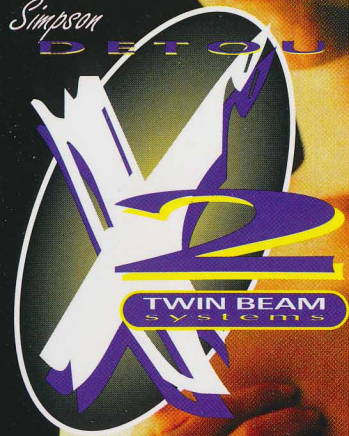


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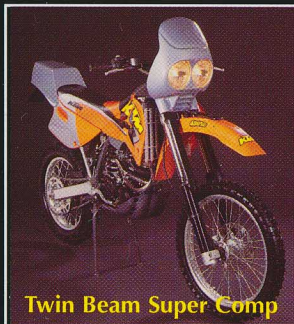
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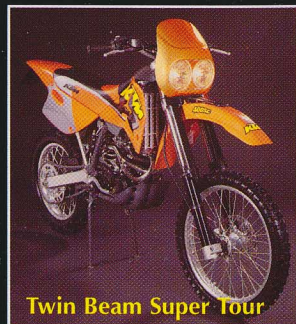
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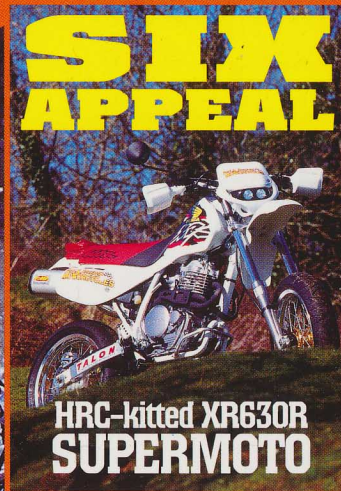


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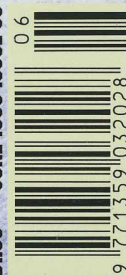
- **ON THE TRAIL OF THE LAW**
Is your dirt bike road legal?
- **RIGHTS OF PASSAGE**
Are RuPPs Green Lanes?
- **STAFF BIKES**
Has Si bought a pup,
and is Blez trying
to sell an old dog?

EXCLUSIVE

**KTM
640LC4**

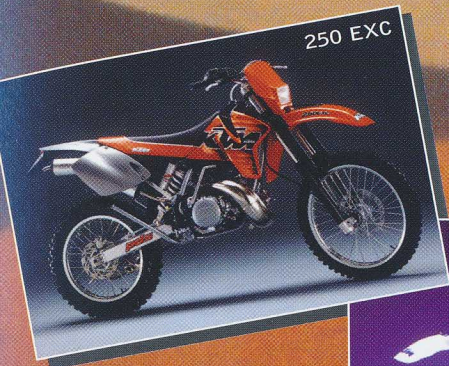
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had a reader phone me the other day wanting to know which make of riding boots we recommended? He said he wanted something good and hardwearing, as his present boots were nearing the end of their lifespan. I asked him what boots he currently owned and he said a 25 year old pair of Ashmans!

Now don't get me wrong, I know that not everybody has the money to splash out on a new pair of boots every few years, but to make them last for 25 years - surely that's taking things a little too far? So I got to thinking about this subject a little more deeply, discussed it with one or two friends and we all came to the same conclusion. Why do we do this sport? After all, nobody needs a dirt bike. We could all live our lives perfectly well without one, but we don't choose to. Let's face it, bikes and the bits that go with them are pricey indulgences, but we spend our money on them because they give us pleasure and hey... it's our choice after all.

In other words we indulge ourselves, spend a bit of dosh, accept that we've only got one life and live it to the full. I'm not advocating rampant consumerism for the sake of it, but on the other hand, the reason we are able to read about wonderful new bits of kit at all is because commerce has enabled forward thinking manufacturers to spend money on R&D to develop new products rather than simply churning out the same old stuff for years on end.

Of course commerce requires a buoyant economy and enough customers willing to part with their money on new and improved products, but in the end it also leads to better, more efficient and ultimately cheaper goods. No off road motorcycle produced 25 years ago could hold a candle to today's superior equipment, and likewise clothing and accessories (such as boots) have developed considerably (especially in terms of safety) during the past quarter century.

Fashions and styling change also. We don't all walk round in sack-cloth with rope around our middle, likewise, we all know that Millets make jeans (or used to), that cost half the price of Levis, so how come people still buy Levis? Because they have a choice that's why.

So there you are. I'm not trying to say you can't enjoy this sport on a budget with an old bike and secondhand kit because I know you can. What I'm trying to say is that if you can afford to indulge in your passion then go for it. Breathe some extra life into the industry, support your sport and it'll support you. And hell, make the most of enjoying all the funky new bits and pieces out there. And remember... were it not for the fact that you and I choose to spend our money on new stuff, we'd all of us be walking around in 25 year old Ashmans and riding twin shock CZs. Get my drift?

Si Melber

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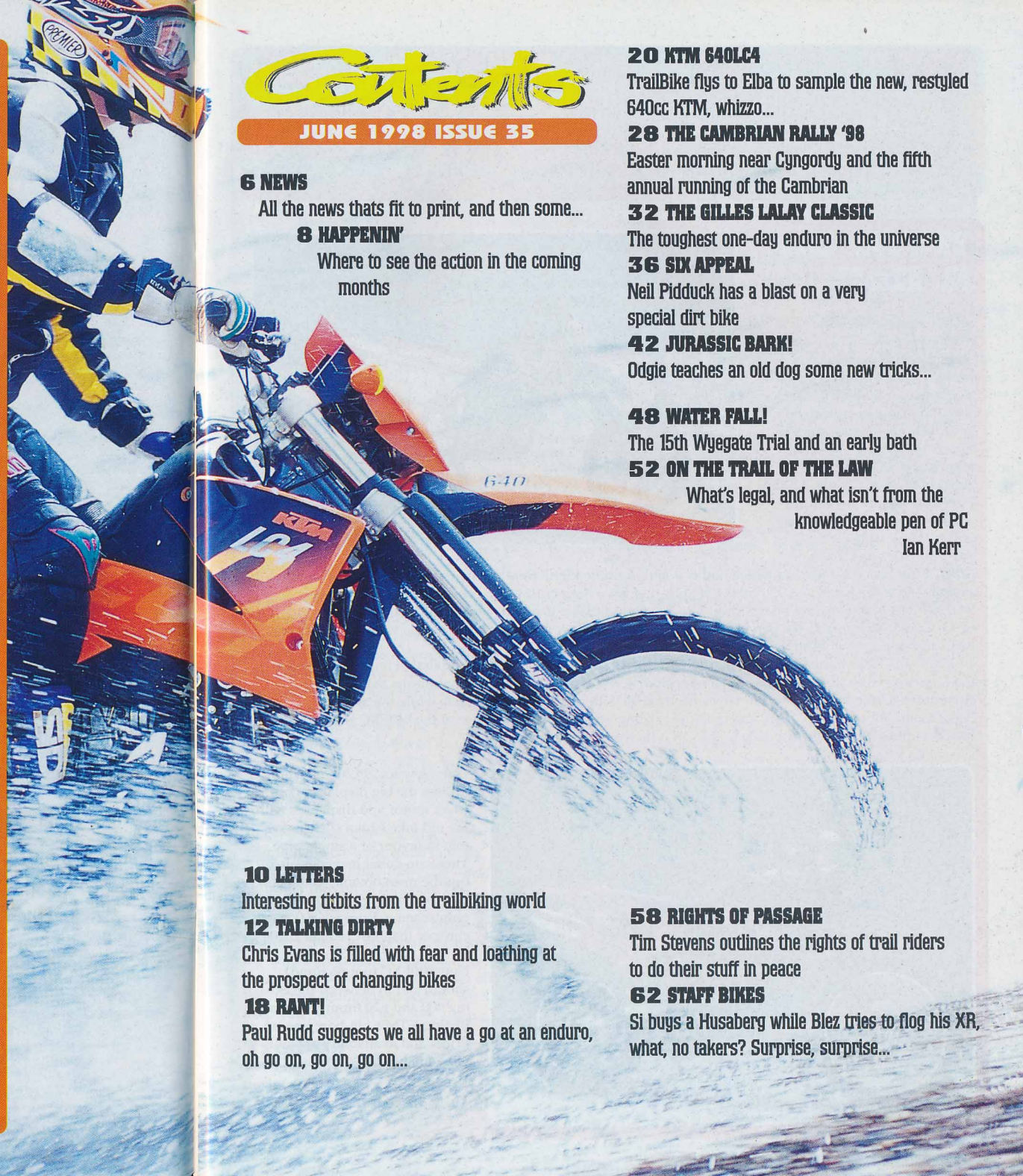
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KTM On A Roll

KTM's aggressive worldwide marketing policy looks set to continue with the launch of a number of new models, as well as a price cut in the UK. The Austrian company which is spearheading a renaissance in European dirt bike sales, has launched a 620cc factory SuperMoto based on the 620SC (SuperCompetition) enduro; together with a revised 640cc Adventure (called the Adventure-R), and a new

640LC4 trailbike (first test elsewhere in this issue). A limited (and final) edition of the Duke will also be available in 640cc form, and 75 of the 400 units that have been built will be coming to the UK. A new 540EXC four-stroke enduro bike is shortly to become available to slot in between the existing 400cc and 620cc models so filling in the gap in its range that KTM believe exists for those people wanting a high performance thumper without needing all the power offered by the 620.

Here in the UK, volume sales together with the significant effects of cut price parallel imports, have led the importers to slash their prices on all new models with immediate effect. That means that the new Adventure-R will undercut its old namesake by £800 with a retail price of £6200, while the new 620 SuperMoto will cost £5200 (£400 less than the existing SuperComp). The price of the 540EXC is yet to be finalised, but will only be available in the UK if there is sufficient demand.

620cc Supermoto features wide 17" rims, sticky Pirelli rubber, and a huge floating front disc lifted straight off the Duke. Acerbis BrushGuards come as standard, as do indicators, but the SM is available in kick start form only, priced at £5200.



Left: New for '98 Adventure-R utilises the big displacement 640cc motor and dispenses with the old bike's twin silencer system in favour of a single pipe. There are detail revisions also, but the most obvious is the new two tone blue & orange paintscheme. Price is £800 cheaper than last year, at £6200.

New 540EXC (not pictured) should slot in between the existing 400 and 620 thumpers completing KTM's big-bore line-up. Prices and availability are still to be finalised.

Snippets

Bumper Thumpers

In the wake of the interest generated by the new Yamaha 400cc thumper, a number of European factories are known to be developing new super-powerful, lightweight four-strokes for release within the next 12 months:

- TM are poised to burst onto the four-stroke scene with the launch of a 250cc enduro bike at the end of this year. Details of the new machine are still sketchy, but TM importer Nick Craigie has confirmed that a prototype of the four-stroke which utilises the new perimeter chassis is currently up and running at the factory in Italy. The 250cc engine which has been designed and built in-house by two ex-Ferrari engineers (to tackle the new quarter-litre thumper class in world enduros), will almost certainly be fuel injected and be followed by a 400cc version early next year.

