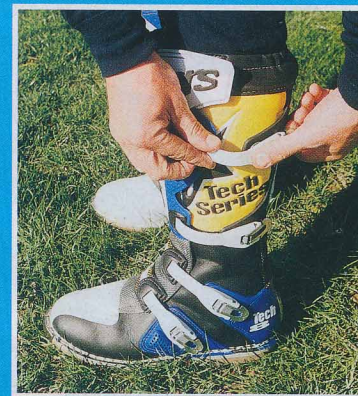
caught out in it in a tremendous rain storm. It didn't let water through the material though some came down the neck which can't be over-tightened like a storm cuff (leaving a large gap), and like all 'waterproof' garments, the Evo's breatheability is much less obvious than its water resistance.

We treated the Evo range to our usual sort of abuse; once used and covered in mud it was left to fester in the TBM van for a week before being washed. After washing, the black parts of the material came up just like new, but the coloured parts had become stained in some places. In fairness, this is true of virtually any light coloured garment, not just the Evo gear, but it's worth remembering all the same, especially when it comes to choosing colours.

All in all then Evo should be congratulated for a serious attempt at producing a quality range of all British enduro riding gear at regular prices. At £119.99 for the jacket, £79.99 for the jeans, £29.99 for the waterproof socks (which we haven't tried yet) and some waterproof gloves yet to come, the prices are keen for all-weather gear, especially kit which looks as stylish as this.

Evo ought to do well with this range and first impressions seem favourable with dealer demand (from all over Europe) currently outstripping supply. If next year's gear can address the neckline closing and incorporate an inside pocket or two then even more people will be tempted, but for now if you buy some Evo gear you'll certainly stand out from the crowd - unless (in the case of the black/orange gear that we were sent) all your mates happen to work on the motorway. SM.

Details From Evo on 01325 377186



Feet Up?

Recently Launched from Alpinestars are what must surely qualify as the most exclusive, not to mention expensive pair of off road boots on the market - and we've been testing them. The new Tech 8 boots continue the evolution of the superbly strong and innovative 'Tech' series, all of which feature top quality construction and incredible strength. Exquisitely crafted from a combination of top grain leather, man-made Lorica and plastic, the Tech 8s feature an unusual inner boot/sock which make them extremely comfortable to wear (with little or no break-in period), and since this part is fully washable there should be no more excuses for cheesy feet in the Crasher household. There's extra steel reinforcing around the toe/heel area and a sturdy metal plate in the centre of the sole. The buckle system is quick, neat and reeks of quality with little alloy fasteners doing the work. The downside of course is the cost - £275 is a lot of money to pay for a pair of boots, particularly as you can get a pair of earlier Tech's for around about half that money if you hunt around. Then again if you're the sort of person that likes to have the best equipment then search these out - we guarantee you won't be disappointed. DC. Details from CI Sport on 01372 378000



Gas

MARK II



Gas Gas have recently announced a revised version of their trials-based Pampera trailbike for 1998, incorporating more trail oriented design than the outgoing model. Si Melber took one trail riding to see if the changes really were for the better

I'll never forget the first time I rode Gas Gas's Pampera back in November 1995. That first bike used a lightly modified trials engine stuck in a hybrid chassis with a taller more comfortable seat and a few roadgoing accessories to make it (more or less) street legal. The gearing was all wrong for a trailie and its road manners on sticky Michelin trials tyres made the handling (at least on the road) interesting to say the least. But, to me it was a revelation. There was nothing that the Pampera rider couldn't tackle with complete impunity. No hill too steep, no rock steps too tall and no trail too tough for the Spanish built bike. What's more with more alloy parts than the White Brother's catalogue and weighing in at only 85kg, the Pampera was astonishingly good value at fifty quid under three and a half grand (as I said so back in TBM 6).

For 1988 however Gas Gas have decided to develop the Pampera more along the lines of a trail-bike building on the successes of the previous bike and addressing some of the outgoing model's anomalies. Side by side the old and the new look very similar, the new model is rather more fluid in its styling with rounded panels replacing the slightly angular design of the one it replaces, but in fact the differences go more than just skin deep, and inevitably some of the older model's style, weight and quality have been sacrificed in the interest of trail-isation.

To remind you, the Pampera still utilises a

New and the old: Visually the new Pampera looks similar to the outgoing model



238cc liquid cooled, two-stroke single cylinder trials engine mated (via a hydraulic clutch) to a six-speed gearbox. The pre-production model we rode had the trials porting of the older bike but customer bikes will have a different barrel with (presumably) less torque and more in the way of top end power - much more in keeping with its dual purpose role we are informed.

Of the old bike's few niggles, the biggest bugbear was the trials-derived gearbox which matched four extremely low close ratio gears with two taller road gears at the top. The gulf between fourth and fifth (on the old one) was so big you could hide a super-tanker in it which made for a difficult time on the road. On the new model that problem has been tackled with a much more conventional wide ratio six speeder. First gear is still incredibly low but now the spread of gears is such that there are a number of much more usable ratios and there's no danger of losing power or speed between changes.

Other niggles like the fork leg speedo had already been addressed on last year's model with a new headlight unit incorporating a speedometer and other functions, but on the new bike all that has changed. For 1998 the Pampera gets a battery which lives under the seat enabling it to power a proper set of lights and indicators as well as a regular round faced speedo, warning lamps and key operated ignition switch. That may sound like an



There's a full length steel under-tray to protect the bottom of the engine

For 1998 the engine has been modified to give more in the way of top end power thanks to different porting and a new exhaust system



type upswept pipe to a rather more utilitarian painted steel expansion chamber design.

Gone too is the lovingly crafted curved alloy swingarm and snail cam chain adjusters, replaced by a rather less attractive straight steel box-section swinger and simple locknut adjusters. Also gone is the trials style alloy bashplate that formed a rigid base to the bottom of the chassis. In fact the chassis is all new. More shapely perhaps, but fabricated from curved steel with a (non-removable) drilled steel sump-plate now protecting the engine lowers. It's goodbye as well to the alloy handlebars which used to grace the top yoke; now your hands find themselves atop a much less attractive pair of black painted steel bars and if you need to carry something on the bike - too bad because the tiny chromed rack has disappeared as well.

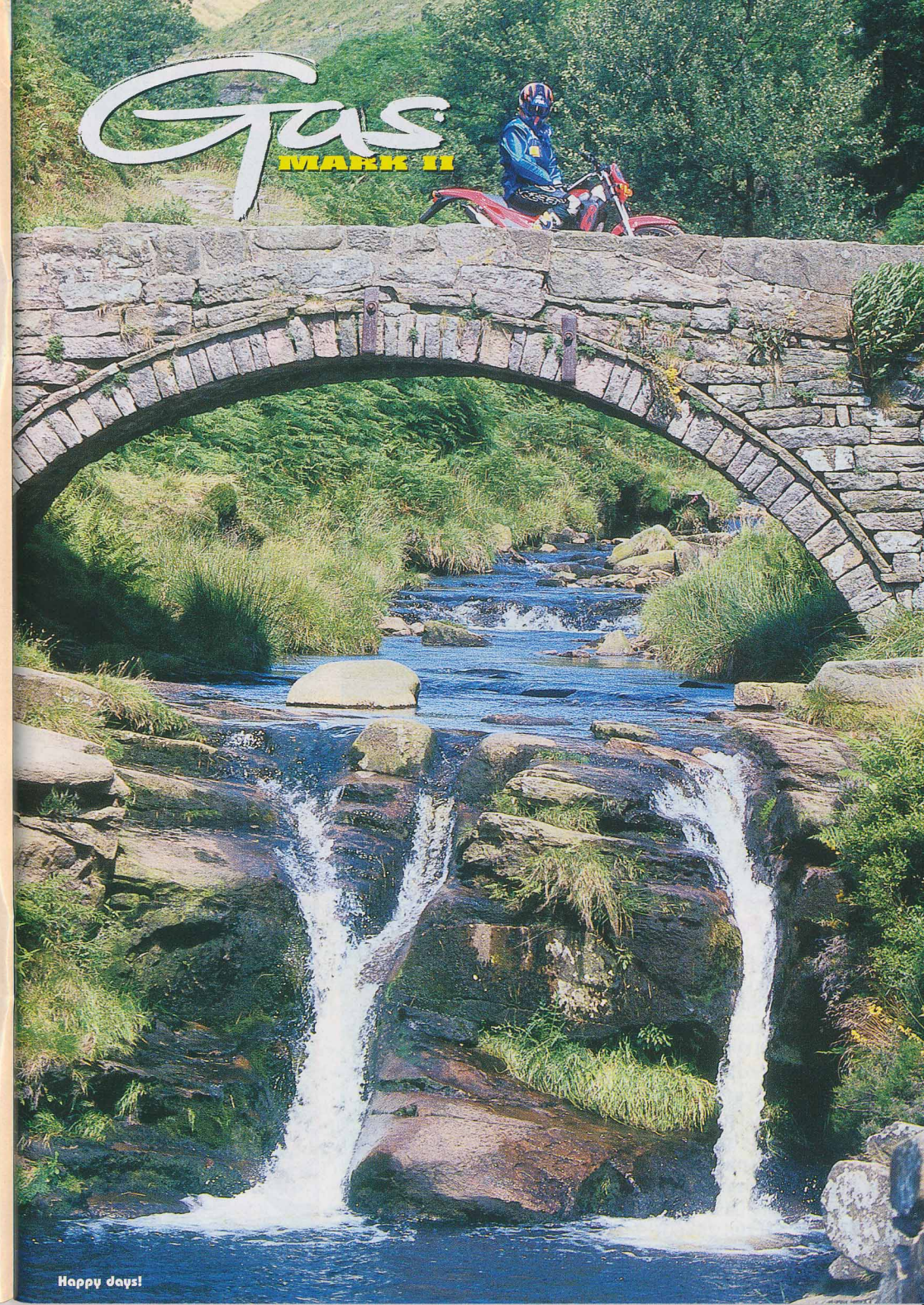
Physically the Pampera is a very

improvement, but despite the battery, there's no electric start and the horn is barely audible over an idling engine. The new instruments also look rather cheap and basic (the same ones are fitted to the Spanish-built Derbi 50), and likewise there's a cheap feel to the switchgear - the indicators aren't even of the push to cancel variety. Moreover there are a number of other detail changes to the new bike which smacks more of cost-cutting than genuine 'improvements'. The alloy silencer has gone, to be replaced by an ordinary looking steel unit. In fact the whole exhaust has changed from a chromed trials

small machine, so if you're of above average build you're going to find the riding position a bit cramped at first. Conversely those of a shorter stature will welcome the Pampera's lowish seat height and easy manoeuvrability. In fact the seat has been reprofiled with a step in it, creating a sort of raised pillion perch which has the effect of limiting the fore-and aft travel of the rider which doesn't help when it comes to weight transference, but at least ensures the main part is nice and low. Sensibly the plastic fuel tank (which lives between the frame spars) is larger for '98 (up from 7 litres to 9) which

Gas

MARK II



Happy days!

Gas

MARK II

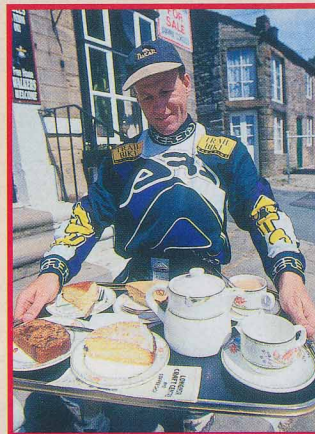


Dials: simple, functional, cheap!



will improve the range, though there's no sign of an oil pump, so carrying a spare bottle of oil and a mixing jug is still a necessity. There's a nice light feel to the throttle action, and a superb hydraulic clutch but the side-stand takes a bit of getting used to as it's located on the right hand side. Finally, a new and larger radiator helps keep everything nice and cool when the going gets hot.

So much for the differences then, now it was time to ride the thing and see what improvements had been made. The good news is that the new bike certainly feels a lot more at home on the road than the last one. The Pirelli MT70 tyres grip the tarmac nicely (which is just as well as they aren't worth a damn off road), and thanks to its trials heritage the direct steering means the Pampera



Tea and cakes for two!

Gas Gas Pampera 250

Price: £3200

Engine: Liquid-cooled single cylinder two stroke with crankcase induction

Capacity: 237.9cc

Bore & stroke: 71x60mm

Comp ratio: 12:1

Carburettor: PHBL26

Transmission: 6-speed

Fuel capacity: 9L

Weight: 88kg

Importer: Gas Gas Motos Ltd (01298 25460)

holds a line nicely through the corners. More importantly, the wide ratio gearbox feels much better suited to the street than the old one - mind you there's still a lot of gear changing to be done. The bottom couple of ratios of the new box are still incredibly low, whilst flat out in sixth the speedo will indicate a rather optimistic 135kmh or 84mph. Good job then that the front and rear brakes work well. The solid discs (185mm front and 160mm rear) are only gripped by single piston calipers but there's enough retardation to bring the bike swiftly to a halt thanks in part to the Pampera's all up weight of only 88kg.

Turn off road however and the Pampera will instantly bring a smile to your face. It's not that it feels uncomfortable on the road - in fact quite the reverse, the new one feels far better on tarmac than the old model - it's just that this is essentially an off road bike that demands to be ridden on the rough - in fact the rougher the better. Point it at a trail, turn the screw and off you go. Nothing will stop you, bogs, hills, mud, rocks, ramblers, the Pampera takes it all in its stride, though it should be said that bumpy ruts don't favour the Pampera's short wheelbase. Large bumps taken at only moderate speeds cause the rear end to bottom out while the stiff front end (due to limited suspension travel) still displays a tendency to wash out without warning. Drop the front wheel into an unseen rut and you can quickly find yourself pitched over the bars thanks to the Pampera's lack of stability.

And we weren't just imagining this. Both Crasher Cornish (who came along for the photos) and I, came off the bike after losing the front end (on a straight bit of track) when the front wheel caught the side of a rut and let go rapidly. I'm sure decent tyres would help considerably, but I remember commenting on the earlier bike's tendency to lose the front when a lot of weight was placed over it. And it's difficult not to place all your weight on the front because the

The new Pampera feels much better on the road than the old model



Pampera actually feels much better when you're standing up - even on the road - than when sitting down. The standing position allows a lot more control and because of the bike's design actually feels the most natural way of riding it - though of course thanks to shorter forks the front end feels much lower than on a conventional trailie.

Since the bike we rode had a slightly different barrel to the version that'll be for sale I won't comment too much on engine power characteristics other than to say that for most people there should be enough rather than an excess of power. Unlike the majority of two strokes, the Pampera really gets going in the midrange with a super smooth spread of power that makes it possible to find grip on even the most slippery of surfaces. In

Depending on your point of view the new Pampera is either a step in the right direction or a less distinctive version of the original. Either way it works well



fact pick your trail carefully and you can find yourself enjoying the sort of go-anywhere ability that some bikes could only dream of. Slimy boulder-strewn riverbeds make a nice challenge as do fallen trees and gooey mud. In fact ideally the Pampera owner would find themselves looking out the toughest trails with the greasiest climbs and the steepest hills, but the problem here will be finding other riders willing or capable of coming with you. There's only so many difficult trails in the UK and virtually nothing that can't be attempted on a regular trailie let alone one as capable as the Pampera.

Conversely, the sort of easy trails which end up being a bit of a thrash on say your average DR350 are actually more of a pain for the Gas Gas owner since the faster you go the more unsettled the bike becomes with a tendency to bob and weave around thanks to a combination of short wheelbase, very direct steering (with limited trail) and modest suspension. If you're one of those riders

that likes to amble along enjoying the countryside then the Pampera might be right up your street. It's quiet, leaves virtually no footprint and is probably one of the least offensive trailbikes we know of. Likewise if you're the sort of rider that seeks out the toughest challenges or enjoys the competition of classic trials, again you'll find the new Pampera to your liking. But if you value a machine as much for its versatility as its ability, then there are better bikes for you. It goes without saying that its the sort of machine that head-banging, no-nonsense, thrash it through the gears merchants, should leave well alone.

In a sense then the Pampera is stuck out on a limb slightly - almost too good for the majority of trails we get here but still not quite versatile enough to hack it as an all rounder. It might seem churlish to criticise the Pampera for becoming more suitable for the trail, but in a sense it's lost some of its unique character in the metamorphosis into its current version. It's certainly lost many of its quality components in its newer guise and that really is the root of the problem. Alongside its previous incarnation the new Pampera appears a bit like a Taiwanese copy of a Rolex - similar in looks, but cheaper all round.

In a way it was easier to forgive the old bike's single-mindedness (eg the lack of oil pump etc) than it is with this one which has the benefit of two years further R&D. No matter that the new bike is actually better suited to the task for which it is designed and despite the fact that it still wears more quality bits on it than your average Japanese trailie ever will, there's always the nagging thought in your head that the earlier model looked a whole lot more serious and was better built.

Okay so the price has come down a bit from the £3500 of the old model, to the £3200 demanded now, but recent currency fluctuations more than account for that difference (the Pound has risen more than 25% against the Spanish Peseta in the last year alone), so that the asking price (which is still absurdly cheap compared to what you pay for some Japanese bikes) doesn't seem to be the bargain that it once was. If I was honest I'd say that Gas Gas have tried to do the right thing by making the bike more trail suitable, but those changes could have been achieved without the loss of quality components, and in a sense then they are guilty of throwing the baby out with the bath water.

Me? I'd take the old Pampera and get the gearbox mods done to make it feel like the new one... but then I'm like that.

cycle logical

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TAKE FIVE

The second part of our list of five favourite pieces of riding kit owned (and treasured) by the editorial team

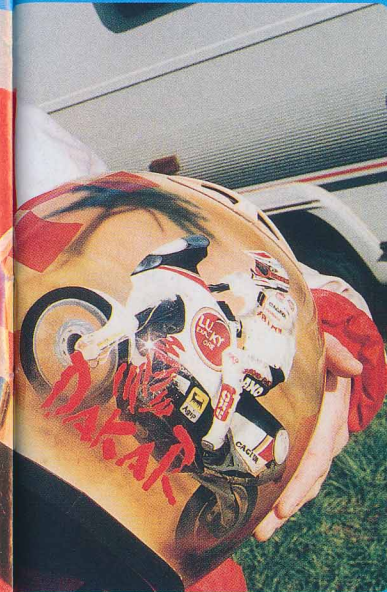
This month
Dave 'Crasher' Cornish

Over the years I've discovered that what you wear whilst off roading can make the difference between having a great day's sport or wondering why you bothered getting out of bed that morning. It's always been a difficult decision how much to put on; wear too much and you boil up like a kettle, wear too little and you'll resent the riding and just want to get home to a warm bath. Throw in some changeable conditions and the problem just gets compounded. So through experience I've come up with a combination of riding kit that works for me:-



Premier (plain) CRX £185, with custom paint by Hewy Designs £100-300

Everyone should have a little indulgence once in a while and mine is most definitely my recently acquired Premier CRX full face helmet. This is the most expensive off road helmet I've ever bought and I love it. Light, comfortable and with a removable 'Coolmax' washable lining the CRX also sports a trick ventilation system as well as removable cheek pads for hot conditions. But what makes my particular lid stand out from the crowd is the amazing Hewy Design custom paint job. Around the front and sides the CRX has a red and pearl white chequered flag which fades out towards the back into a desert scene portraying Edi Orioli aboard his works Dakar Cagiva. The quality and depth of finish of this work of art has to be seen to be believed and is worth every penny. Only problem is, yep you've guessed it! the first time I used the CRX I came home with a smashed peak, so Hewy's in the process of painting up another. Premier (Bert Harkins Racing) 01582 472374,



Clover Adventure waist bag, £30

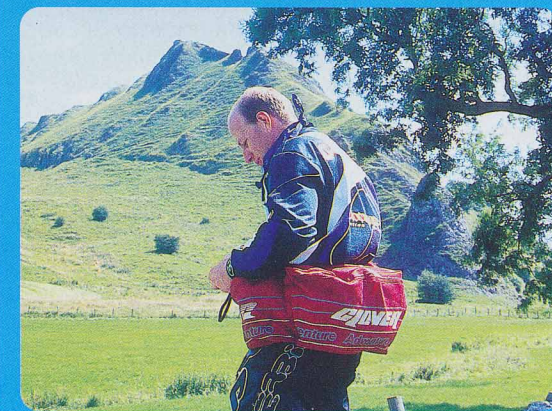
Carrying anything on a dirtbike can be a real pain. Even for a day's gentle green laning I take waterproofs, drinks, a bite to eat, maps and when I remember, a few tools. I hate wearing a rucksack whilst riding so almost eight years ago I stumped up £30.00 for my trusty Clover giant bum bag. This oversized bag sports a cavernous mid section with two smaller pockets on each side and swallows up an amazing amount of kit. Once I've buckled it up around my waist the bag actually gives some support to the lower back (similar to a body belt) and you only really notice the weight of the bag and its contents when standing up on the pegs. Although the zipper has finally failed this bag has seen action all over Europe (and North Africa) and has proved to be a truly versatile and robust piece of essential kit. Only trouble is I'm not to sure if Clover still make the Adventure but if you can find one snap it up, well recommended. Clover 01202 570490

Scott Leathers Pro Enduro jacket £86.95

I guess everyone has their own favourite riding jacket and while I confess to changing jackets quite frequently, my fave at the moment is a Scott Leathers Pro Enduro jacket. This jacket features the sensible touches that a good off road garment should, such as an aertex lining, time card holder, large pockets (including a usefully big rear pouch) and a draw



string around the waist to avoid the billowing ballooning effect. Whilst not claiming to be waterproof, my Scott jacket has kept me dry for over a hour in driving rain. The arms and shoulders have built-in soft (and comfortable) armour and it fits snugly at the cuff with Velcro fastenings. Scott's range of bright colours may not be to everyone's taste and I deliberately chose the more muted blue and black to match my other riding gear. In fact since I've had this jacket it's rarely been off my back but fortunately when it's due for a wash the Scott comes up just like new and unlike some expensive imports this British made garment won't break the bank either. Scott Leathers 01833 631526.