- Husqvarna are reported to have a new four stroke (complete with oil pump and electric starter) on the bench possibly for fitment into an aluminium perimeter chassis. **Husaberg** too are developing a new small (250cc?) unit which will be housed in a compact new chassis and equipped with the latest PDS rear suspension a la KTM. Meanwhile KTM themselves are known to be developing a new twin cam motor in 440cc (off road) and 540cc (road) form which sources close to KTM claim will be lighter and much more powerful than anything currently on the market.

- US Mountain bike manufacturer **Cannondale** has confirmed that it's building a new four-stroke dirt bike for launch at the end of this year. Few details were available as we went to press, except to say that the bike will be trendsetting in appearance (in keeping with Cannondale's image), as well as lighter and more powerful than all the current thumpers available. We'll keep you posted on this one...

Trod-On

- A temporary reprieve has reopened the infamous Monks Trod in Wales to trail riders for a further two years after

much campaigning by the Rhyader Motor Club. This means that the historic carriageway is once again navigable by responsible two-wheeled traffic between 15 March and 31 October, with the proviso that the Elan Valley Trust can cancel the agreement at any time if abuse is perceived. Rhyader Motor Club Chairman Mike Davies said: 'It is up to all users to ensure that their machines are road legal. Enforcement action will be taken against those who transgress.'

Ceramic Plates

- If you've got a problem with a chrome or Nikasil coated barrel which has seized or lost its coating then help is at hand. Word has reached the TBM office about a company called Langcourt who specialise in the repair and replating of worn or damaged aluminium cylinders, repaired using a super tough ceramic coating. Langcourt claim to be able to transform your barrel back to 'as-new' condition for a fraction of the cost of replacement, and pride themselves on a rapid turnaround time. So far they've attracted business from Team Yamaha, Suzuki and So-Cal Kawasaki, and if you want them to help you, give Ceri a call on 01934 612226 and tell her we sent you.

DBG? - Yes, yes, yes

- After a (ahem) slight delay, the much awaited Dirt Bike Guide is now definitely on sale up and down the country. If you're having difficulty getting hold of a copy, we have a few office copies for sale. You need to send us a self addressed A4 sized envelope along with postage stamps to the value of £4.50 (no cheques please), and we'll send you first class, a copy of the DBG (while stocks last).

- Kawasaki's ageing KMX125 has been given a new look for 98 thanks to two new paintchemes. Available in either Firecracker Red (pictured) or Lime Green and Purple, the price of the little learner legal trailie remains unchanged at £2750 plus delivery and OTR charges.



Death on the Rocks

Tragedy marred this year's Optic 2000 Rallye Tunisie after three competitors died from suspected heat exhaustion. The three rallyists (two French and a Belgian) had all apparently suffered from dehydration during a rally which was reportedly tougher than it's been for a number of years due to sweltering conditions in the Tunisian Sahara. The three competitors (one biker, one quad rider and a car driver) all died on the same day after temperatures had allegedly peaked at over 40°C the day before.

The deaths put a sour note on a usually enjoyable event which was won by Frenchman Richard Sainet on a factory supported KTM. Fabrizio Meoni claimed second, while Spaniard Jordi Arcarons took third place giving KTM a 1-2-3. Jean Brucy took the Schalber BMW F650 to fifth place while top British finisher was Dave Hammond who managed a creditable 19th overall, two places in front of rally stalwart Simon Pavey. Of the 14 Brits who started the event, seven failed to finish including TBM's own Andy 'Coke' Coker who was up to 13th place (and top Brit) when his 600 Husaberg expired on the penultimate day. (Full rally report next month including a look at the circumstances surrounding this year's tragedy).



Happenin'

LDT = Long Distance Trial End = Enduro 3ST = Three Stage Trial SM = SuperMoto RY = Rally
 (A) Round of the ACTC Championship (T) Round of 'The All England Supermoto Championship'
 (N) Round of the North of England Enduro Championship

Date	Organiser	Event/Location	Type	Contact
2/3rd May	Beacons	Beac Brit Champ	End	
3rd May	Woodbridge (ECent)	Tunstall Forest	End	Deb Harvey (01473) 610971
9/10th May	Ady Smith	Leek, Staff	End School	01283 813760 / 0370 954056
19th May	Jubilee	Taunton	LDT	
24th May	Caerleon & M.C.C.	Pencarreg Rally	RY	Gail Lucas (01989) 769191
24th May	Seaton Delaval DMC	Slaley Enduro	End (N)	Brian Eland (01207) 272228
25th May	M/sport for Women	Rhayader Wales	End School	M Walford (01323) 899958
30th/31st May	New Era Club	Cadwell Park	SM (T)	New Era Club (01920) 444205
7th June	Scot Borders EC	Craik Forest End	End (N)	Dougal Walker (01506) 500622
12th June	12hr end Hungary	Pannonia Ring	End	Brian Eland (01207) 272228
18/19 June	WTRA	Welsh 2-Day	End	Anne Kilvert (01686) 623183
21st June	Islwyn Club	Tour Of Islwyn	LDT	Trevor Ruck (01495) 2232272
27th/28th June	New Era Club	Pembrey	SM (T)	New Era Club (01920) 444205
27th/28th June	Selkirk	World 2 Day Enduro		
4th/5th July	Austria	Rachau Hill climb		
5th July	Dot Jones	Welsh treasure hunt		Dot Jones (01691) 791307
12th July	New Era Club	Croft	SM (T)	New Era Club (01920) 444205
19th July	North East EC	Kielder Enduro	End (N)	Ian Bell (0191) 4883137
25th July	New Era Club	Pembrey	SM	New Era Club (01920) 444205
26th July	Llangollen & DMC	Tour of Wales	End (N)	Jeremy Price (01978) 842142
16th Aug	BSSA	Compten Capar	3ST	Terry Bunn (01275) 839677

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HONDA CRM 3 1995 625 miles year TBC.....	£2800-00	HONDA CRM 250-2 1991 very tidy 6875 miles new seat.....	£2000-00
HONDA CRM 3 1995 625 miles as new.....	£3300-00	HONDA CRM 250-3 1994 VGC	£2750-00
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HONDA XL 250 Degree 1992 electric start 5000 miles.....	£1900-00	HONDA CRM 250-3 M Reg fmf pipe plus extras.....	£2900-00
HONDA XLV 750 5600 MILES	£1983 ETBC	HONDA XL 250 Degree e/s 1991 1125 miles only VGC.....	£1800-00
MOTO MARINI G Reg to clear	£1000-00	HONDA CRM 250 93 prospec/flatalide/reeds/very trick/quick.....	£2200-00
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SuperMonnier

Dear Si
After reading April's issue (TBM33) I was pleased to see that Husky Sport has been appointed official importers for Monnier-Honda. The craftsmanship and quality of these machines is first class and I can only live in hope that more of these bikes make it to our shores.

With the XR600s days numbered as a serious enduro tool now that all these modern four strokes are lighter, more manageable and just as fast, the best place for the XR6 is on the road in Supermoto guise. Everyone who saw the Monnier XR6 supermoto at the Dirt Bike Show fell in love with it - myself included.

Not having the money to buy a Monnier, I set about building my own, and here it is - cheaper, but hopefully just as horny. The spec includes Akront rims, Talon hubs, ProLite disc, Harrison caliper, uprated master cylinder, braided hoses, Pirelli rubber, revised suspension settings, K+N filter and polished swing-arm and sump-guard. Hope you like it and I look forward to the XR600R feature coming soon.

Alan Craise
Glasgow



Build your own SuperMonnier - why not? Sure the stickers could have been glossier and harder wearing and seeing as you're so keen on having them why don't you pay for 'em as well

Cheers for the pics Alan, we reckon you've done a sound job on your XR - every bit as good as a Monnier. You won't have to wait long for the XR6 piece though because it's in this issue...

Sticker-Up

Dear Si
First of all top marks for an ace magazine but what happened to the so-called 'glossy stickers'? The stickers I got were no more than dull sticky back paper with printing on them! Sure they looked the dogs dangly bits on my CRM... until it rained - and the ink ran, then the paper turned to mush. I've had free stickers from lesser publications which have been a lot harder wearing, so why undermine your reputation with cheap and nasty give-aways? Sorry to have to moan because the mag's great, but they weren't up to it.

Neil Baxter
Lancs

Boy you're a hard one to please Neil. If someone gave you an apple in the street for free would you give it back to them if it wasn't shiny enough? Some people have got nothing better to do than to write into magazines to

complain. Sure the stickers could have been glossier and harder wearing and seeing as you're so keen on having them why don't you pay for 'em as well

- that'll be four and a half grand please... a cheque will do!

Louts Out

Dear editor
It is with great disappointment that I am writing this letter to you. My name is Paul James and I am clerk of the course for the Wyeate Trial held on Sunday 15 March by the West Glos and Dean Forest MCC (see elsewhere in this issue for a report - ed). Unfortunately around 12.15pm near to St Maughans Church Monmouth, two riders were asked to slow down by one of the local residents, to which their reply came by way of four letter abuse.

It has taken much time and persuasion to keep local people on side when organising an event like this, if only these idiots realised just what was involved: meetings with police, parish councillors, wildlife experts. It has personally cost me a weeks wages to do this job (I'm self employed as are other members of the club committee), and we've all taken time out from our work to help organise this event.

WE DO NOT WANT this kind of person to ride our trial, and I'm sure I speak for many other clubs that organise events like this. Although we don't yet know their names, the two riders involved know who they are, and if they have the bottle to write to me with their apology I shall pass them on to the resident concerned.

Any rider out there who feels the urge to behave like this in future events may rest assured that if your number is taken you will be banned from riding with this club, and your name will be sent to as many clubs as possible in the hope that they too feel strongly enough to enforce a ban

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

on idiots. Please TBM, help us to stamp out this loutish behaviour.

Paul James
Lydney Glos

Couldn't agree with you more Paul. It's a fantastic event the Wyeate (I know I've done it), and the sport can do without eejits like this.

The Tube

Dear Si
I know this may seem like a silly question, but why are trailbikes not fitted with tubeless tyres? I know that it's possible to fit tubeless tyres to spoked wheels because I've seen them fitted to trials bikes. The rims of these bikes have a flange or spine through which the spokes are hooked. Consider these advantages: bikes would be about 1kg lighter (and that's unsprung weight); tyre creep when riding with reduced pressure would no longer rip the valves out of tubes; compression punctures from sharp rocks would be less frequent; punctures could be repaired without removing the tyre or wheel even; you couldn't even nip the tube when changing tyres; and there would be further weight saving as you would no longer have to carry tyre levers, spanners and spare tubes. The only disadvantage that I can think of is that it might be difficult to locate punctures when on the trail.