TAKE FIVE

Klima Sport underwear, long pants £27.50, zip top £34.95

Starting with a base layer I've found that a set of Klima Sport long-johns matched to a long sleeved zip-up roll neck top keep me warm without the bulk of several

heavy layers of clothing. Not only that but the Klima Sport clothing range is made up from a trick double skinned layer that 'wicks' away perspiration from the body allowing the moisture to pass through the outer layer keeping you dry (and hence warm). This virtually eliminates the dreaded sweat aided chill factor for ever, but that's not all, because as the wonder fabric wicks away moisture it also helps to keep your body temperature more stable in hot conditions. I've tried and tested my Klima Sports from Sheffield to the Sahara and they are one of the first pieces of kit I pack into my gear bag. Klima Sport 01565 651906



T-Pro knee protector & brace £85

With my reputation as an, ahem... occasional crasher, I like to wear as much protective gear as possible. And the one area which is a constant worry to me is my recurring knee injury. This is the result of a previously broken knee cap and any further dislocations keep me out of action for several painful weeks. So since 1990 I've ridden with some kind of support/brace around both knees. So far the best things I've found are a pair of T-Pro combined knee and leg braces. Constructed from a lightweight but tough nylon/plastic material and fixed by large Velcro straps, the T-Pro gear offers full shin, knee and thigh impact protection and more importantly (for me at least), the hinged area around the knee keeps the vulnerable joint well supported by preventing twisting and extension. It may not be the sexiest item of riding gear and at first a brace may feel clumsy, bulky and initially restrictive, but wear one all the time and you will wonder how you've ever had the nerve to ride without it. My T-Pro brace gives me heaps of confidence and allows me to extend my off road career into my early... er, okay late thirties (and hopefully well beyond) and I never leave home without it. T-Pro 01582 471702

Wish List:

Cold hands must be one of the biggest problems for any form of biking, and like the ed mentioned in the last TBM, I would sell my granny to get hold of a decent, hard wearing pair of warm and waterproof gloves. The nearest I've got to this seemingly impossible dream is a pair of Gore-Tex Alpine Star lightweight road gloves which as you can imagine are a little too bulky for off roading. Another big problem I find is goggle misting in wet or humid conditions. I've tried everything from smearing the inside with Fairy Liquid to ripping out the top foam from the goggle frame and nothing seems to work. Surely someone out there has a simple, cheap solution to this annoying problem or makes a pair of goggles that are immune to it?



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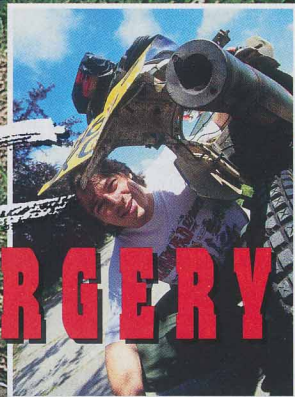
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Believe it or not, staffer Paul Blezard's reputation for having the scruffiest looking XR600 on the planet is set to come to an end.

This is the true story of how the TrailBike team went about transforming this mangy-looking, dog-eared old XR into something desirable - in a single day. Si Melber tells the sorry tale, points the camera and shows you how with a minimum of outlay, anyone can perform miracles.



TRASTIC SURGERY



Above: Eeevuch it's 'orrible. Bent, twisted and all out of shape - and the bike's not much better either.

Main pic: The bike and the bits meet for the first time.



The look of despair on this guy's face just had to be seen to be believed. He stood there shaking his head in disbelief. This was, and I quote 'the very worst bike he had ever had the misfortune to come across'. And as this guy was a scrutineer for the two man enduro we'd entered, I knew we were in big trouble.

Needless to say, Blez's XR600 was thrown out of the event long before it had even been fired up and he returned to me with a sort of hang-dog expression on his face that seemed to say 'I can't believe it's happened again' but actually came out as: 'please can I use your bike Si?' Of course I'd tried to warn Blez. We all had. Anybody, who had ever set eyes on his XR had told him that it needed some TLC. Sure, mechanically it was just about okay (the wheel bearings were shot to pieces and the carb was worn out), but bodywork-wise it looked like it had come second in a serious accident. With its melted plastics, yards of gaffa tape and jagged bits of metal sticking out at crazy angles, it always managed to send scrutineers into a sort of foamy-mouthed frenzy.

Something had to be done. Something radical for certain, to improve the look of the



bike and to ensure that scrutineers didn't fall about laughing the moment it was wheeled out from Blezard's rusty old battered van. 'If it looks right, that's half the battle' we'd told him in one voice, but he wouldn't listen to us... at least, not until now. This latest setback seemed to galvanise Blez into thinking that perhaps, just perhaps, it was time to take a look at the old girl and see what a fresh set of eye-liner and lip-stick could do for her. In short it was time for an XR600 makeover.

The date was set, the bits were ordered and the bike and Blez duly arrived at the appointed venue within an hour of when he'd promised - things were looking good. The idea was to ditch all the existing plastics and lighting, with its dodgy wiring and temporary bodes, and install a clean, new set which would give the old girl a bit of a lift. It wasn't meant to be a ground up restoration job, but a sort of face-lift just to show what can be done to any bike with a moderate outlay.

We started by stripping away the rear fender and the clutter around it. The clutter consisted of a couple of jagged bits of metal which had once supported a framework fabricated out of old central heating copper pipes (yes, you did read right), designed to keep Blez's throwover panniers out of the rear wheel. Needless to say with time the copper had become brittle, the frames had snapped, the panniers ended up in the wheel which allowed Blez's huge padlock and chain to make a bid for freedom halfway down the M3 (let's hope you weren't the unlucky person following Blez that day). Now all that remained were the sharp steel brackets and a couple of bits of broken copper piping which were just asking to gouge a chunk out of your leg at the first getoff. Off they came pronto.

On the rear fender the original lens had



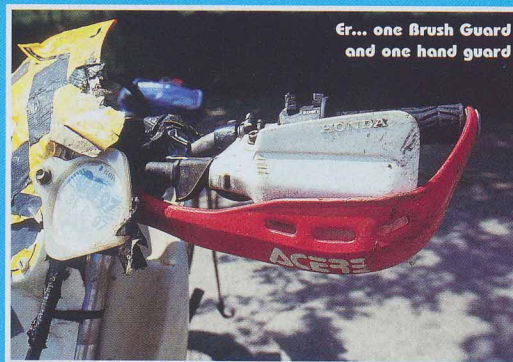
been removed and as this bike was a US import (originally without a stoplight), Blez had installed a brake light switch and a different (three wire) rear lamp cluster over the top of the old one. Somewhere along the line this had got smashed and instead of being replaced, had been gaffa-taped back together using some of the famous Blez-bodgery. Off it came, and in its place went a smart new Acerbis XR replica item complete

with stop/tail lamp and neat wiring. It bolted straight on and looked great.

We could've chosen plastics from one of the other suppliers like UFO or Polisport who both offer replacement panels as well as a number of universal

parts, but we decided to use Acerbis plastics (sourced through our own Desert Fox) for the whole job because they do a complete set of replica XR600 parts which bolt straight on in place of the originals, and we know the quality to be pretty good.

Next we tackled the petrol tank. Years of off road grime ground in by the hulking Blezard thighs had discoloured it, and the ancient Honda graphics had bubbled, peeled and faded badly over the years. Fifteen minutes each side with a paint scraper removed



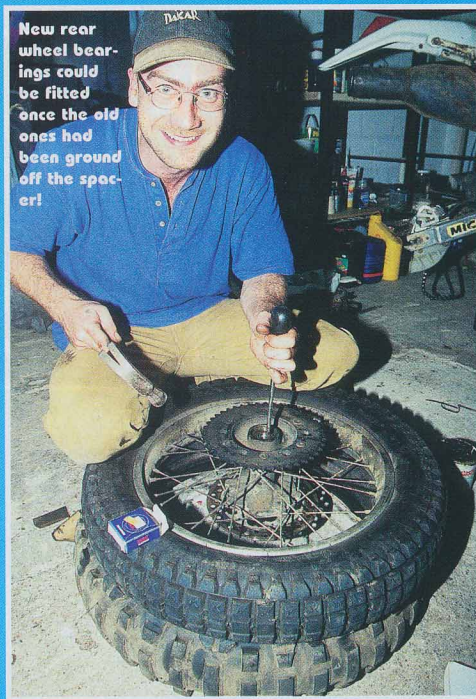


Stripping the bike down to its core components didn't take all that long

the tatty old graphics, followed by a decent wash down with turps to get rid of the glue and then household Jif to lift the dirt. Once it was clean we installed a smart new set of the latest MXA graphics in 97 XR colours. These are much thicker and harder wearing than the original decals and really help lift the look of the bike.

While the tank was off we took the opportunity to change the carb which had been giving some problems, for a virtually new one that Blez had sourced from the TBM classifieds for a measly 40 quid. It wasn't really part of the makeover but was a job that needed doing, and would help cure the bike of its annoying low speed hiccup. And besides, it seemed sensible to do the work now while the bike was in pieces.

Next it was time to take a look at the front end, but before we did that we removed both wheels so that the rear wheel bearings could be replaced, and the worn out trials tyres changed both front and rear. Off came the front mudguard and once again an XR replica item was fitted. The front guard needed shortening at the rear to avoid fouling the frame down-tube, and it also needed packing out underneath the bottom yoke as it was slightly thinner than the one which



New rear wheel bearings could be fitted once the old ones had been ground off the spacer!

came off. A small section of the piece we'd trimmed off was filed into shape and inserted between the mudguard and the bottom yoke to make a perfect fit.

Peeling off the headlamp assembly revealed a birds-nest tangle of multi-coloured cables, bits of tape, zip-ties and twisted bits of wire which held the old headlamp assembly in place. And when I say headlamp assembly, I do mean *Assembly*. You see the plastic surround had broken so many times that Blez had botched it all together with yards of tape and bits of old broken car mudguard he'd found by the side of the road. It worked okay, but looked a right mess.

With the front wheel removed and the forks exposed it was an easy job to remove the caliper, slacken off the pinch bolts and slide the forks out. The old fork gaiters weren't in too bad a condition (there was a small tear in the bottom of one of them), but as we'd decided on a red/white colour scheme it was necessary to lose the faded old blue ones. Twenty minutes later with a fetching new set of red gaiters in place, the forks were cleaned up and reassembled. Now it was time to tackle the handlebars.

The bike was already fitted with a fairly new set of Renthal bars and there wasn't much wrong with them, so we left them alone and instead concentrated on fitting some protection for the levers. It was a case of discarding the old hand guards, removing the one (yes one) old Brush Guard that Blez had somehow managed to fit over the existing handguard, straightening both the levers (which were banana-shaped) and then installing a new pair of white Rally Brush Guards to match the bike's new colour scheme.

With the bars done and the forks back in place it was a simple task to attach one of the new DHH twin halogen headlamp assemblies. The transformation was immediate; instead of tape and broken plastic there was a neat white unit which would provide the bike with brighter, more efficient lighting. Future scrutineers couldn't fail to be anything other than impressed!

By now there was a large pile of discarded plastic, ancient old wiring and about a roll and a half of used gaffa tape all piled up



Blez was despatched to the kitchen to make the sarnies!

in the corner and we still weren't anywhere near finished. Meantime with a bit of sweating and cursing, Neil had got the old tyres off the rims but was having problems removing one of the rear wheel spacers in order to fit the new bearings. Serious problems need serious solutions; we called for the grinding machine and with the help of Kiwi mechanic Rob (who's always on hand in times of emergency) drifted out the old bearings then ground off the old bearing



A pile of discarded, broken plastic was growing in the corner of the room

PLASTIC SURGERY



After: Does that look smart or what? Shame we can't say the same about Blez!



race which had actually welded itself to the spacer due to lack of lubrication! Not much sign of regular maintenance there.

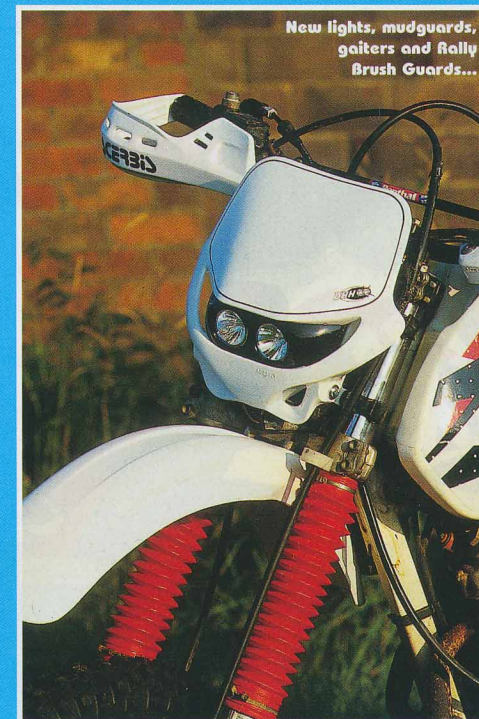
While all this was going on, Blez was wandering around haplessly clutching a spanner and looking distracted at the sight of his bike actually receiving a bit of maintenance for a change. We couldn't stand his constant whining so we dispatched him to the kitchen to get on with making lunch for us all. By the time he'd emerged with a large tray of sarnies, the wheel bearings were in and Neil had set to work fitting the new tyres.

We'd chosen a smart new set of Michelin Bajas for the XR because not only do we rate Michelin tyres (they're expensive, but in our opinion well worth the extra), but because the Baja in particular is their newest, fully road legal dual purpose tyre, and is particularly suitable for the XR. With a really aggressive open block tread pattern in the centre and plenty of sidewall knobs for good road grip when cornering, the Baja will make both a good enduro tyre and a passable road hoop. Cheap they aren't, but quality costs these days and as Blez's bike needs to be extremely versatile, Bajas seemed a good bet.

By the time we'd finished lunch (at five o'clock), we were on the homeward stretch. We still had all the wiring to sort out but in the meantime we set about removing the standard Honda aluminium cage that's supposed to protect the bottom of the engine. Experience has shown that these aren't half as good as a decent bashplate at protecting the delicate crankcases and preventing the frame rails from taking a battering. A glance at the underside of Blez's bike showed that the frame rails had already copped a load of abuse, but a quick and easy fix was to install a bashplate which would cover up all the rusty tubing and prevent any more damage being done. It took about 20 minutes to remove the old cage and install the new sumpguard ensuring a nice tight fit and giving the bike a much more serious look.

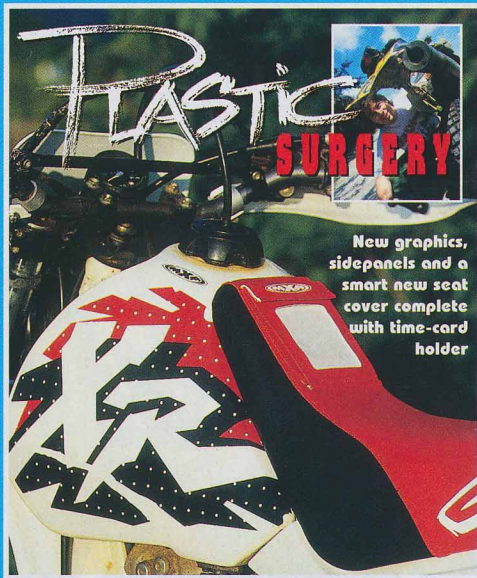
Most of the paint was long gone from the frame around the footpeg area so we decided to smarten it all up by fitting a set of frame protectors. This meant removing the home made pillion pegs that were in the way, and then rubbing down the frame with wet and dry glass-paper before spraying it with some white PJ1 frame paint. Once the paint had dried it was a simple matter to fit the frame protectors using the cable ties provided - neatening up the look of the whole area.

Now it was time to refit the wheels complete with the new tyres making sure the



axles were liberally smothered with high melting point grease, and remembering to pump both the brakes back into position. Then we transferred the Dzus fasteners from the old melted side-panels to the new (replica) set, before finishing it all off with the recovered seat. MXA had performed the transformation on the seat, and made a first class job of it. Multi-panelled in red/black with new graphics and quality stitching, we were well impressed by this finishing touch. We'd asked them to keep the existing comfy seat foam and install a time-card holder for enduros which they did, though they wanted us to point out that they can't guarantee the longevity of these holders. A really aggressive rider they explained, can tear them off by sliding up and down the saddle. We assured them this wouldn't be a problem in this particular case!

Finally, the bike was wheeled out into the early evening sun and a few photos taken to show the difference - a sort of before and after effect. What with the bearings done, the bike stripped down and re-lubed, the bodywork changed, the dangerous add-ons removed and not a bit of gaffa-tape in sight, we're genuinely looking forward to seeing the look on the face of the scrutineer at the next enduro.



easier to sell. So for a moderate outlay Blez has got himself a bike which quite apart from being more presentable and enjoyable to ride, has also realised its true value. On top of that the bike looks more or less the same as any used 97 machine (the XR600 has remained virtually unchanged for more than ten years), with only the scruffy engine giving the age away.

We had intended to finish the day off by making a little ceremonial bonfire out of all the damaged bits and pieces we'd removed, but believe it or not Blez wouldn't let us. He packed up all the broken bits (smashed lenses, melted panels and all) into a cardboard box and put them in the back of his van. 'What are you going to do with those?' We asked him - his answer was classic Blez: 'Sell them in the classifieds' he replied, 'there's plenty of life left in them yet!'

Costs

Item (RRP)	Make	Price
Front mudguard	Acerbis	£21.15
Rear fender	Acerbis	£46.25
DHH Headlamp	Acerbis	£64.00
Rally Brush Guards	Acerbis	£44.85
Side Panels	Acerbis	£33.45
Frame protectors	Acerbis	£24.60
Fork gaiters	Polisport	£9.95
Seat cover	MXA	£30
Tank graphics	MXA	£40
Bashplate	Desert Fox	£59.99
Frame paint	PJ1	£6.75

Conclusion

The cost of all the parts (not including the tyres and bearings which are service items) comes to just over £380, which may seem like a lot but not when you consider the alternatives: Unrepaired, the bike would've fetched maybe £1200-1300 on a good day - that's if you could find someone interested in buying it in its previous condition - it looked scruffy and more importantly uncarred for. Now, fully fettled and with all the new parts on it, it'd probably fetch somewhere in the region of £2000+ and be much

Blez's van is next...!



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Bush BIKING

Who'd want to ride in Australia eh?

Reader Dylan Hughes (originally from Wales - as if you couldn't guess) now lives and trail rides in Australia. He recently took part in an Aussie raid organised by Australian trailbike magazine Sidetrack.

This is his account...

Round one of the SSARS attracted a wide range of different bikes and riders



You've still got to watch out for muddy ruts, even in the Australian bush



After a three hour drive north from Sydney, Tony Byrne (otherwise known as Tony Hardstart) and myself finally arrived at Legges camp, Myall Lakes near Bulahdelah which is on the North Coast of New South Wales. Although it was the middle of winter, there wasn't a cloud in the sky and the temperature looked set to go over the 20 degree mark. Perfect for riding bikes through the Australian bush.

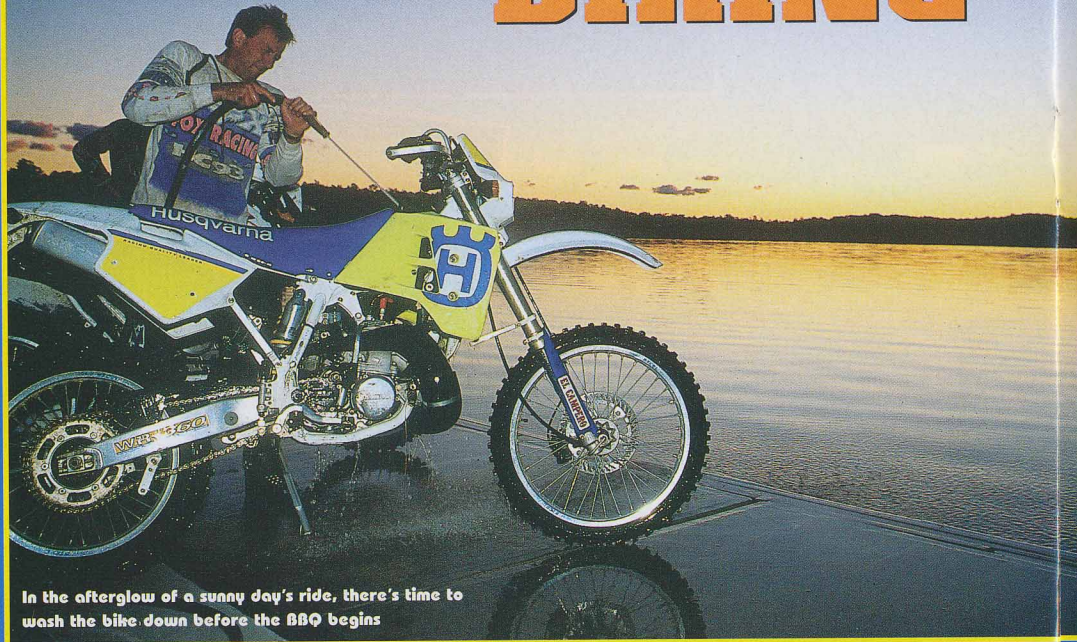
The campsite was jam packed with all colours of bikes from Honda XL185s to KTM 620s and a couple of Honda Dominators, 65 bikes in all. The first round of the Suzuki Sidetrack Adventure Ride Series (SSARS) looked to be a success from the start. The event, basically a non-competitive rally (raid), utilised a route sheet system for the riders similar to that used in the Paris Dakar where distances to turns together with

instructions and miniature diagrams showing type of turns or obstacles that would be encountered.

After the formalities were completed a rider briefing was given where we were reminded that the event was not a race and to remember to keep left at all times and be aware that there would be several trees fallen across the track in some areas. Finally after everyone had taped their route sheets to their bikes using all sorts of different map rollers and other ingenious home made devices we were off, or so I thought.

My mate Tony Hardstart was having trou-

Bush BIKING



In the afterglow of a sunny day's ride, there's time to wash the bike down before the BBQ begins

ble starting his bike, and as usual the engine had flooded. After numerous kicks and several attempted bump starts the bike spluttered into life although by this time the sweep riders were getting a little impatient. We set off following our route sheets at a reasonable pace to try to catch up with the rest of the field who'd quickly disappeared. After only 15km while crossing the Pacific Highway, Hardstart and myself were accosted by a ferocious looking police officer in a 4wd Nissan Patrol. As it turned out it was Hardstart he wanted because his rego plate (an Australian licence plate which shows the bike to be street legal) was missing and the rear light was broken. Hardstart immediately showed his rego documents and apologised for forgetting his new number plate as the old one had come off after a bush excursion. The officer nodded and to our amazement let him off without so much as a stern talking to, let alone a fine and we quickly continued on our way in case he changed his mind.