Maurice Courcha
London

Erm... good question that. The straightforward answer is because nobody makes tubeless knobbies, but that doesn't really get to the root of the query, because if everyone used tube-

less rims, tyre manufacturers would undoubtedly make tyres for them for all sorts of applications. All modern trials bikes run tubeless rear tyres so sealing isn't a problem even with pressures as low as 4psi. In a faster environment such as on the trail or the road, it's just possible that a tubeless tyre could be rolled off the rim if the pressure was insufficient. Also it would need wheel rim manufacturers to retool for tubeless tyres (the rims are different shaped), but then again that's what happened in the road bike market so I guess it could happen in the trailbike one. Of course trailbikes like BMW's R1100GS use tubeless tyres, and Honda's Akront-shod XL600LM and the new SL230 we tested last month came with the flange-type rims to which you refer, but with both these designs, wheel strength is compromised slightly. Other than that I guess it's down to the conservative nature of the dirt biking industry which regards unnecessary change as... well, unnecessary. But perhaps someone out there knows better and can help shed some light on it?

Sandy? - Sure!

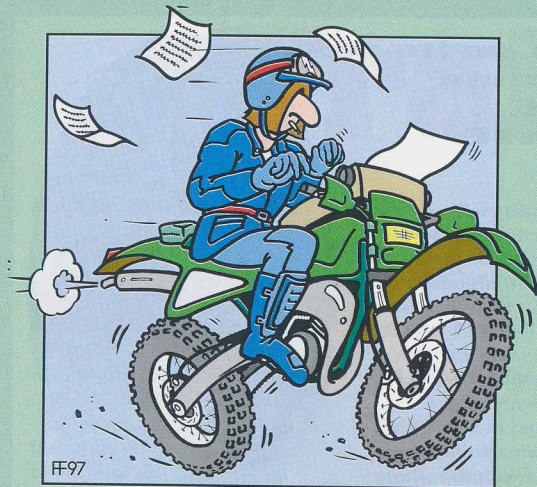
Dear Si
Reading Blez's enlightening MoT rant in the last issue I was delighted to discover about the lights and indicators clause. I was already aware that masking the front and rear lights supposedly rendered all switches etc 'invisible' to MoT examiners, but thought I might add to the collective knowledge by passing on a little tip on to you and your readers. Black and Decker make a handy little tool called a Powerfile (belt sander) for DIY use. As any handyman will know, this tool is perfect for



preparing frames or exhausts prior to painting, however I have also discovered that should you accidentally have this tool switched on when you are fitting a new set of knobbies to your bike, an accidental slip may cause your tyre sidewall to be superficially lightly sanded. If this sanding were to coincide with the lettering 'Not for Highway Service' or 'Motocross', it would probably save you a lot of explaining and embarrassment at your next MoT or roadside pull.

Oliver C
Exmouth

Ha ha ha... now Oliver we really couldn't be seen to be condoning that sort of behaviour could we? A black and Decker Powerfile you say, hmmm, well now I come to think of it my frame does need a bit of painting. By the way, strictly speaking you are supposed to cover up all the wiring and switches if you intend masking off the lights for your MoT, however for a fuller explanation about bike legality read the article in this month's issue entitled 'On the Trail of the Law' which explains everything you need to know.



TALKING *Dirty*

**Chris Evans
is filled with fear
and loathing at the
prospect of
changing bikes...**

I don't know if it's the arrival of spring, the '98 model launches, or the reluctant acceptance of the fact that my WR200 won't last forever, but I'm slowly coming round to the idea that I'm going to have to get another bike. For some of you out there in TBM reader land I know that this is an annual or even six monthly occurrence, that causes no anxiety whatsoever and often a considerable amount of anticipatory pleasure. For me however - failed consumer that I am - the decision to change bikes results in nothing but stress, sleepless nights and, more often than not, the wrong choice.

If you think I'm exaggerating, here's the proof. In 26 years of continual riding, I've

owned the grand total of just 11 motorcycles (though I've ridden hundreds). If I told you what they were, the nails that have passed through my garage, you'd be even more convinced of my purchasing ineptitude. What little remains of my tattered self-esteem prohibits me from listing them out for you, suffice to say that one of my better buys was a Gilera 50 'Tourer'!

More depressing still, my inability to purchase the 'right' bike has absolutely nothing to do with ignorance. Compulsive digester of motorcycle magazines that I am (I even used to purchase TBM before I wormed my way onto the free list), I could recite you virtually word for word, the findings of all the relevant road tests published since well before the advent of single shock suspension. In addition, thanks to my work as a bike hack and dirt bike guide, I've had the chance to cock a leg over almost every dirt bike known to man. No, if anything, my failure is rooted in a surplus of knowledge, and the terrifying monster that knowledge creates - choice.

The first is whether to buy new or secondhand. Here I can't speak with much experience as I've never had the privilege of being the first to fire up the bike of my dreams (or nightmares). In fact I confess I've never even bought secondhand from a dealer, and until recently was convinced that anybody who did so was wasting money. That was until my latest acquisition a WR200 bought privately, turned out to be stolen... and not yet recovered! I wondered why Yamaha had stamped the frame numbers on the wrong side of the headstock - the vendor informed me it was a special limited edition model (ha-ha).

Then there's the four-stroke versus two-stroke dilemma. I used to be a confirmed thumper man, but after two years with the WR (without doubt the nicest bike to date), I'm in a total quandary. My 200 is so light, so easy to start, and so much fun to ride that I can't help thinking that two-stroke's the way to go. On the other hand we live in an age of encroaching green legislation, and the new generation of lightweight four-strokes epitomised by the new Yam are supposed to be as nimble as any oil burner but with none of the drawbacks - like messy pre-mix and a range measured in yards rather than miles. Plus as a non-competition rider, less worried about efficiency than fun, I miss the way the torque power pours in on a big four-stroke single.

I know I will also agonise for days, if not months, about whether to go Japanese or

European. One thing I am sure of - the Japs sure know how to screw a solid motorcycle together. On my raids I've seen plenty of Euros go pop, but virtually no Japs. If reliability were the only consideration, this would be an easy choice to make. Unfortunately the Jap/Euro dilemma encompasses a whole load of other parameters. For a start European bikes look much tastier as well as purposeful, and have that 'cobby' race bike finish that something mass produced by the Big Four will never achieve.. Plus inevitably, while they're still running at least, they handle better and are generally more 'involving' to ride than their slightly aseptic Oriental cousins.

Which brings me neatly to what is perhaps the trickiest choice of all: 'balls out and hairy', or 'boring and sensible'. Let's face it we ride dirt bikes for fun, and a race bike (like an ex motocrosser with lights) is about as much fun as it gets. The trouble is that all that fun comes at a price. Just keeping the latest dirt missile in chains and tyres can turn even a reasonably healthy bank balance into something resembling Russia's economy in a matter of months. Plus you need to spend at least as much time fettling the thing as you do riding it. When you finally come to your senses and try and sell it you'll at last understand the true meaning of depreciation.

Financially the 'boring and sensible' option makes a lot more sense. Get yourself something that sips rather than swallows, preserves consumables rather than rooting them, and never needs any more than basic maintenance and you'll be surprised at how little it costs to run. On the other hand this could have something to do with the fact that your bike is so dull, you never actually take it out for a ride.

With all these imponderables the temptation is to take the coward's way out and simply rebuild the bike you already own, adding a few go-faster bits in the process to satisfy your consumerist urges. I actually did this to another bike I owned - a completely knackered DR350 enduro - and the thing was worse than when I started on it. It ran considerably worse, cost a fortune to rebuild and took for ever to finish. Definitely not the answer.

No, I'll simply have to bite the bullet, break open the piggy bank and flash the cash. In the six months it takes me to get up the courage however, I'll just give the WR a little strip down and top end rebuild, a lick of paint, polish up the plastic, renew the graphics..... and put off the inevitable a little bit longer.



NON-COMPETITIVE LONG DISTANCE OFF-ROADING IN FRANCE

RAID MORVAN 12/13/14 JUNE

Deep in rural France - just south of Auxerre - the Raid Morvan is ideal for those who want to cover big off-road distances. 180km per day combined with hilly, wooded country guarantees a challenging ride.

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RAID PAS DE CALAIS 27/28 JUNE

Run over an area reminiscent of the Wiltshire Downs, this raid offers a wide variety of trails from fast open tracks to narrow windy paths. Plus special routes for big trailies. "Highly recommended" - Bike Magazine.

£160 *

RAID NORMANDIE 24/25/26 JULY

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* easy ** average *** difficult

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new stuff



Size is Everything
Big One Honda CRM250 silencer - £58

At last a new product which not only meets a demand, but does so at a sensible price. Hands up all those CRM250 owners looking for an after-market tailpipe to replace the existing stock one? Well the budget priced Big One may prove to be just the ticket. Manufactured in Italy by Big One (part of the former Fresco concern), this slip-on alloy replacement is fully repackable, comes with a brushed aluminium finish, and

may well help liberate a few more ponies from your favourite steed. Although not strictly road legal (there's no BSI kitemark), at just £58 inc VAT, the Big One is sharply priced and available now through Trevor Pope Motorcycles on 01705 521111.

Light Guard

Cyrcra Racing combo - from £55

The latest combined enduro headlight and fork protectors (as sported by Paul Eddy and Team Suzuki in the US), are now available in the UK from Eurotek. Manufactured by Cyrcra Racing in the US, the one piece assembly is made from a toughened plastic with a 12V / 55W headlight lens and comes in two sizes: short (pictured) for inverted forks and long for conventionals. Prices are £55 and £75 respectively and both come in a choice of colours.

More details from Eurotek on 01765 608209.



Sit On It

Tecnosel XR6 seat & graphics - £42.30 & £35.25

Tecnosel, well known for their range of high quality replacement seat covers and decals, have just launched a new 98 style seat cover and graphics kit for the XR600R. Resplendent in red, white and black, the Tecnosel seat features their special non-slip seat top, while the high quality matching graphics includes decals for both tank panels, fender, airbox & swingarm. Available through all Tecnosel stockists or for more details contact Mito UK on 01202 741580.

Right Guard

Enduro Engineering Disc Guard

Take a look at any trick bike prepped for off roading in the USA and our guess is that it will have one of these fitted. It's a rear disc guard designed to protect the disc from assault by rocks, logs and even other bikes! Enduro Engineering's universal disc guard is manufactured from 4.4mm alloy plate and is designed to fit a range of dirt bikes including Honda CRs and XRs, Suzuki RMXs and DRs, Huskys, Huseys, and KTM's as well as the venerable KDX200. The disc guard bolts in place of your existing plastic guard using the two bolts provided, and should help protect your rear disc particularly if you regularly ride in rocky going. Details from Owen Sport on 01670 852384.