The day improved dramatically over the next few kilometres as we left Bulahdelah

and headed into the trees or bush as they call it here. Over the next few hours we became immersed into dirt bike heaven as we started to reel in the riders in front of us and pass them forgetting the fact that it *wasn't* a race. This didn't last too long though as I had my first get off after misjudging a corner - although I jumped straight back on my bike and pretended to be just having a smoko when the next rider came along. After a quick sip of water and vowing not to fall off again, I set off at a slightly slower pace marvelling at the number of different tracks we were riding without doubling back on ourselves. We were headed in a generally northerly direction rejoining the Pacific Highway again for a few kilometres of tar before heading bushwards once more. The tracks now got narrower with several trees and branches crossing the route, and there were moments when there would be a tree on the ground and then another at head height - easy if you're going slow, but at 40kmh down a steep hill it's quite exhilarating to say the least.

By lunch time we had covered 72km and

stopped at a Caltex petrol station for a refuel and a feed. Most of the Aussies were having good old chips and Aussie meat pies which looked large enough to wedge a barn door open - washed down with a tinnie of VB. The afternoon leg of the event was split into two categories for those who wanted an easy ride and others that preferred a more challenging route. Being a masochist I had opted for the harder challenge and was not disappointed. After riding a few kilometres south on the Pacific Highway we headed east towards the coast. From here on the ride became interesting to say the least as the track became tighter and the branches of trees started to whip my goggles. The hill climbs got steeper and the downhills became quite hair-raising especially as one had a 90 degree left turn halfway down it. Alas I once more came to grief here but quickly remounted before anyone but Hardstart noticed.

At the bottom of some of these hills there would be a creek crossing where by now the opposite bank would be quite wet thanks to the other riders passing through. Momentum was the key and the good old DR350 didn't let me down, propelling me at a respectable speed up the opposing bank on all occasions. At the top of one of these hills a large tree had fallen across the track and so the track diverted at 90 degrees to the right up another hill which looked so steep it didn't look possible. However the tyre marks showed that it was and to prevent me hesitating TK (Tony Kirby, editor of

Australian trailbike magazine, Sidetrack) was standing halfway up the hill with a demonic expression and a boulder in his hands held aloft over his head. I considered my options, gathered my courage and propelled myself up the hill with all that the DR had to offer. To my surprise I shot past TK with ease but didn't stop until I got to the top - laughing.

Soon after, the terrain became flatter as we descended towards the low-lands and headed towards Seal Rocks and our final checkpoint at the end of the route sheet. As there was still a couple of hours daylight left most of the group were given a guided tour to an isolated beach where TK held a photo shoot. Shortly afterwards we all blasted south for about 10km along the beach which was brilliant before riding inland to join the rest of the group and return by boat which would transport us across to the campsite.

Within a couple of hours all the riders had showered and changed, gathered for a BBQ and presentation, as clothing and other off-road goodies were raffled. Speeches were made and round one of the SSARS slowly disappeared into the starry Australian sky. All involved had had a great time including one female rider by the name of Megan (good Welsh name that) who also completed the course.

Although sadly only a one-day event, Hardstart and myself are eagerly awaiting the next round. All involved in the organisation of the event should be congratulated especially Off Road Adventures who helped organise it along with Sidetrack magazine.



Riding the Australian way

World and European Enduro Championship round-up 1997

Words and photos Geoff Meyer

Up and coming British youngster Jonty Edmunds looked a good bet to take his first European Championship in the 125cc class going into the last two rounds held in Sweden and Finland recently. Edmunds riding a TM held a 13pt lead over his nearest rival French Husqvarna rider Olivier Samofal after the first two rounds in Spain and Portugal, and despite Edmunds' recent knee injury, only a major problem would see him lose such a lead.

As luck would have it, Edmunds found himself facing not one but two problems in the two Scandinavian rounds which would cruelly rob him of the championship victory by just a single point.

Things had started well for the jovial Welshman. Round one in Spain left him in first place after a consistent 3-2 result was enough to secure first overall. The next round in Portugal went even better, no problems and a win on both days consolidated his 13pt lead: 'I felt really good there' Edmunds said afterwards, 'It was a good round for me, and fortunately there was no drama.'

But while Edmunds began to contemplate his first major European title the next round in Sweden was to bring him back down to earth, literally. 'I had a big crash here today. On one of the cross country tests I was flat out in third or fourth gear coming over a hill and got a little sideways. The bike's swingarm clipped a tree and I cartwheeled

down the hill, breaking the [hydraulic] clutch and plugging the end of the exhaust, and the bike wouldn't start. I got it going again but lost about a minute in that test which dropped me down a bit.' Without a clutch Jonty was forced to ride the rest of the day clutchless, bumpstarting his bike to get it going.

With his lead reduced it was a matter of defence in Finland rather than going all out for the win: 'I was happy with fourth on the first day, all the others were shit or bust but



Below: Swede Anders Eriksson claimed second place in the big thumper class aboard his Husky. Right: Jonty Edmunds missed out on the European 125cc title by a single point, but still claimed a well deserved second



Below: Peterhansel (175cc), Watts (125cc) and Rinaldi (400cc) shared the victor's spoils in the 1997 World Enduro Championships



I was taking it easy. I'd crashed in Scotland and damaged my knee, so just before Sweden I had a brace made, it was the first time in months that I'd ridden there, and here you have to use a lot of back brake which was difficult with the new brace.'

But just to compound his problems, a violent thunderstorm in the middle of the day made the going deceptively slippery and though Jonty just made his check on time, the clock ticked over before his timecard was stamped dropping him a minute. Finally

World and European Enduro Championship round-up 1997

his TM sprung a small leak in the radiator causing it to overheat and though his team realised what had happened and topped it up with fluid and sealant, the damage had been done and when the bike stalled it took three minutes to start it again.

The lost time dropped him from fourth to sixth on the day losing three points in the process and the championship with it. 'It's really disappointing, a win is what I expected, it will make a difference for next year, I don't know what I'll be doing next year but a win here would have left me in a good position for a team. Still we are working on a deal for the world 125 championships in 1998 and hopefully I've shown enough form this year to get it together.'

While Edmunds second place finish was the highlight for the Brits in Finland, there were a number of other British riders who deserve a mention. Rowan Jones (Yamaha) finished in 25th place in the 125 Euro series, followed by Robert Wrayford just a place behind. Ever present Philip Smithson once again completed the world 400cc four-stroke series. 'It's been a long year' he said afterwards, 'my results have suffered a little,

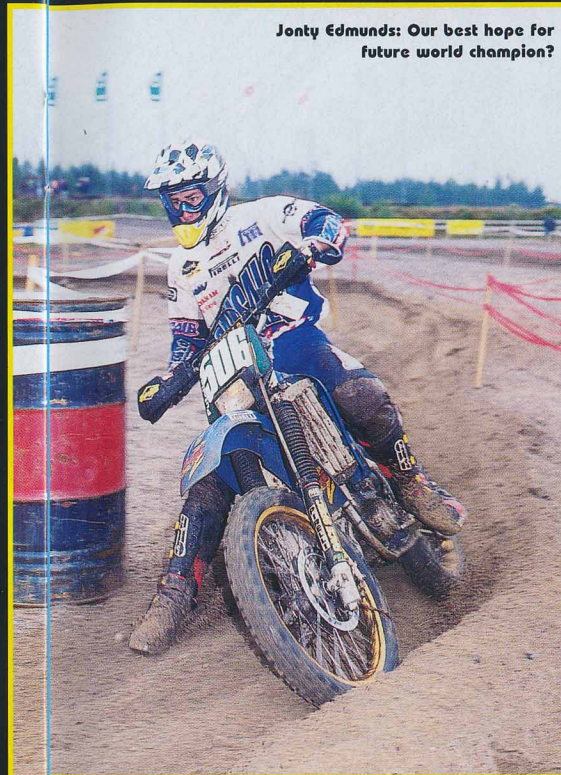
but overall I'm happy to compete. It's a shame we don't get much recognition, we work hard and the costs are high' said Smithson who has done the world championships longer than anyone else.

Ireland's Paul McMinn is another to perform in the 400cc four-stroke class, his 13th place being the best for any 'British' rider. 'We had trouble here yesterday and DNFed, but the consistent results were good enough, and I'm not unhappy with 13th place overall' said McMinn afterwards. Mark Vaughn rode the highly competitive world 125cc class finishing 21st overall with 15pts, Matthew Lewis also rode the 125cc class and while he only scored in rounds three and four, finished in 32nd place. In 37th place came Tim Lewis with 2pts, while Richard Hay rode the (over) 175cc class and finished with a single point for 48th place.

Australian Shane Watts proved to be the most popular champion this year winning the World 125cc class, while Dakar legend Stephane Peterhansel blitzed ahead of Giovanni Sala to win his first ever World 175cc championship. Mario Rinaldi clinched the 400 four-strokes, while Kari Tiainen once again proved unstoppable in the big thumper (500cc+) class.

A little while later we caught up with Jonty again who reflected on his result for us: 'Obviously I came here to win the championship so I'm disappointed, but look at some of the other classes - a lot of good guys finished second like Eriksson and Sala. Now I'll go to the ISDE and go for gold. The Six Days is all about finishing and getting to that final motocross test (which Jonty won in 1996).

So with the future still bright for Edmunds, the runner up spot this year can only make him stronger for his challenge on the world scene. Let's hope he can take heart from this year's disappointment as without a doubt Jonty Edmunds is the future of British enduro racing.



Jonty Edmunds: Our best hope for future world champion?

World 125cc Championships

1	Shane Watts	Aus	KTM
2	Mika Ahola	Fin	TM
3	Rickard Larsson	Swe	Husq
4	Fausto Scovolo	Ita	Yam
5	Stephano Passeri	Ita	KTM

World 175cc Championships

1	Stephane Peterhansel	Fra	Yam
2	Giovanni Sala	Ita	KTM
3	Petteri Silvan	Fin	Gas
4	Eric Bernard	Fra	KTM
5	Jarno Boano	Ita	Hon

World 400cc 4-stroke Championships

1	Mario Rinaldi	Ita	KTM
2	Laurent Pidoux	Fra	Husq
3	Laurent Bouffieux	Fra	Husa
4	Dirk von Zitzewitz	Ger	KTM
5	Bjorn Carlsson	Swe	Husa

World 500cc 4-stroke Championships

1	Kari Tiainen	Fin	KTM
2	Anders Eriksson	Swe	Husq
3	Peter Jansson	Swe	Husa
4	Fabio Farioli	Ita	KTM
5	Martin Lind	Swe	Husa

European 125cc Championships

1	Olivier Samofal	Fra	Husq
2	Jonty Edmunds	GB	TM
3	Alessio Paoli	Ita	Hon
4	Xevi Pons	Esp	Hon
5	Mikko Pihlajavesi	Fin	Hon



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Clutch problems with our long-term XR400R has meant a new set of plates within the first eight months of ownership. At least it's simple to install...

STAFF

The continuing saga of the long-term XR400R, Cagiva Elefant 900 and a new addition to the editorial line-up

The XR Files

The truth is out there!

How often do you check your clutch? My guess is that the word 'never' springs to mind. Sure you lube the chain, clean the air-filter, check your tyres and brake pads, and even grease your bike's bearings once in a while, but do you periodically remove the clutch cover, disassemble the clutch and measure the plates

for wear? Like hell you do.

Mind you, I wish I had. Or rather I wish I had known that the clutch was on its way out before I drove the 200 odd miles to Wales, paid my fifty quid entry fee for the Welsh Two Day Enduro, cleaned all my kit, spent hours getting the XR400 prepared, only for it to break down in the first special test barely six miles into the off roading.

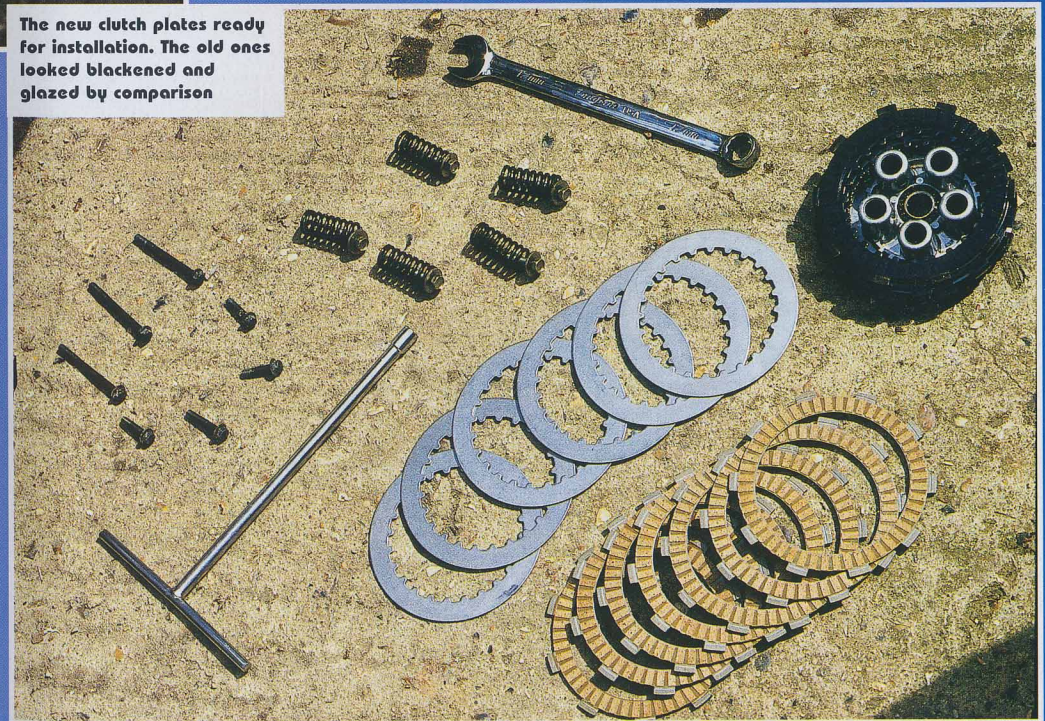
But my XR400 worries go back a bit further than that. You see the weekend before the Welsh, Blez and I had entered a two man enduro (him on his XR600 and me on the 400) as a sort of shakedown run to check that everything was ready for the Welsh. Blez's bike failed scrutineering (see elsewhere in the issue for that story) so we were left with just the 400 on which to compete. No matter, the beauty of these two man

events is that you can compete with either a two person/two bike combination or two person/one bike set up (though in our experience a two bike/one person combination never works).

The event was one of the excellent TBEC (Trail Bike Enduro Club) events held on forestry land down in Suffolk. Being near the coast, the ground was much loamier and more sandy than normal forestry and was littered with small trees and tree stumps, giving rise to a nice little track with fast berms on the corners and trickier bits where you needed to dodge the stumps - all in all a great day's racing. Perhaps the event would've been better still had the time clocks been synchronised so that we knew whether we were on time or not, and the penalties for doing extra laps and arriving late (or rather on time by one clock, late by another), not so harsh. (The last time I criticised TBEC I got a serious (but good natured) ear-bending at the next event).

On the second lap I collected a tree stump with the rear brake pedal which bent through 180 degrees and then jammed under the right footpeg. At the time I didn't have a brake saver attached (see trail tips) and had to stop for running repairs. I came into the pits three minutes early yelling for

The new clutch plates ready for installation. The old ones looked blackened and glazed by comparison



STAFF BIKES

Blez to run and get his toolkit from his van. He returned a couple of minutes later clutching a two foot crowbar and a lump-hammer the size of a large melon, and was just about to use the brittle alloy engine cases as a leverage point when I suggested to him (in words of one syllable), that perhaps that wasn't such a good idea - pall!

Between us we straightened the lever (as best we could) and Blez went out for his first session having lost less than a minute. We didn't really encounter any more problems



Bad design: it's possible for the kick starter to get stuck down - trapped by the footpeg bracket

in the morning session and despite a few braking problems caused by the weird positioning of the brake pedal, the XR felt great to ride, drifting into the long sandy corners and firing out of them on full bark. I have to admit that there were times when I was riding the clutch a bit, especially when closely following a slower rider, or when the engine bogged in the deeper sand, but everything seemed fine. Certainly the clutch felt pretty hot, but the XR400 runs very hot anyway and neither of us noticed any clutch slip.

In the afternoon another problem arose. The first session after lunch includes the special test which in this case was simply a timed first lap. Starting on the line with a dead engine I was keen to get a good start and give us a decent test time. There I was poised and ready to go; bike in gear, clutch pulled in and kickstart eased just over compression. The starter's hand dropped, the bike fired first time and I was about to drop the clutch when from down below I could hear a loud ratcheting sound. I looked down to discover that the kickstarter had stuck down, jammed behind the footpeg bracket. It took me about 20 seconds to find neutral, release the kickstarter and get going again, by which time the four other riders on the line had taken the first corner and disappeared in a cloud of dust down the following straight - I was dead last.

That really fired me up. I shot off from the startline as fast as the XR would go, revving it to the stop. I'd caught and passed the first rider by about quarter distance and up ahead I could see the next two. I managed to overtake the next rider just before the start of the nadgery stuff, but then nearly lost the place again as I overshot a berm and went down momentarily. I had to wait until nearly the end of the lap to get past the next guy, but by that time the only other rider of our starting group was long gone, and I dived between the special test flags in second position to record the sixth fastest test time of the day - phew.

Once I got the bike back home I recreated the conditions of the jammed kickstart and discovered that if the kickstart swivels round at the bottom of its stroke after catching on your boot - as it often does - then as it tries to return back to the starting position it gets jammed behind the little lug on the right hand footpeg (which is meant to stop the peg folding back on itself). I can't believe the Honda technicians didn't encounter this particular problem during testing of the XR - especially now it's been confirmed that the kickstarter has been modified for 1998 models (after a number

of reported breakages), and my guess is that this jamming problem has shown up elsewhere. Either that or they've got Mystic Meg working for their technical dept.

As for the clutch problems, well suffice to say that the clutch started to slip badly, part way round the first special test in Wales and by the end of the test I'd lost all drive completely - there was nowhere to go but back home. Back at base a few days later I removed the old plates (a quickish job thanks to the separate clutch cover design on the 400) and replaced them all (both drive and friction) with a completely new set. The old ones looked blackened and slightly glazed, though there was still plenty of meat left on them. I'd read in the US mags about other XR400 owners having clutch problems but thought it was more to do with ham-fisted Yanks than Mr Honda getting his sums wrong. Quite by chance, the day I was repairing mine, a reader rang up to ask if I'd heard of any clutch problems with the 400R as his was slipping at high revs and the bike was not yet three months old! Obviously all was not well.

There was a clutch modification on the XR400 between the 96 and 97 models (the RT and RV ones), but as ours was a later model I



B&B aluminium insert releases more of the XR400's midrange power but is pretty noisy. Exhaust damage caused at the Cambrian Rally

can only conclude that Honda have still not got things right yet, and that the clutch is a weak part of the machine. Heavier duty clutch springs are available for the XR, but the clutch pull is already heavy enough without the extra weight of compressing bigger springs, and this is only really a fix rather than a cure.

As for the rest of the bike, well there have certainly been some changes. The old instruments were removed after Blez broke the mountings off the Honda one, and were



Wraparound B&B ally bashplate protects the vulnerable oil lines, while a homemade brake-snake prevents further lever damage

STAFF BIKES

replaced by a much neater and lighter digital ICO unit operated by a thumb switch on the left handlebar. The big dent in the exhaust came about as a result of an unscheduled get-off in the Cambrian Rally (in a liaison section would you believe), when I lost the front end on a rocky downhill. I was riding in the company of Crasher Cornish, and the look of smugness on his face when it was me that went down and not him - had to be seen to be believed.

After mangling the existing Honda baffle trying to get it out (supposedly a simple job - ha!), I was really pleased to be sent the alloy B&B insert mentioned in the last issue. This bolts in place of the Honda end-pipe, looks heaps better and releases a flood of power. I've not yet had the chance to dyno

it, but I'm guessing we must be talking 7-10 percent here - awesome! The one problem is noise. The B&B insert is... well, how shall I put it? Fruity, to say the least. I reckon that for enduro use or places where noise isn't a problem you should try the B&B insert (the difference is amazing), but if your riding takes you along trails where you ride close to habitation, then keep your stock insert in and help keep the peace.

Along with the B&B insert came a really neat B&B alloy bashplate (see this month's new stuff) which is really easy to mount and hugs the frame a lot tighter on both sides of the engine cases than the Moose Racing bashplate previously fitted. I had to shave a small section out of the side-plate to allow for clearance for the rear brake pedal which now sits much closer to the engine and is fitted with a brake saver to try and avoid any more lever bending experiences, but the end result looks neat and very protective!

Overall then, I love riding the XR which feels light and very responsive by four stroke standards, but the recent problems have certainly made me look twice at the XR400R in terms of reliability. The clutch and kickstart definitely seem to be weak points with the 400 and what with the carb glitches, I reckon that Honda still have a little way to go before the bike is fully sorted. Let's hope that's the last of the problems!

An electronic ICO meter replaced the damaged Honda dials



Ele-tubbies

Has Crasher gone La-La?

It's been more than three years since I set off in a borrowed van to Yorkshire to pick up the Ele. For me this is a personal record - most of my previous bikes are lucky to last much longer than 12 months before I start scanning the classifieds for another machine. And though over the years I've owned literally dozens of trail and enduro bikes, the big Cagiva really has to be my all time favourite (at least so far).

Okay I know it's not everyone's cup of Darjeeling, but for me the Ele really has put the fun back into biking. The main reason being the bike's ability to turn its hand to just about anything; for example the 900 has been rallied, raced, toured, trailed, used as a commuter and scratched along the local B-roads on a Sunday morning with my road bike buddies. Yep, the old girl's certainly versatile.

Since the last Staff Bikes feature and due to work commitments (not to mention loads of available test bikes floating around the TBM offices), the bike hasn't really clocked up much mileage, however what did need sorting out was the previously mentioned flattened header pipes (TBM 19). This potentially expensive incident happened last autumn when the bike bottomed out and squashed the pipes against the motor's under belly whilst out playing.

Dale at Smiler Racing (01493 369834) cut out the damaged section of pipe and fabricated a matching stainless steel curved piece that looks as though it's been there since the bike left the factory. Total cost for this repair £50, not bad considering the price of replacement Cagiva parts comes to almost 300 quid!!

In the search for some more power from the fuel injected vee twin, Superchips (01280 816781) were contacted and the

results of a morning spent 're-chipping' the bikes ECU are well documented in issue 25. Whilst the outright increase in power wasn't much to write home about (2bhp), the throttle response throughout the whole rev range has improved and the way in which the bike picks up revs from around 3000rpm is amazing.