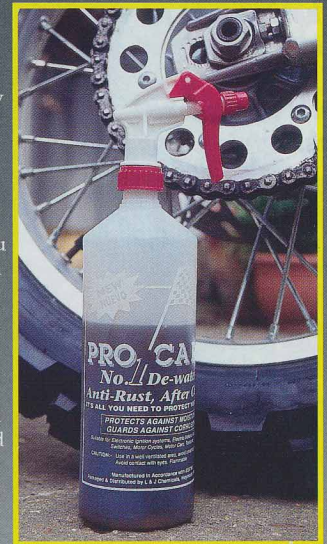
TESTED

Wash and Glow

Pro-Care fluid - £55

We bought this stuff from an off road shop more than a year ago and have been using it ever since. Basically Pro-Care is a water dispersant, anti-rust, afterclean fluid that you spray on your bike once you've jet washed the thing down. You know how once your bike dries it can end up looking a bit dull and matt (especially where it's scratched), while leaving pockets of water all over the engine casings. My bet is that very few people (myself included) ever bother to dry the bike down with a rag afterwards. That's where Pro-Care comes in. Once you've washed the thing, a quick squirt of Pro-Care displaces the water, protects against rust and corrosion (particularly where your frame paint is missing), and leaves your bike looking shiny and new again. Unlike products like WD40 which can leave an oily residue and which you mustn't get on your brakes, Pro-Care can be sprayed all over the bike (though its main use is on the engine and other metal parts), leaving it shiny and gleaming. A one litre bottle

costs £4.99 inc VAT and we simply decanted it into a cheap pump action spray gun bought from a large DIY store. That way you're not paying for costly propellant or roosting the ozone layer. So far one litre has lasted more than a year (which is probably a reflection on how often we wash our bikes). All the same, good value we reckon. Available nationwide from all Pro-Clean agents or by calling them direct on 01305 760707. **SM**



TRAIL TIPS

This month our trail tips concern a neat way to keep your hands warm and dry, an easier way to lube and adjust your chain, and a cheap but cheerful fairing made from a plastic box...

Roger Wood from London starts off our tips page this month with a neat idea to help chain lubing: To make it easier to direct the spray from a can of chain lube, remove the little plastic spray tube which comes with the can and heat the tube with a cigarette lighter about 10mm from the far end. When it's warm, put a 45-90° bend in it and this will help you to better direct the spray of oil. If you don't find it helps, simply cut off the new bend and go back to a straight tube. Cheers Roger we like that one, but we'd probably add that if you carry a tin of chain lube with you in your bumbag for use out on the trail, shorten the tube to just 25-30mm long so that it fits neatly under the cap where it won't get lost.

Steve Hill from Leicestershire suggested this tip on the phone to us the other day: When it's really lashing down or particularly cold, pick up a pair of plastic diesel gloves which they dispense free at most garages, and wear them under your riding gloves. They provide added insulation and best of all your hands stay dry whatever the weather. Thanks Steve.

Now here's a tip from the TBM crew: If your dirt bike has snail-cam chain adjusters on the rear axle for tensioning the chain, weld the one which the axle slips through first (ie the one furthest away from the end with the axle nut), to the axle bolt-head itself. That way you only need carry one spanner to remove the rear wheel when out on the trail, as the other end of the axle is kept captive by the snail-cam adjuster and won't spin as you begin to undo the nut at the other end. We've done this on a number of our bikes and it works a treat.

Here's a neat trick for a cheap and

cheerful mini fairing in this case applied to an Armstrong MT500 by a mate of Blez's called Jeremy Clifton-Gould. This particular appendage (pictured) began life as a large tupperware biscuit tin, but a hacksaw put paid to that, and with a bit of shaping and filing plus the help of a few self-tapping screws it now provides (partial) protection from the elements. With a little bit of thought the box has been shaped so that it continues the line of the headlight surround, and doesn't block the view to the tip of the front mud-guard. What's more it's virtually unbreakable and cost only a couple of quid.

Finally we received this contribution from Simon Evans: Interested to read about Tim Marquis' tip in the April issue about replacing the fairing bolts with dzus fasteners for speedy removal. It's obvious that he lives in some rural idyll like Guernsey and not in SE London like me. I would therefore add but a single caveat to his words of wisdom - don't change all the bolts for quick release fasteners - leave at least one bolt firmly screwed home. I didn't and found that my quick release bodywork on my TDM was quickly released by some low-life scummy tree-leaf on a grab'n'run mission. Goodbye 300 quid's worth of bodywork in a few short seconds... Oops. Sorry about that Simon.

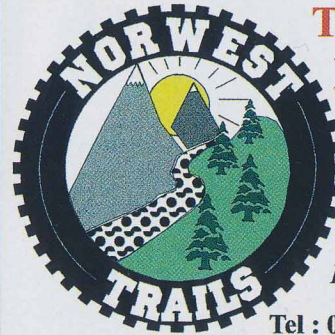
Neat Tupperware screen, but where do you keep your sarnies?



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.**

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RANT!

Reader Paul Rudd from Cumbria reckons that we should do more to encourage new riders to sample enduros, and suggests some sensible ideas.

These are his thoughts...

Pain, as does so many other things, comes in a variety of shapes and sizes. In this occasion it was in the shape of a small tree stump poking me in the ribs. The occasion was my last ever enduro.... before the next one, of course!

I should establish at this point in my narrative that I am a foundational rider, ie one who supports the rest of the field from a firmly established position at the bottom. Skill has never been my strong point, but I don't let it deter me. My enduro career spanned a few short years during the mid Eighties. It began with a rude awakening at an event in Derbyshire from which I retired after 1.5 painful laps and culminated in the aforementioned encounter with a tree stump.

In between I had DNF'd everything from Melville to Minehead.

During those years I rode many events most of which I remember as being hard. The most memorable event however was not so tough. In fact I came out of it with a treasured possession - a silver medal. That event was The Bush enduro, run by the North East Enduro Club. It was pitched squarely at the clubman with A and B classes and the course was rideable but not without its 'interesting bits'. The revelation I experienced in riding that event was tangible; the discovery that an enduro can also be enjoyable led to a discussion with champion rider Geraint Jones at the recent Dirt Bike Show over the virtue of running easy events for riders of modest ability.

For me though the aim continued to be achieving a finish. But all too often after 'legging' for miles through single muddy slots, heaving the bike out of interminable bogs, and scaring myself witless skiing (with both brakes locked on) down hideous downhills, the finish never actually came. That puts me in mind of the time when on a Scottish Borders Club event a few years ago, I decided that I'd had enough and should throw in the towel. I went off course to find the tarmac back to the start only to get horribly lost and find myself back at the start of the special test. I was about a mile from where I had left the course despite about five miles of detour through thick pine forest. My only option was to ride the test and the remaining half of the course as I couldn't go back against the traffic. When things go wrong they always go horribly wrong don't they?

Once or twice however I finished an event without houring out or disaster overtaking me (everybody else did), and the medals were just about worth dying for. At this point I would like to offer a word of thanks to all the clerks, officials and marshals of the various northern and Scottish clubs, who have furnished me and many others with so much in the way of good sport over the years. Special mention however must go to the Scottish Borders Enduro Club and the Cardrona Enduro. The Cardrona was a Scottish championship round which attracted the usual range of entries encompassing the full spectrum of riding abilities from Richard Hay down to the likes of me. Richard won by coming first, but I also won - a personal victory - by finishing. I circulated all day over the mixed but not overly hard terrain and enjoyed a close fought battle with a friend of mine on his first event. Despite crashing heavily on a forest road, my friend decided that if that is what enduros are about, he wanted more and has ordered a new bike in anticipation of the forthcoming season.

Our enjoyment of the event was shared by the many sportsmen and duffer grade clubmen all of whom seemed to have a thoroughly enjoyable time. And I am sure that although the experts weren't unduly taxed, everyone who paid their 20-odd quid got their money's worth. The fastest man still won and no doubt the slowest came last, but at least he was still there at the end. A special mention here for the indomitable septuagenarian Ian Bell who kept it going start to finish - an example to us all.

I would suggest that there is a place for more events such as these. By all means retain a fair proportion of tough events - we want to keep our top riders sharp - but not at the expense of the many who have tried an event only to retire after one lap crying 'never again'.

Okay, so some would say that ours is a tough sport and that if you don't like it you can lump it - maybe so. But then again if you wanted to take up rugby, you wouldn't begin by running out with Wigan. To make our sport strong we need full entries. In order to do that we need more riders, and the way to achieve that is to make the ride more enjoyable for those riders who are aptitudinally challenged. Let's not smack our first timers across the chops with a 'ohmyGodyougottabejokin' hill which he or she spends an hour dragging their bike up while experts use them for traction.

One way to alleviate the suffering among the unwary would be to grade events or courses like they do in climbing (of the rock and snow variety). A simple grading system acts as a broad guideline to aspiring newcomers or even seasoned professionals, so that while the weather conditions may vary depending on the season, the degree of difficulty remains (relatively) the same. In other words a grade three remains a grade three whether it is easy (on a nice sunny day), or treacherous (in blizzard conditions). The fact is that the base level of that particular climb is a grade three and you know what you are tackling.

By introducing a grading system we would help the unwitting trail rider avoid entering events like last year's Melville - and being lost to the sport for good. At best it would only be a rough guide, but surely it would be helpful nonetheless.

If you are a trail rider reading this and you fancy giving enduros a go - don't be put off. Try one, then another and another. I'm still trying after all these years and hey, one lap of a tough event can still be rewarding when reflected upon from the supreme comfort of nice a hot bath.

KTM 640LC4

Hard On!

With the launch of their restyled LC4 trailbike range, KTM have breathed new life into an existing model, extending its term until a whole new line of bikes (and engines) come on stream sometime just before the new millennium. TrailBike Magazine flew to Elba and were the only British journalists to ride the new 640cc KTM. This is what we found...

KTM have got a mission. It is their avowed intention to displace one of the Big Four Japanese motorcycle manufacturers from their previously unassailable position as top dogs. Not just in the UK or Europe, but worldwide. No mean feat given the task that's involved. But when you start to count up the number of new models they have launched recently, and discover their future plans, you begin to realise that the Austrian concern may well be acting out more than

just a pipe-dream.

Of course they aren't planning on doing it the Japanese way. As a European company that founded its reputation on competition dirt bikes, their philosophy differs somewhat from the Japanese manufacturers. KTM believe in imbuing all their motorcycles with a sporting pedigree; a 'hard' edge that sacrifices comfort and perhaps everyday practicalities to a performance-driven goal. Which is why the new LC4 is such a revelation for them.

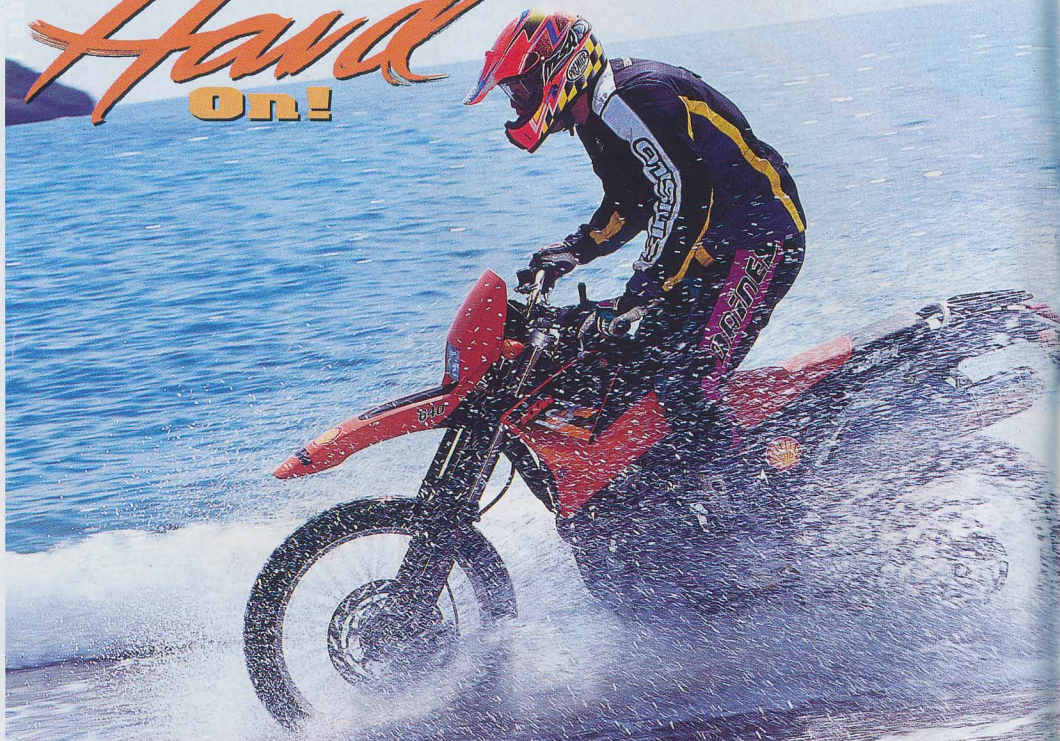
Talk to any KTM employee and they use the term 'hard' as if it were the company's name. In Germanic speaking countries the term 'hard enduro' or simply 'hard' implies a no-compromise motorcycle designed for performance above all other considerations (enduro simply means off road or dual sport in this context). This philosophy percolates through every pore of all employees until it precipitates out into the atoms of each and every motorcycle they build. They are proud of the fact that when you ride a KTM you physically know about it.

But surely this philosophy doesn't sit too well with a company hoping to breach the fortified walls of Japanese domination? KTM know that while performance counts highly in customer's buying decisions when they come to purchase a new bike, it is not the be all and end all. Which is why the new KTM LC4 is a bit of a milestone. It is a hybrid bike if you like, built around a 'hard' engine and chassis, but designed with a fresher, more practical and dare I say it, softer outlook.

And why not? This is the end of the Nineties for goodness sake we deserve something a little more stylish, which while still as practical, is a little less utilitarian than the stuff served up in the past. While it's not a perfect analogy, comparisons with the car world do bear close scrutiny. These days most 4x4s



Hard On!



Surf's up...

are about as far removed from early Land-Rovers and Willy's Jeeps as to be almost unrecognisable from their humble forebears. Customers want not only rugged ground covering ability, they also need everyday practicality as well.

The new LC4 640 picks up this concept and runs with it. Take a look at the lines - a little more stylish, more flowing than before, but still equally as practical (I know because for the sake of TBM integrity I felt it my moral duty to lob one, just to see how well it would stand up to regular abuse). The tank is smooth and shapely and there's a new (smoothed-in) locking petrol cap operated by the same key that works the steering lock and ignition (gasp). The panels and 'guards have a dash of styling about them, and heaven forbid, even the seat is a little more rounded and comfortable than any previous KTM perch. The instrument layout has been redesigned and incorporated into a simple dash. And there are body coloured indicators, stylish and functional mirrors, and a sexy looking tail lamp and rear rack. I had to pinch myself.

Before I get too carried away however, let's take stock for a moment and remember that what KTM are offering is only the equivalent of what the Japanese have dished up for the past few years -

practical and comfortable bikes. In a way KTM are playing catch up, and not before time. Also a cynic might say that the Austrian marque are all too aware that another European manufacturer known for their 'hard enduros' are shortly to launch their own softer version, in the form of the electric start Husqvarna TE610E. Which KTM acknowledge will undoubtedly provide the main opposition for the LC4 in Europe.

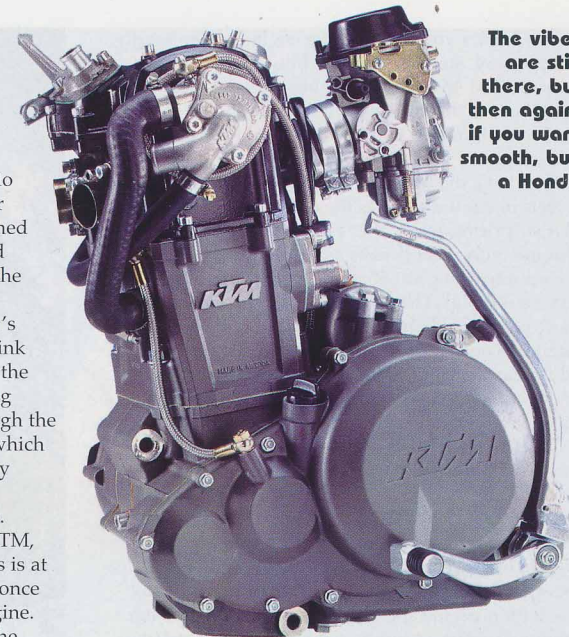
But so what? If KTM have come to this disposition a tad later than their opposition, then they certainly intend to outflank them, by taking the styling and concept one stage further if need be.

Moreover perhaps the biggest difference between a KTM and an equivalent Japanese machine - something like a KLX650 for example - is the fact that the KTM mill packs a wallop (and a vibe) that most Jap units would be hard pushed to match. The adoption of the 640cc engine (actually 625cc, up from 609cc), simply reinforces that. KTM are proudly claiming that their new 640 lump is: 'probably the most powerful one cylinder serial engine of the world'. Despite the broken English the point is clear enough - this is the unit which puts the 'hard' into hard enduro.

To achieve this claim, KTM have (unusually) kept the same sized 101mm piston, but increased the

stroke from 76-78mm and added a few detail changes along the way - the most important of which is a switch to Japanese made Mikuni carbs from the Dell'Ortos of old. Not only do these changes give the motor extra urge, but they are claimed to improve the torque spread and driveability throughout the rev range. But if you think they've improved this motor's reputation for vibeyness - think again. Like the 620 before it, the 640's beat has a groin-tingling tremor that reaches up through the bars, pegs and mirrors and which can be unnerving if your only point of reference is super-smooth, vibe-free Jap singles.

Despite protestations to KTM, they refuse to accept that this is at all unwanted, citing the fact once again that this is a 'hard' engine. Fair enough I s'pose, given the engine's level of performance, but I doubt for one minute that any Jap manufacturer would market a bike with that level of 'balance'. Of



The vibes are still there, but then again, if you want smooth, buy a Honda

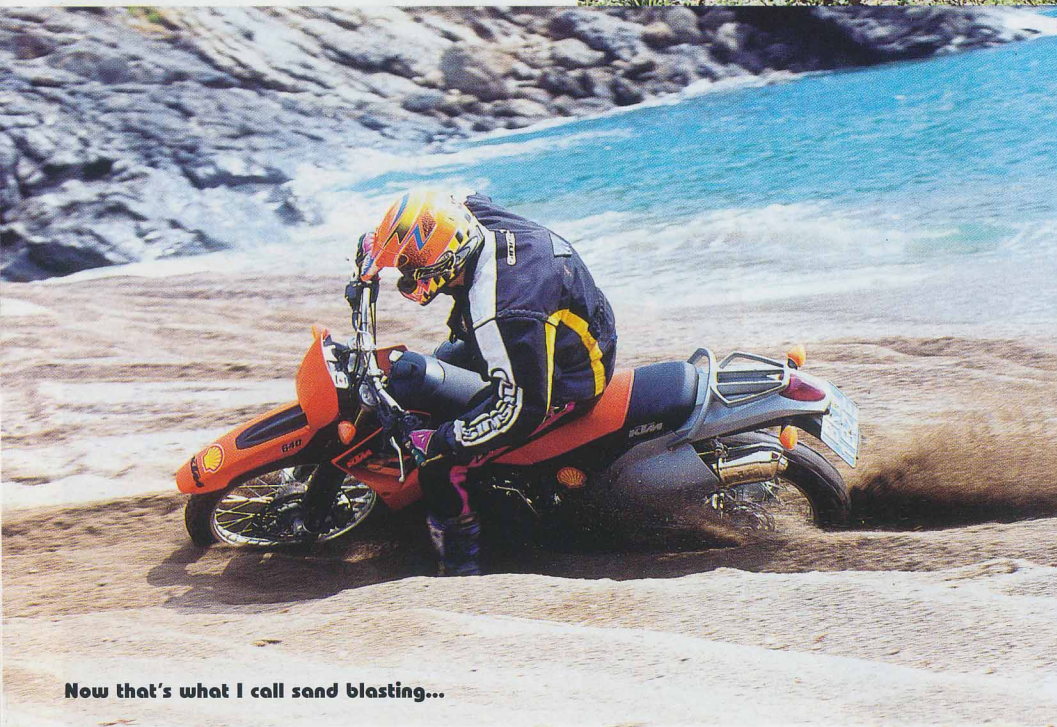
course that is the whole point. KTM want their bikes to feel tangibly different to a 'sanitised' Japanese powerplant. And of course it all depends upon your perspective