Another bonus of having a 'Superchip' installed is a much smoother and even idle speed. In fact now the motor simply feeds heaps better all-round. From tick-over to red line the desmo Ducati lump puts out smooth, seamless grunt. The extra urge is most noticeable whilst blasting past lines of cars at around 60-70mph. Leave the bike in top gear and before you know it, a tweak of the light throttle has you quickly and safely past them in an instant.



MOT time held no worries, but the huge standard silencer was commented on by the tester and sure enough if you banged it with your hand, loose and broken baffles could be heard rattling about inside its voluminous depths. The modified Ducati race can that I had kicking around the garage was also blowing itself apart and was far too noisy anyway, so the search was on for an aftermarket performance slip on can that would breathe well enough without upsetting the neighbours.

Not surprisingly for a relatively rare bike like the 900ie only a few aftermarket silencers are available off the shelf, and so I decided to take the bike back round to Smiler Racing for a chat. Dale suggested using stainless steel for the silencer and baffles, as neither carbon fibre nor alloy would

STAFF BIKES

stand up to the power pulses of the vee twin and besides, an errant rock chucked up by the back wheel could punch a hole through lighter material without too much trouble.

Then the problem of power without noise was tackled. Dale came up with an answer to both with a design for a trick 2-1-2 system. This allows the gasses to escape freely through twin silencers but the baffle area is actually increased keeping the decibels down to an acceptable level. A week later the Cagiva was ready to pick up and to say I'm pleased with the results is an understatement.

The superb finish on the twin stainless steel cans and pipework has to be seen to be believed. Both pipes are mounted on the right, one below the other, and sound as good as they look. The glorious boom on the over-run sounds just like Foggy's works Ducati and surprisingly both cans weigh considerably less than the huge stock item, all for less than 250 quid which is almost half the price of a Cagiva pipe.

So with the bike running and sounding better than ever it was time to attend to the cosmetics. The paintwork on the tank and side panels was beginning to look a bit tatty and a mate of mine who works for a professional bodyshop came to the rescue. Steve rubbed the panels down to the plastic,



Hand-made twin stainless silencers make the Ele stand out from the crowd!



The old and the new, or rather the old and the even older, because Crasher has now sold the editorial Elephant and bought himself an ex-Dakar 650cc Africa Twin

applied a special flexible isolator primer and sprayed it all in 'two pack' before curing everything in a warm oven.

With the original 'Lucky Explorer' graphics almost impossible to get hold of, I contacted a local sign makers (Mark at Waveney signs 01493 440868) who charged a very reasonable £25 to replicate the elusive side panel tank logos in long lasting, UV-resistant vinyl. Finally to give the bike a finishing touch I replaced the rusty fairing fasteners with some tasty looking stainless steel button head screws. Unlike expensive trendy alloy bolts which corrode and can't be used in high stress applications these stainless jobbies will last for years and cost me less than a fiver from local fastener suppliers (Hubbles 01493 440261).

Having invested a load of time and money getting the Ele just to my liking, any sane person would've hung onto the thing - but, er... not me. The Ele has now been sold to make space in my garage for the next project, an original Honda France, HRC-built, 650 Africa Twin. These bikes were built in small numbers and sold to budding privateers to enter the Marathon Class in the Paris-Dakar Rally. I'm not quite sure what I've bought yet, but all will be revealed in the next instalment of Staff Bikes...



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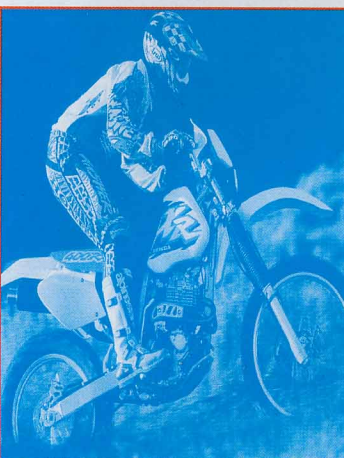
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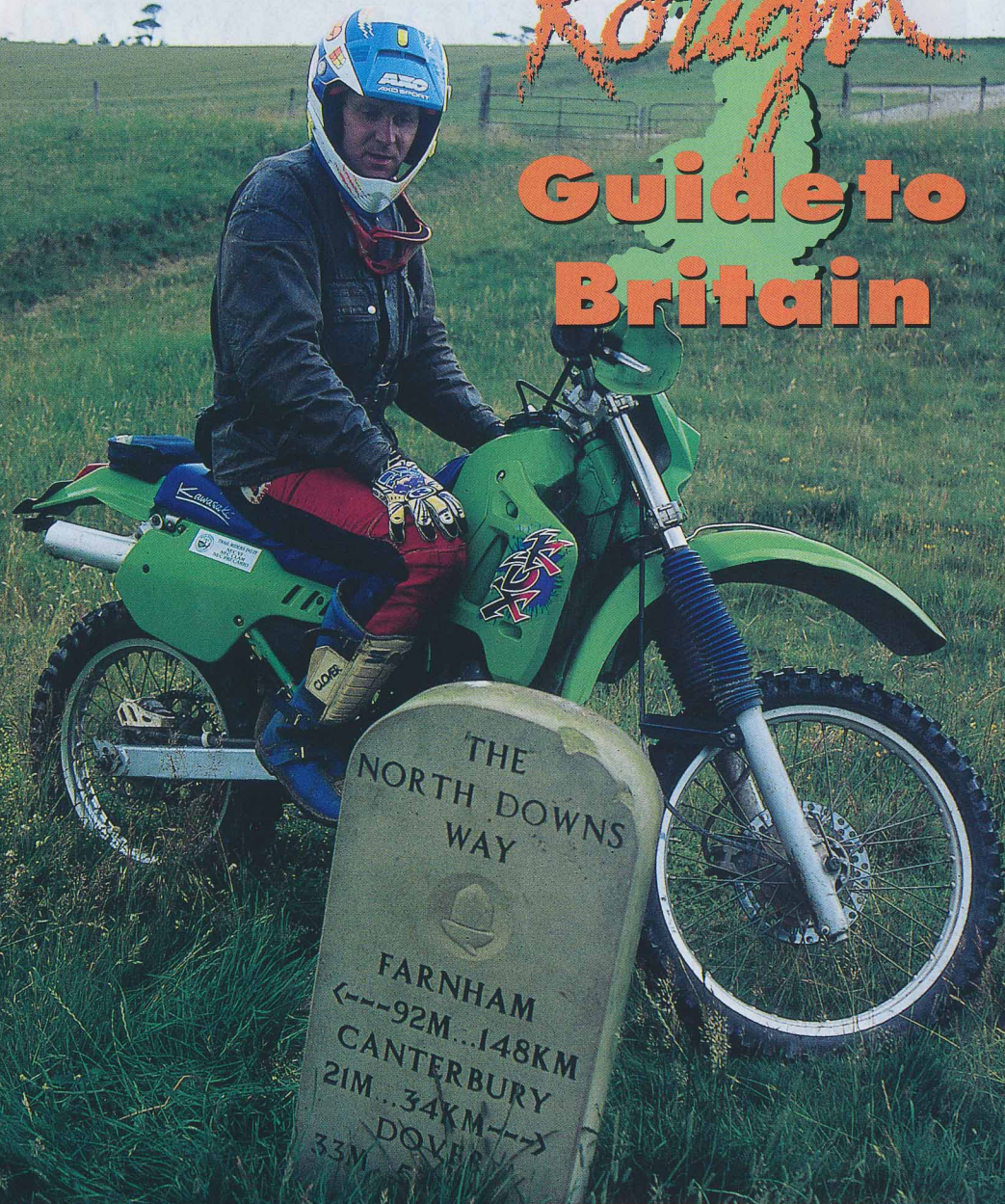
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ACCESS

The county of Kent offers a wealth of interesting trails to the adventurous rider. Steve Neville is your guide to the 'garden of England'.

The Rough Guide to Britain



Steve Neville

OS map 189



Kent is divided from west to east by the curve of the North Downs, a chalk ridge which extends from south-west London to the coast at Dover. Bisecting this ridge are Kent's two main rivers - the Medway and the Stour - which since the last ice age have cut deep valleys into the chalky hillside. To the south of the downs the geology is clay, extending into the Kentish Weald - a lowland basin (whose lanes are characteristically wet and boggy in the winter); while running along the top of this ridge is a road which for centuries has been used to transport people and goods when the lower valley roads were too wet. This ancient route forms the axis of our Rough Guide to Kent, and goes by its medieval name of the Pilgrims Way.

Today, much of the of Kent's natural vegetation has been lost to modern development and the ancient Wealden forests have long since disappeared. Even so, the county remains rich in woodland and parkland. The Downs are treeless but grassy, due to sheep grazing, while irregularly shaped fields and straggling hedgerows characterise the lowlands - many of these marking historic boundaries and enclosures. Sadly, since the end of the Second World War, Kent has also

lost many of its ancient hedgerows to modern agricultural methods and so-called improvement (sic) assisted by government grants. However, the tide is now turning, money is becoming available through environmental initiatives to replace them again, and there is some evidence of re-hedging on parts of this route.

The current day population of Kent is about 1.5 million people, but don't worry you won't meet many of them on this ride. In fact the lanes in Kent are possibly amongst the best in southern England. Certainly from the fact that most of them are classified as byways open to all traffic (silly term, I prefer just byway) rather than roads used as public paths which require reclassification or dual status UCR/bridleways with all the attendant hassle (but that's another story).

Incidentally, the Pilgrims Way starts in Winchester in Hampshire, but today many parts are tarred country lanes and its not until you get into Kent that there is a reasonable amount of byway. The North Downs Way, opened in 1978, is a long distance path which starts in Farnham and finishes both in Folkestone and Dover. Whilst some of its route follows the Pilgrims Way, much

The Rough Guide to Britain



of it is only footpath or bridleway and hence only open to walkers or horses. The Pilgrims Way byway tends to fizzle out at Westwell and become a footpath, and the remainder of the route to Canterbury is surfaced road.

Our rough guide starts in the village of Harrietsham. You will need OS map 189 (Ashford and Romney Marsh), and you can pick up the Pilgrims Way by turning off the A20, taking the road on the left under the railway bridge and riding north. Join the Pilgrims Way at (892,532) and ride east, following the byway markers. The route is fairly obvious for the first five miles, but when you get to Charing Hill, cross the A252 by turning left up the hill and immediately right down a narrow road, and continue for about a mile until you get to Burnt House Farm. At this point the Pilgrims Way separates from our route and continues east. We want to take the byway uphill along the sunken lane. This adds some excitement due to the gradient plus numerous bits of rock, wood and mud. When the byway levels out, on your right you may be rewarded by the sight of a glider taking off from Challock

aerodrome. Continue past the end of the byway, bearing left up the road until you get back to the A252. Turn right and then left 200m down the road. Now turn right onto the B2077 and when you see a wood on your right, turn up the byway on the right.

At the end of this byway, cross the A251 and follow the narrow road for 100m. Turn left at the minor triangular junction and follow the road - the surface will gradually degrade until you join the next byway. When you arrive past Howlett's Farm, turn left up the road and ride for about three miles to Shottenden. Turn right at the first cross-roads and continue for 100m keeping an eye out for the byway sign on the left. This lane twists and turns and takes you out onto the A252 again. At the A252 turn left and then right after 300m up into Dane Street and the byway. Here we climb to meet the junction of another byway which was subject to a traffic regulation order (TRO) in the 1970s. For many years the council had the TRO sign placed across the byway, making this lane a cul-de-sac. Research by the

TRF showed this to be in error and we had the council move the sign and gate to its correct place. The documentation as to the reason why this was put on in the first place has been lost, and one of these days we will have all permanent TROs reviewed and hopefully removed.