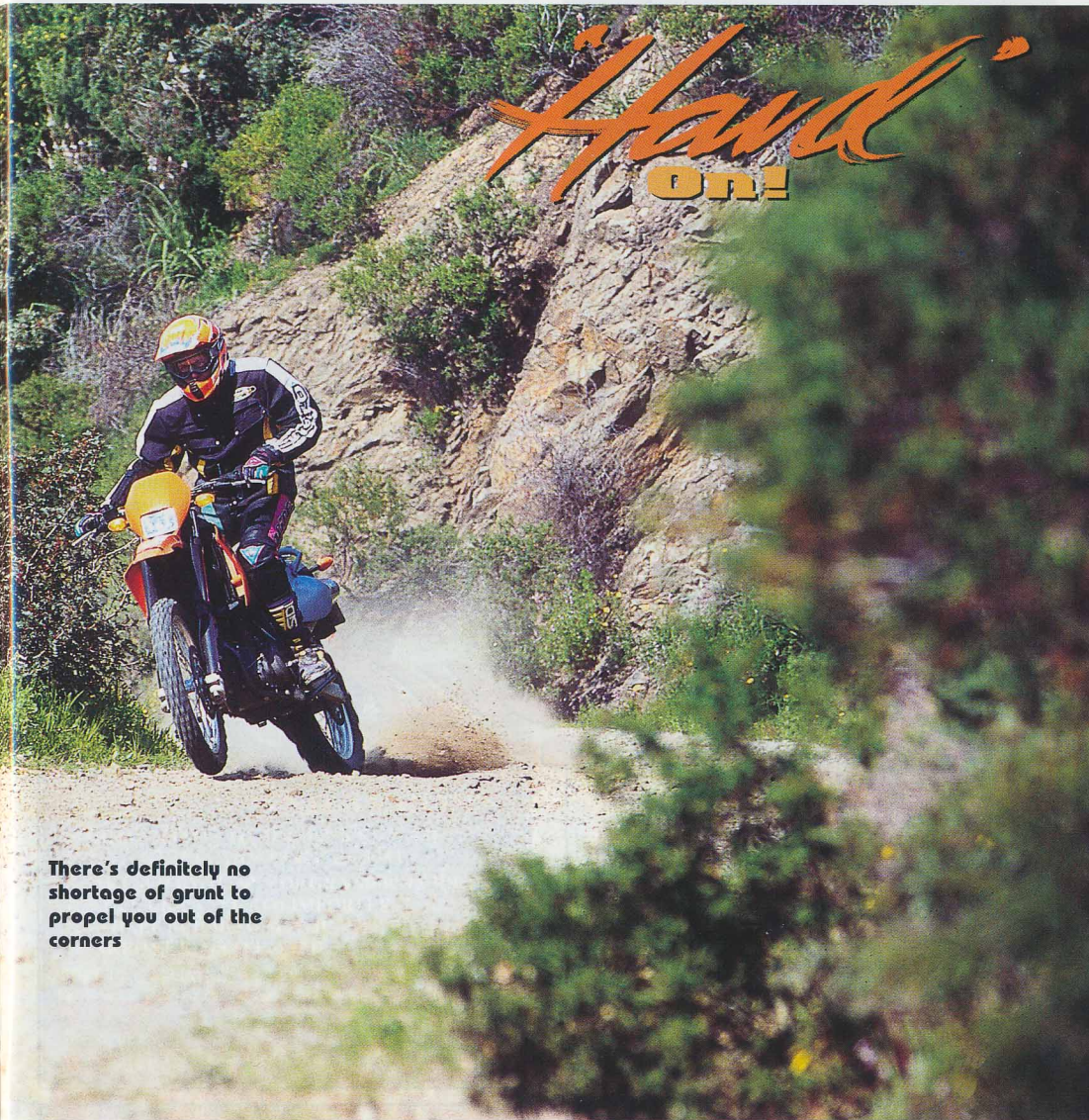
as to whether you consider the engine unnecessarily vibratory or simply 'characterfully' potent. In fairness to KTM, given a reasonable acquaintance with the bike it is almost certainly something that most owners will readily come to accept as little more than a feature rather than an annoyance.

So what's the bike like to ride? Well I have to say it feels much the same as the old 620EGS-E before it. Not surprising really after all it utilises the same chrome-moly steel chassis as before (but now with the adoption of giant 50mm Extreme WP forks which work superbly). The engine feels pretty similar. If it's more powerful than the previous lump then the difference is negligible (after all the old 620 never wanted for extra poke), though the Mikuni carb certainly endows the 640 with crisp carburetion and smooth, vice-free pick-up.

Like its predecessor the new engine starts at the push of a button, though thanks to a high 11:1 compression ratio (up from 10.4:1), not always first time. Sensibly there's a (left-side) kickstart fitted as well, though I never needed it, and once fired up the 640 takes a little while to settle down to a regular toomp-toomp sound. The controls are light and simple to use with push to cancel indicators and a handlebar mounted choke adding to the bike's versatility (the same as before). However the main difference between the outgoing model and its replacement comes when you begin to ride it. The seat is rounded and (relatively) comfortable, the riding position well



Now that's what I call sand blasting...



There's definitely no shortage of grunt to propel you out of the corners

thought out, and the mirrors probably the best ever fitted to a trailie. Likewise when you've finished riding for the day and you park up, instead of switching keys and fiddling around for a steering lock built into the headstock, one twist of the ignition key is all that's required to cut the ignition and lock the bike up - simple.

Out on the twisty and super slick roads of Elba the LC4 handled predictably well with good balance, neutral steering and plenty of feedback. Plus a decent set of anchors (thanks to a 300mm front disc!). Like the old EGS-E, the new LC4 is a tall bike (both have the same 955mm seat height), so chucking the

thing into bends requires a reasonable amount of input from the rider to get the thing properly heeled over. Once there, the stable handling lets you increase or decrease the amount of lean you apply without any hint of front end instability. Powering the bike from one bend to the next the LC4 thunders out of corners with addictive urgency and will comfortably crack the ton given enough right hand.

Here however you are reminded of its competition heritage as the close(ish) ratio nature of the five-speed gearbox means that you quickly get into top gear (above say 40-50mph) and stay there. Despite tallish gearing at the bottom, it can still feel slightly



Left: Tail light and grab rail are functional and look the business



Left: At the front another piece of fine design. Right: White Power forks are as you would expect, brilliant!



Above: Instruments are minimal but effective

Handle On!

undergeared at the top for fast road use.

Off road the LC4 is typical KTM: solid, predictable, a little tall and a bit of a handful downhill where a combination of overly sharp rear brake, high compression engine and tall gearing can lock up the back wheel in an instant. However all that pretty bodywork has done nothing to harm the bike's off road capabilities. Climbing all over the thing is just as easy as it was before - show it a rocky trail and the LC4 will eat it for breakfast. On the rough the bike's suspension is a class above virtually all Japanese stuff and really the only limiting factor is the standard Metzeler Enduro-3 tyres which are biased towards road use. At a claimed 136 kilos (dry!) the LC4 is still a porky beast, but at least it has the poke to overcome any weight disadvantage.

In fact a day spent in the saddle will probably convince you - like it did me - that KTM have moved in the right direction with the new LC4 by improving its user-friendliness without compromising any of its ability. As a big soft/hard trailbike the KTM has plenty of attractions, not the least of which is that thundering new engine and the stylish looking bodywork, which if you are unconvinced from the photos - actually looks better in the plastic (as it were) than in any picture.

The fact that this bike is not a European

Dominator or KLX clone might come as a disappointment to those people who currently buy Japanese trailbikes principally for their user-friendliness. But to others however, it will remain a blessing that while KTM have chosen to embrace a few oriental practicalities, the LC4 remains distinctly European in its heart of 'hards'.

KTM LC4 640

Price:	£5150
Engine:	Liquid-cooled, sohc, four-valve four stroke single
Displacement:	625cc
Bore/Stroke:	101x78mm
Comp Ratio:	11:1
Carburettor:	Mikuni BST40
Transmission:	5-speed
Generator:	200W, 12V
F/Brake:	300mm
R/Brake:	220mm
Fuel Cap:	12L, 2.5L reserve
Steering angle:	27.5°
Wheelbase:	1510mm
Seat Height:	955mm

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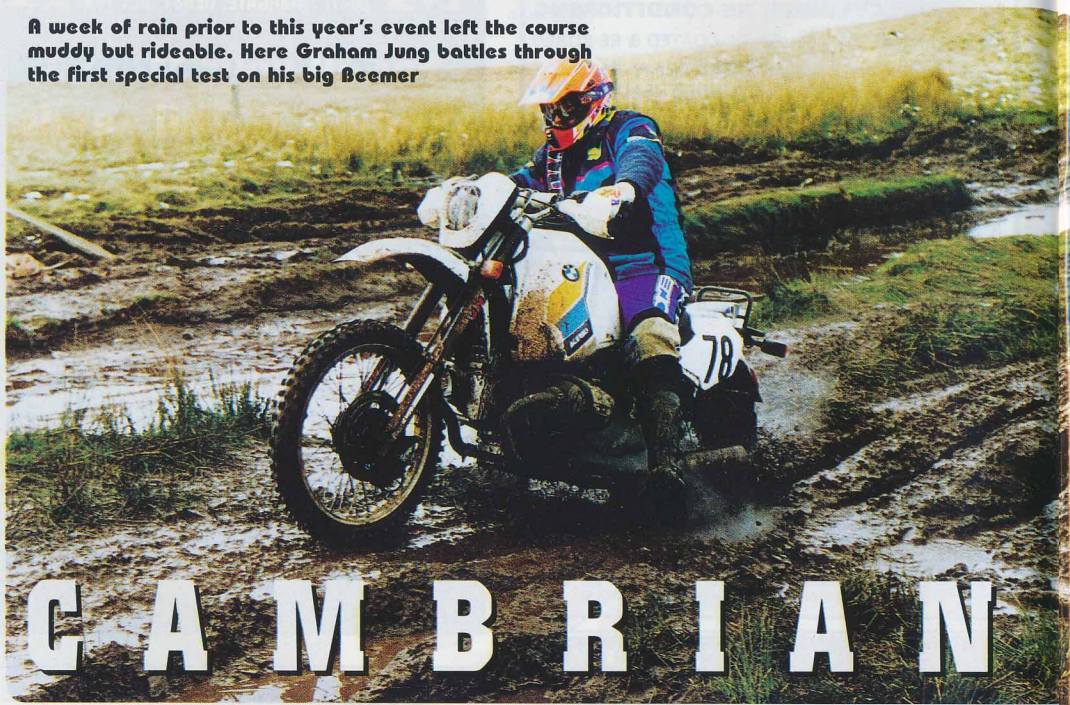
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A week of rain prior to this year's event left the course muddy but rideable. Here Graham Jung battles through the first special test on his big Beemer



CAMBRIAN RALLY '98

As the sun rose over the snow-covered hills near Cyngordy on Easter morning on this the fifth running of the annual Cambrian Rally, 200 hardy competitors lined up for a near perfect day's sport and dirty fun. Paul Blezard reports...

The torrential rain and sleet of the previous week had disappeared to be replaced by clear blue skies and brilliant sunshine, but not before it had left its mark on a wet and muddy course which had to be drastically shortened in order to ensure that the event remained the fun ride that it is designed to be for competitors on all sorts of machinery. As it was there was still two 40+ mile laps to complete with three special tests on the first and a single special test on the second to decide this year's winner.

The organisers (the Welsh Trail Riders Association)

had made it clear that preference would be given to those riders entering on trail bikes, and this year the trail bike entry comfortably outnumbered the sports-bikes by about two to one, with everything from restricted 125s to mammoth 1000s taking part.

I had been contemplating entering on my XR600 (a frightening thought - ed), but at the last minute Nick from the Container Co came up trumps with a nearly-new CRM250 Active Radical. In best journalistic tradition I didn't trouble myself to ride it before the town crier belled me away from the start, and a few miles out of Llandovery I began to regret that decision. Chasing another bike on the fast and twisty A40 I chucked the CRM into a left hander at about 60mph and was horrified to discover the back wheel beginning to overtake me. As the bike slewed onto opposite lock I braced myself for the big get-off then breathed a huge sigh of relief as the lightweight two-stroke straightened itself out again. Phew!

I wobbled into a nearby petrol station sweating buckets at the thought of such a close shave on the road,

when who should be there but TBM's own John Rushworth on his trick XR400. John lost no time in whipping my wheel out and taking the tyre off, and meanwhile, two lads in a support Transit kindly offered to return to Llandovery to get me a rear tube, which was just as well because the original had been literally torn in half by the blowout (thanks chaps!). The old boy in the garage not only provided the tyre levers, but also insisted in helping with re-fitting it, so within half an hour I was back in business again. But in my haste to catch up with the rest of the field I brilliantly managed to ride straight past the start of the first special stage on the tarmac military road.... (duh!)

After all the excitement involved in just getting to the start of the first special stage, the racing itself was relatively relaxing for me, although peppered with incidents, as these events always are. All things considered, I wasn't too disappointed with 21st place out of the 130-odd trail bikes that took part but I'd like to share a few excuses with you anyway. The brakes on the CRM were a bit below par at both ends thanks to a warped disc at the front and huge travel on the rear lever; my hands were nearly numb from the cold for the whole of the first stage after my non-stop thrash on the road from Halfway and I damn near drowned the bike in one of those horrendous water 'troughs' (didn't we all?).

I took a small detour on the second stage and an even bigger one on the third when I ran off the track completely and had to do a U-turn over a huge pile of logs. But my biggest disappointment was that we weren't timed on all three of the stages on the second lap, because I know I would have been much quicker second time around. Mind you, riding in 'convoy' on the second lap meant I failed to spot one of the deeper bogs and went straight over the handlebars in stage one and again in the liaison stage on the Epynt ranges, tumbling off on two further occasions after losing the front end.

As ever there were a host of interesting bikes and characters at this year's Cambrian Rally, and here are the '98 Blez awards for merit:

* The 'Bold Novice' award must go to Philip Rushworth for entering his first ever off-road event on his monstrous BMW 1000 special - he did well to complete a muddy lap. More experienced and similarly mounted Graham Jung rode his own trusty Beemer to the over 700 award and Pat Tighe did even better on his Africa Twin to take best multi cylinder and a superb 56th on

The editor gets to grips with the new long-term Husey. Or should that be the other way round?



a bike which looked better at the finish than most of the entry did at the start! Other 'Spirit of the Cambrian' mentions go to Mike Griffith (36th on a Dominator), Kevin Thomas (41st on an XTZ660) and Ian Sutcliffe (one lap on a Transalp).

* My 'Heroic Masochist' award goes to Marcus Perie who not only rode his re-built 1982 Cagiva STX125 over

Sunny conditions welcomed the riders as the Llandovery town crier started them off



Crasher struggled all day with a lack of grip - plus riding into every puddle didn't help



CAMBRIAN RALLY '98

200 miles from Carnforth, but also took it to a highly creditable 89th place before setting off home again in the freezing cold.

* The 'Mad as Mick Doohan' award goes to diminutive but hard-as-nails Richard Brown who cruised to 26th on his KDX125SR after surviving a head-on with an African truck in the Camerons last year which has left him with a right leg which is only loosely attached to the rest of his body.

* The 'Lamb to the Slaughter' award goes to 19 year-old novice Joe Sexton who drowned his DR350 within the first half mile of the first stage and spent an hour and a half getting it going again but persevered manfully to complete the full distance.

* The 'Tough Luck' award goes jointly to Rob Wyszomierski and Roger Johnson who both seized their CRMs solid in the first stage.

* The 'Good Egg' award goes to Gary Taylor, proving he's a chip off the old block (eldest son of the late, lamented Dave) by stopping to help his mate Martin Ward in the middle of Stage two, while the 'Bad Egg' award goes to Carl Tiley for clipping another rider on the spectacularly fast fourth stage and not stopping to help him after he crashed.

* Last, but not least, the 'We are not worthy' awards go to all the er... award winners including Steve Griffiths (best trail) and Carl Tiley (best sports) not to mention all the others who thrashed me with ease

including the most impressive of the lot, Queen Katrina (Price) for fourth trail bike on a far-from-speedy KTM400. **Paul Blezard**

The Editor

I was under no illusions that the new Husey long-term would be faultless on this its maiden voyage at this year's Cambrian Rally (see Staffbikes in this issue for the background to this story). I'd gone up to Wales the day before the event in order to sort a few things out and get the Husey out onto the trail, just to give it a sort of shakedown. You know the score - make sure nothing falls off, that the controls feel right, that sort of thing - especially since it was the first time I'd ridden it. Anyway, TBM's Scotland correspondent John Rushworth was down for the weekend to watch this year's event, so he and I borrowed an OS map and went off riding into the hills, together with the 400EGS that Crasher would be using next day.

We'd not gone more than about six or seven miles when I casually suggested to John he might like to give the Husey a 'quick blast' just to see what he thought. As it turned out, a twist of fate meant that my choice of words turned out to be strangely prophetic. We were no sooner on our way than JR came tearing past me like a man possessed. 'Boy' I thought, 'He's got to grips with that thing really fast' as I set off in hot pursuit. What I hadn't realised was that within half a minute of us

swapping berths, the Husey's throttle had jammed - wide open.

With John rapidly heading towards what appeared to be a small inland sea (but turned out to be a gigantic puddle), I pulled up, while John (despite desperate declutching and frantic braking), went into it flat out in third. There was a sort of roaring sound, then a gurgling noise and then all of a sudden... an eerie silence.

Through the spray and steam I could just make out a very dead Husey and an extremely wet John who reckoned he'd seen his life flash before him (especially the bit about the Navy, as the Husey nosedived into the drink). The 501 had swallowed nearly as much water as John, and decided it was not going to be playing any more that day. It was an awfully long push out of the hills for someone as wet as JR was, and in the end I relented and went off to fetch the TBM van, but not before I'd rechristened John "Titanic", because he was... you know... sunk by a 'Berg'?

We got the Husey started later that evening - the throttle cable had mysteriously jumped out of its guide on the throttle body, but drowning the motor thankfully hadn't done any serious damage. Next day I lined up in the sportsbike class just behind enduroists Carl Tiley and John Deacon and one place in front of regular Rallye Raider Ben Shuckborough - gulp.

I figured I'd take things pretty easily to start with - try and settle myself into a rhythm, but I'd figured without the boisterous John Deacon. No sooner had we turned onto the dirt than Deeks came by at well over 60mph with his front wheel six feet up in the air - only inches away from my head.

The first stage was a repeat of last year's final stage (on the MoD test track) only run in the opposite direction. I went off pretty steadily, avoiding all the deep water, but about halfway round was overtaken by Ben who was really hauling on his 640 KTM. Stage two began with a long blast around a left hander and I went haring into it only to be confronted by a sharp right turn at the exit - disappearing off the course and into the bushes - I'd only gone about 400m. This time I managed to stay ahead of Ben although I dropped the Berg momentarily when I misjudged a sharp right-hander later on. Stage three however was a complete disaster.

Everything had been going well until about halfway through when braking for a little kink - up and over a bank - I inadvertently flipped the kill switch with my thumb (without noticing). The engine died and despite frantic efforts on my part, it was a good minute before I realised the problem. A lack of familiarity with the bike had been my downfall.



Both Ben and the following rider caught me up this time and in the ensuing tangle Ben stalled his KTM - which took a little while to get going (er... sorry about that Ben). By the time I got to special stage number four I was determined to make amends with at least ONE good time.

I turned up the wick for the last of the day's specials, gunning the Husey off the line and into the fast fire breaks. Remarkably, things went really well this time, I didn't drop it, I didn't hit the kill switch and I didn't get caught. In fact I went on to set the ninth fastest time in class beating Ben and a number of others, finishing up with 13th in class overall. All of which just goes to show that even an old hack like me can get it right if you give him a fast enough bike and several goes at it!

As for the rest of the rally, well it was the usual well oiled event (both during the day and in the bar afterwards). The organisers had sensibly shortened the course because of the inclement weather, and I thoroughly enjoyed myself getting to grips with my new bike. All I can say after that is roll on the Pencarreg Rally later this month. Can't wait. **Si**

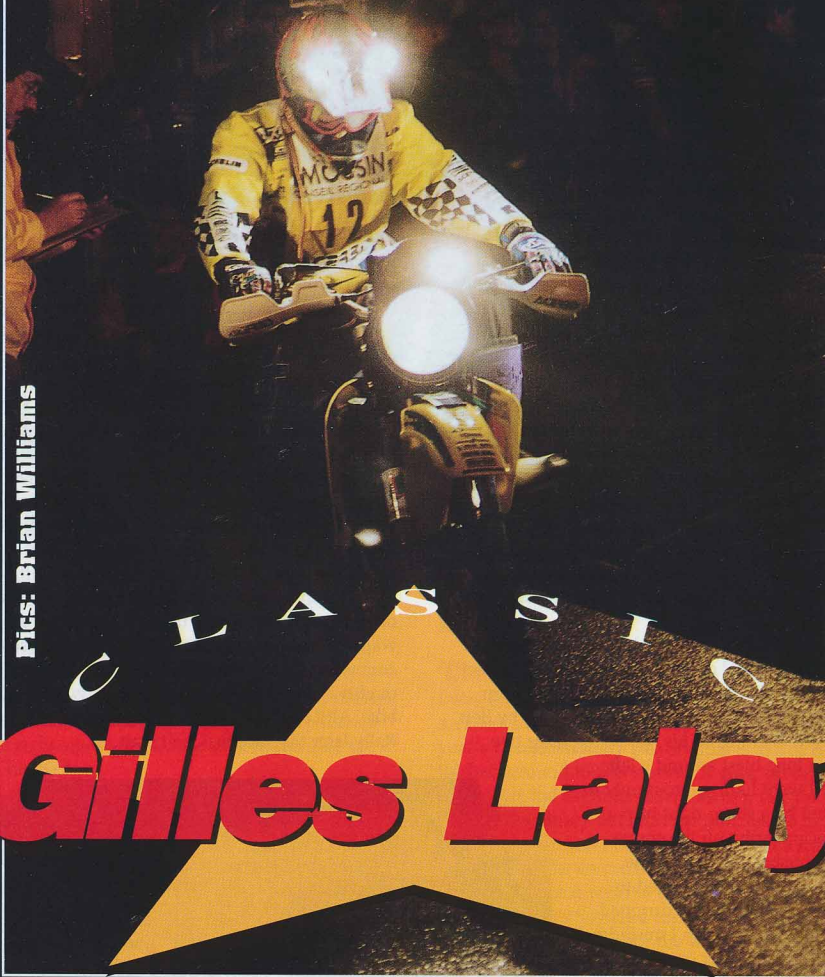


Caption space for the Cambrian

The Gilles Lalay Classic is acknowledged as the toughest one day enduro in the known universe.

TrailBike Magazine's George Brent rode it this year on his Moto-Ward Yamaha WR250. This is his story in his own words...

Pics: Brian Williams



I was definitely on a multi-national minute starting alongside an American, French and Swiss rider. The qualifying session in the morning comprised four special tests - two cross country and two MX tests. The last test at Peyrat Le Chateau was out of this world. There were at least 10,000 spectators crowded around the course cheering everyone as they went by.