Fortunately you can now follow the byway down the hill to its end. So, continue towards Mountain Street and Chilham joining the A28 for a short while. Look for a minor road on the right leading to a level-crossing at Bagham. Cross the railway and join the byway at (092,538) following it south as it turns into a RuPP. Eventually you will rejoin the A28, and at this point there is a choice. You can cut the ride short, returning towards London via the A20 or, if you've not yet had enough, you can continue the ride as there are a whole group of byways centred on (080,470) to explore.

These are the Crundale Downs, and since they form part of a Kent County Council circular ride and are

mentioned in numerous ramblers guides they are perhaps best avoided on dry summer Sundays - unless you enjoy continually meeting walkers and horses. To the south and east there are several interesting byways worth looking at near Hastingleigh and Bradbourne (shown on the OS map). Also there is an unadopted road with good historic vehicular evidence at (095,438) as it runs south east. Likewise, there is a good unclassified road near Hill Street at (120,453) running north towards Spong Farm.

Having exhausted this group of lanes, ride generally south west around Ashford towards Bromley Green at (990,370), and to the west of here you will note another cluster of byways. These are the infamous Shadoxhurst lanes. Being forestry land and also of low-lying clay these can get seriously muddy, and unlike the Crundale byways, the lanes are hardly ever used by walkers. Also note that there is an unclassified road (the black dashed line) at (963,352) which can be added to the list of lanes definitely worth riding.



The Rough Guide to Britain



Once you have extracted yourself from this lot you will probably need to recover. So head north towards another byway running north from Hancock's Farm at (963,388). At this point it is once again possible to cut off north west via the minor roads to the A20 and return towards London if that's your base. Alternatively there are four or five more byways that can be taken in around Pluckley, as you return towards Harrietsham. Finally, it is possible to rejoin the Pilgrims Way at Harrietsham and travel west on a mixture of byways and minor roads; all are part of the Pilgrims Way, driven over many centuries by travellers going to and from London and eventually to the west of England. Have fun out there.

Steve Neville is currently National Rights of Way Officer for the TRF and has been a member since 1980. He has been involved in RoW issues since the mid Eighties and has a passion for explor-

ing old roads where few people tread. He is also concerned about the preservation of our heritage of green lanes and firmly believes that the real threats to the countryside come from commercial and agricultural interests rather than motorised recreation.



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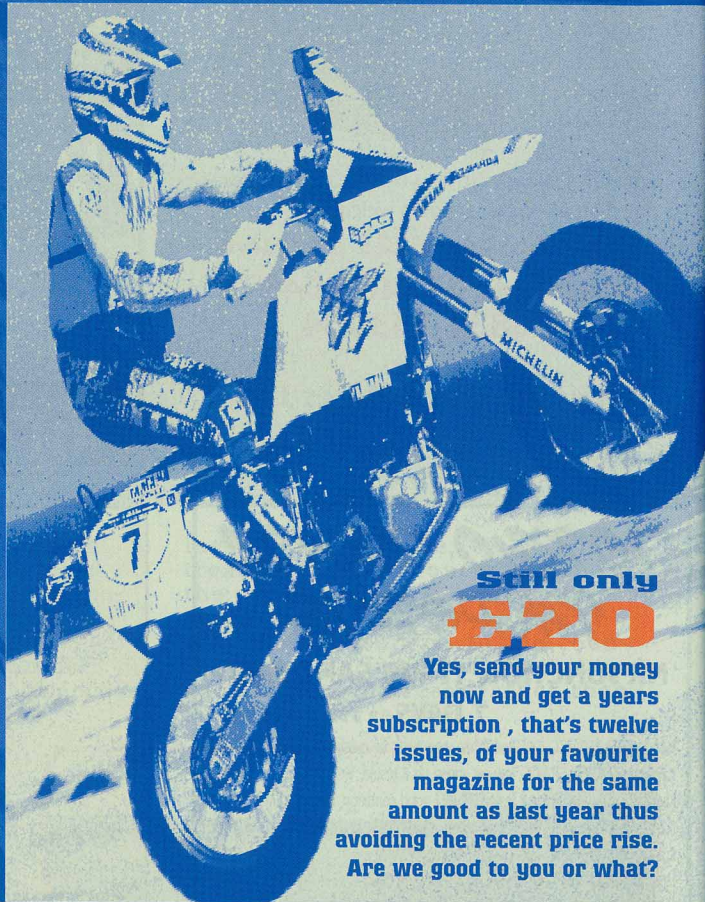
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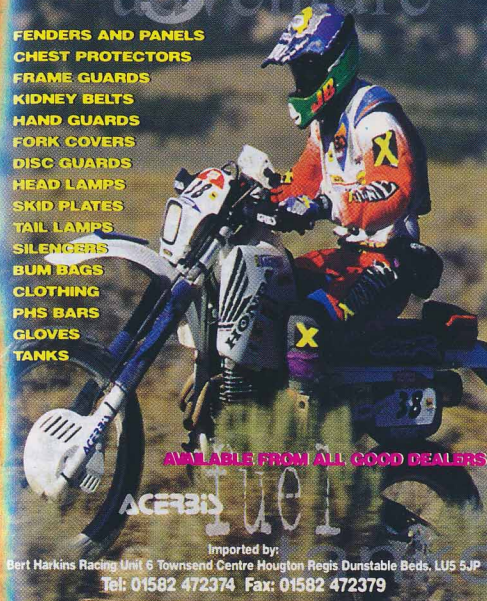
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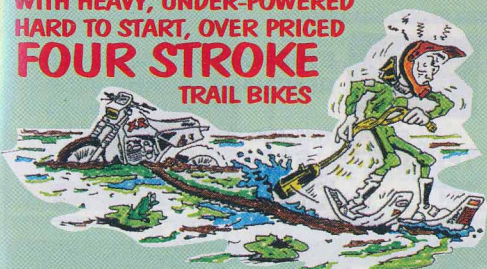


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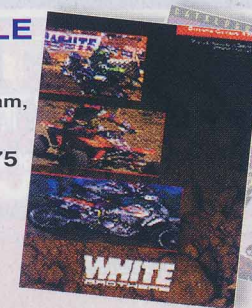
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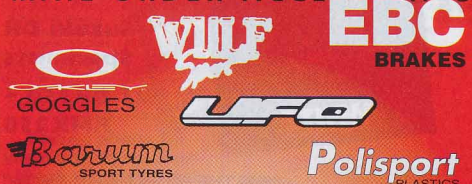
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WANTED

Wanted Yamaha DT175 1974-78 twin shock, original iff poss, must be runner or been stood under cover, also wanted KMX125 frame for G-reg bike, also wanted XL250S or KL250 1979-80, or TS250, will-travel for right bike. Tel 6-7pm 01325 461029 (Co Durham)

Wanted w/shop manual for KLR650 (1990), must be cheap. Tel Tony on 01254 233389 (Lancs)

Wanted Xr200 engine, must be in good working order and complete. Tel Chris (eves) on 01772 633276 (Lancs)

Wanted luggage rack for Yamaha XT250 and any info (road tests, sales brochures etc) on Yamaha IT465. Tel David on 01904 490764 (Yorks)

Wanted original Suzuki plastic fuel tank and fitting for DR350 enduro plus h/light for same, would also be interested in any other bits, cash waiting. Tel 01702 343169 (Essex)

Wanted Honda XR, Kawasaki KDX between 250-500cc, priced between £500-1000, must be clean and in good cond. Tel 01592 652504 (Fife)

Wanted Micron exhaust for Yamaha XT350, also f/r wheels c/w spindle & bearings, must be reasonable cond. Tel Charlie on 01243 264049 (W Sussex)

Wanted any info about slotting an XT350 motor into YZ250 MX rolling chassis, any help much appreciated. Tel Mark (eves only) on 01495 244337 (Gwent)

Wanted KMX125 frame, must be in one piece (I've snapped mine!), also wanted Yamaha DT175 1975-79, twin shock, scruffy or in need of resto, as long as it's in one piece. Tel 01325 461029 (Co Durham)

Wanted Honda XL350 K1 parts, bashplate with fittings, fork springs or maybe complete bent forks, seat cover, sales leaflets, anything useful purchased. Tel 01803 529958 (Devon)

Wanted Honda XL500 hop-up kit, cam/piston w/h/y, also wanted good rear shocks, Ohlins, WP etc and TLS brake plate complete from early XL500R or even complete front fork assy. John Leon 41 Rubens Road, Northolt, Middx, UB5 5JJ

Wanted MX gear from early 80s, pants 30-32, tops medium-large, helmet full-face medium, Japanese or European, must be good nick. Tel Victor on 0171 485 4977 (London)

Wanted Suzuki DR350S frame pref with log book, will consider whole bike. N Rosling, 50 Cedar Ave, Long Eaton, Nottingham, NG10 3JQ

Wanted info, manuals, sales brochures etc on pre-74 CZ & Husky scramble models, may be interested in part or complete bikes. Tel Rob after 6pm on 01473 721953 (Suffolk)

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Wanted Yamaha XT225 Serow, must be in good cond, late model pref. Tel 0114 2480954 (Sheffield)

Wanted Suzuki DR750 engine, 1988 model, must be good cond. Tel Dave on 01481 716898 (Guernsey)

Wanted Yamaha XT350 frame with log book to replace damaged original, whole bike considered if cheap enough, but must have V5 and be straight. Tel John on 01933 679195 (Northants)

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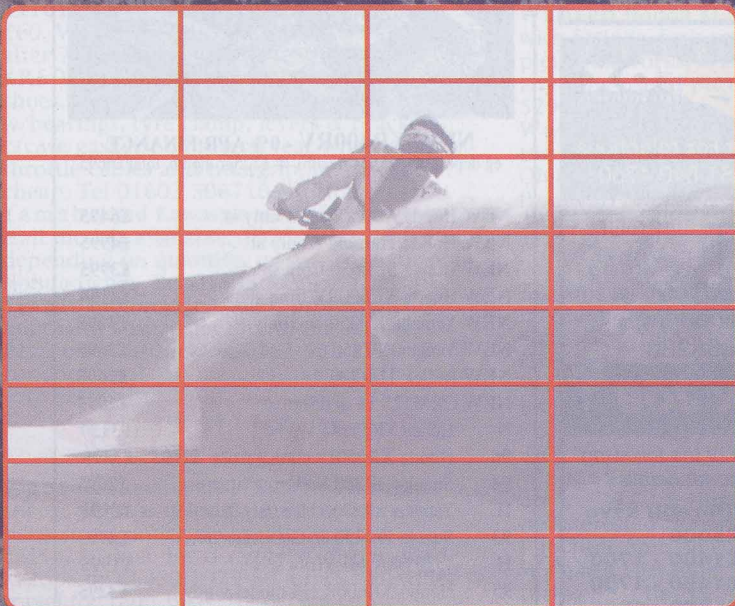
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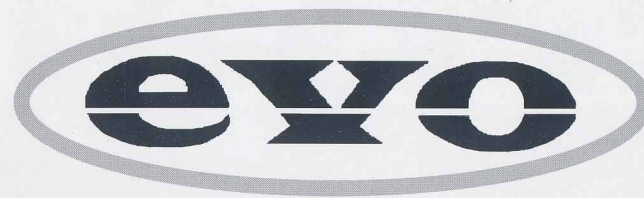
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