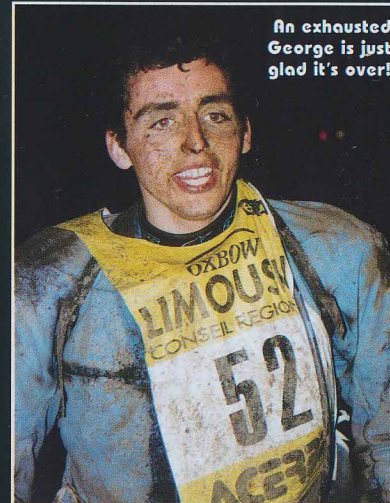
After the first test the course headed down a sheer drop. In front of me about ten riders were sliding down on their bums with killed engines, but for some stupid reason I thought I could ride down the hill. I had the brakes full on but they seemed to make very little difference as I plummeted down the hillside with gathering speed. Marshals and spectators were dashing for cover as I sped out of control, crashing over the bars with the bike cartwheeling over me. I landed on my back ripping off my bib, camelbak and finally my helmet. Luckily I was stopped by my

bumbag which hooked itself around a branch and I was left just hanging there until members of the crowd lifted me off, dusted me down and helped me back onto my bike. They were screaming and cheering me on which motivated me to show off over the nearby jumps, but I rode off literally seeing stars.

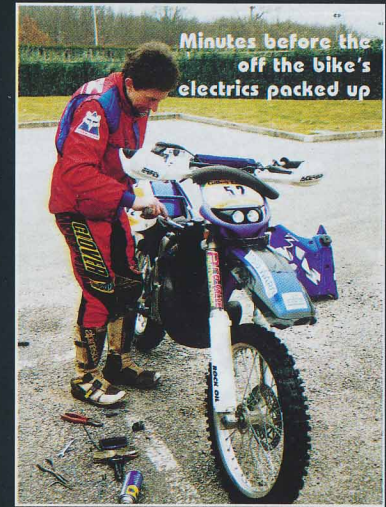
It took a while for the organisers to confirm the lucky 100 qualifying riders for the next round starting at 3pm. I collected my #52 bib for the forthcoming event and despite having had half a tube of deep heat applied to my aching muscles and downing six Nurofen, I still hurt like hell. I found out later that up until the crash I had been lying in 30th position.

It felt like an eternity before we started the main race, but

once into the first couple of corners I found myself back in the groove and keen to press on. Within a couple of minutes I found myself back in the woods reaching the first of what would turn out to be many a steep climb. There were bikes everywhere, I struggled up the hill watching the occasional bike without rider fly overhead. Further around the course it became apparent that the field was already being whittled down. I was riding on pure adrenaline, rushing headlong towards impossibly steep hills helped on by spectators who lined the vertical climbs. At times I was completely out of breath, but look-



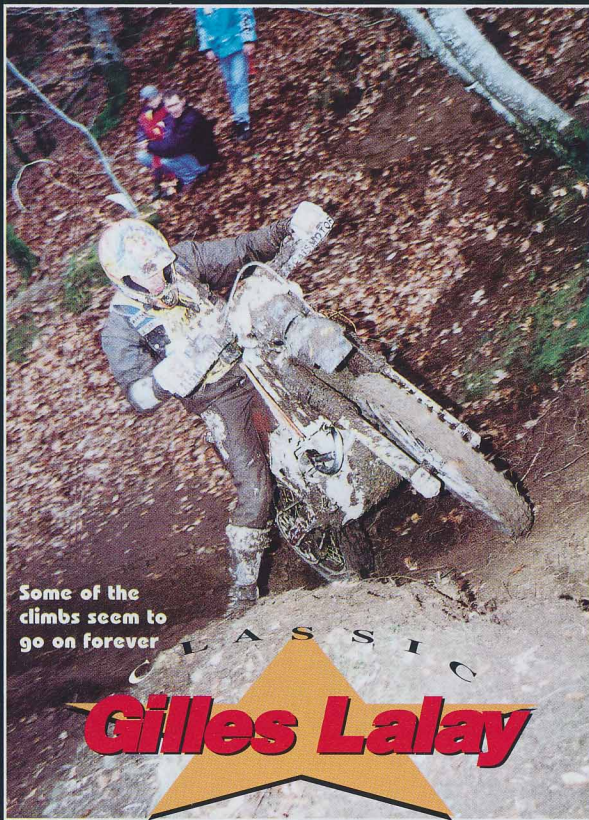
An exhausted George is just glad it's over!



Minutes before the off the bike's electrics packed up

TBM rider George Brent qualified in 52nd position for the main event





Some of the climbs seem to go on forever

CLASSIC Gilles Lalay

ders either side I saw an amazing sight ahead. There was a traffic jam of about 20 riders; looking up I could see the reason that they had all stopped was because the next stage of the course was up a sheer cliff face. Many of the riders were giving up and saying that it was just impossible to go any further, however some of them (myself included) decided to club together and help one another. Using all our remaining strength, we managed to slowly make our way up the cliff manhandling the bikes one at a time between us. In the pitch blackness the comradeship shown between the riders, the spectators and marshals is one of the most vivid memories that I have of the Gilles Lalay.

Unfortunately at the top of the hill a marshal informed me and a number of other riders that we couldn't carry on because we had fallen more than the allowed one hour behind the leaders, making it impossible to catch up. I am thrilled to have made it until eight o'clock in the evening at my very first attempt at the Lallay. I might have been cold, wet and tired but I was still buzzing with excitement having had one of the most thrilling days in my entire life.

Frenchman Cyril Esquirol took the honours this year completing the course 15 minutes ahead of everyone else. However the final tally showed how difficult the GLC really is: out of the 250 entrants only seven riders managed to make it to the finish line. Next year I hope to be back at the GLC along with other British riders and make it to the end of the course. **George Brent**

ing at the crowds cheering and clapping me on made all the difference and helped me get through the most difficult stages.

Everyone was so excited and wanted to grab me and encourage me along. The atmosphere was just out of this world - it really gets you through the most impossible hazards. Time really flew by and I was having so much fun. I came along to the first refuelling point with just 15 minutes before they would shut the check-point. I quickly filled up with fuel and replaced the air in the radiators with coolant. The course led over miles of trials sections and was incredibly rocky going in some places bashing my bike and turning my legs to jelly.

There was one climb that looked to just go up and up and up with spectators lining either side ready to catch the unwary riders. I went at it full force but lost momentum near the top and before I knew it a rope was lashed around my bike, and I was winched up the slope.

Time was getting on, it was dark and I was cold and wet, not to mention exhausted. Struggling along the side of a river bank in a massive canyon with huge boulders



Eventual winner was Cyril Esquirol on his tasty XR400R

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Appeal

Something for the weekend sir?



Pics: Neil 'can I borrow your camera please' Pidduck

I remember as a starry eyed teenager the advent of Honda's XR600. It was an object of desire, something I longed for, a big thumping four-stroke single that I imagined too hot to handle and a bike that could get me into more trouble than adolescence ever did...

For nearly 15 years the virtually unchanged XR6 has been shrouded with this air of desirability and even today, when there are many more capable machines on the market, it still remains for many, a sought after and seductive bike. Indeed, at the recent Breckland enduro there were no fewer than seven of the beasts entered. Enduroists, rally raiders, overlanders, green laners and even London couriers have all seen logic in the good old XR as a mount of choice for their chosen discipline, so when west country Honda dealer Paul Branson called the TBM office saying that he was building a supermoto XR6, we didn't need to be asked twice.

This particular XR started life as a standard '98 model so the first crucial addition was a set of wide 17inch wheels from Mr Talon. Laced to the beautiful gold Talon hubs were a shiny pair of aluminium Excel rims, 3.50" up front and 4.25" at the rear. These had been shod with a pair of Metzeler MEZ1 hoops with a 120/70-17 taking care of the front end whilst a massive 160/60-17 just squeezes

between the swing-arm and chain at the rear. The obligatory trimming of the front mudguard had been done along with the removal of the fork gaiters and the addition of an Acerbis rear fender and DHH headlight unit.

These bodywork modifications may or may not have shaved a bit of weight off the old girl but they have certainly helped smooth out the lines on the ageing XR. Already reasonably low thanks to the smaller wheels and low profile tyres, the XR was also fitted with a lowering link at the rear, dropping it down a good couple of inches below stock, making it easier to get a good long swing on the kick starter. The final apparent modification was obvious once the thing had been stirred into life. A stunning looking oval aluminium FMF PerforMax tailpipe (£199.95 from MD Racing), which uses the tunable disc sys-

Getting your knee down isn't something you would normally do on an XR600, but this is no ordinary XR...



Take a new XR600R, add a big-bore kit and supermoto rims and then find yourself a twisty stretch of road. Neil Pidduck donned his race face and prepared for blast off on a very special dirt bike...

tem found on Supertrapps imbued the XR with a hearty rumble.

The most interesting change however is far less obvious to the naked eye and takes place at the heart of the Big Six's motor. For there nestling inside the lump is Honda's own HRC engine power-up kit, giving this powerplant a wallop of 628cc and a serious power hike. The kit which retails from Honda dealers for £713.68 + VAT, is comprehensive in its contents. Included are a complete cylinder, piston and rings, camshaft, clutch basket, primary drive gear, clutch springs, gaskets, various carb jets and assorted nuts, washers, springs and clips, not forgetting the all important instructions complete with all relevant technical information.

We've seen HRC power-up kits give healthy gains on XR400s, but wanted to know exactly what differ-

Sticky race-compound tyres make this kind of behaviour the norm



ence it would make to the Six; so first we had to run the bike on the dyno in standard trim (except for the FMF pipe which was already fitted). In this guise the engine pumped out a respectable 39.4bhp and 33.6ft-lbs of torque at the back wheel which is more than we'd expected of a standard XR600, and a couple of those ponies must have been down to the free flowing exhaust. However with the HRC kit neatly installed a second trip over to the dyno recorded an impressive increase - 47.8bhp and 38.5ft-lbs of torque - about 20% up on stock - now we were talking.

I dug out the map and devised a nice convoluted

route through Devon and Somerset along twisty 'A' and 'B' roads through Exmoor and the Quantocks, mindful of the fact that this was a bike built for bends, and careful to leave out any dual-carriageways or long open roads. Indeed, on the few miles of long boring straights I did encounter on the XR it was difficult to find anything pleasant about the bike; with the upright riding position and wide bars allowing far too much attention from the wind.

No, what this machine needed was corners, endless corners. The wide tyres provided plenty of grip and feedback through the bars was excellent, although accelerating through slower bends or coming hard out of smallish roundabouts allowed the rear end to give a little shimmy if you got on the throttle too early. Initially the transition from a knobby tyred 90/90-21 to a smooth 120/70-17 on the front took some adjusting to, but with my growing confidence I found that the bike could be steered accurately from one apex to the next and although the steering felt quicker thanks to the 17 front wheel, the wider, grippier tyres and lowered suspension gave wonderful stability.

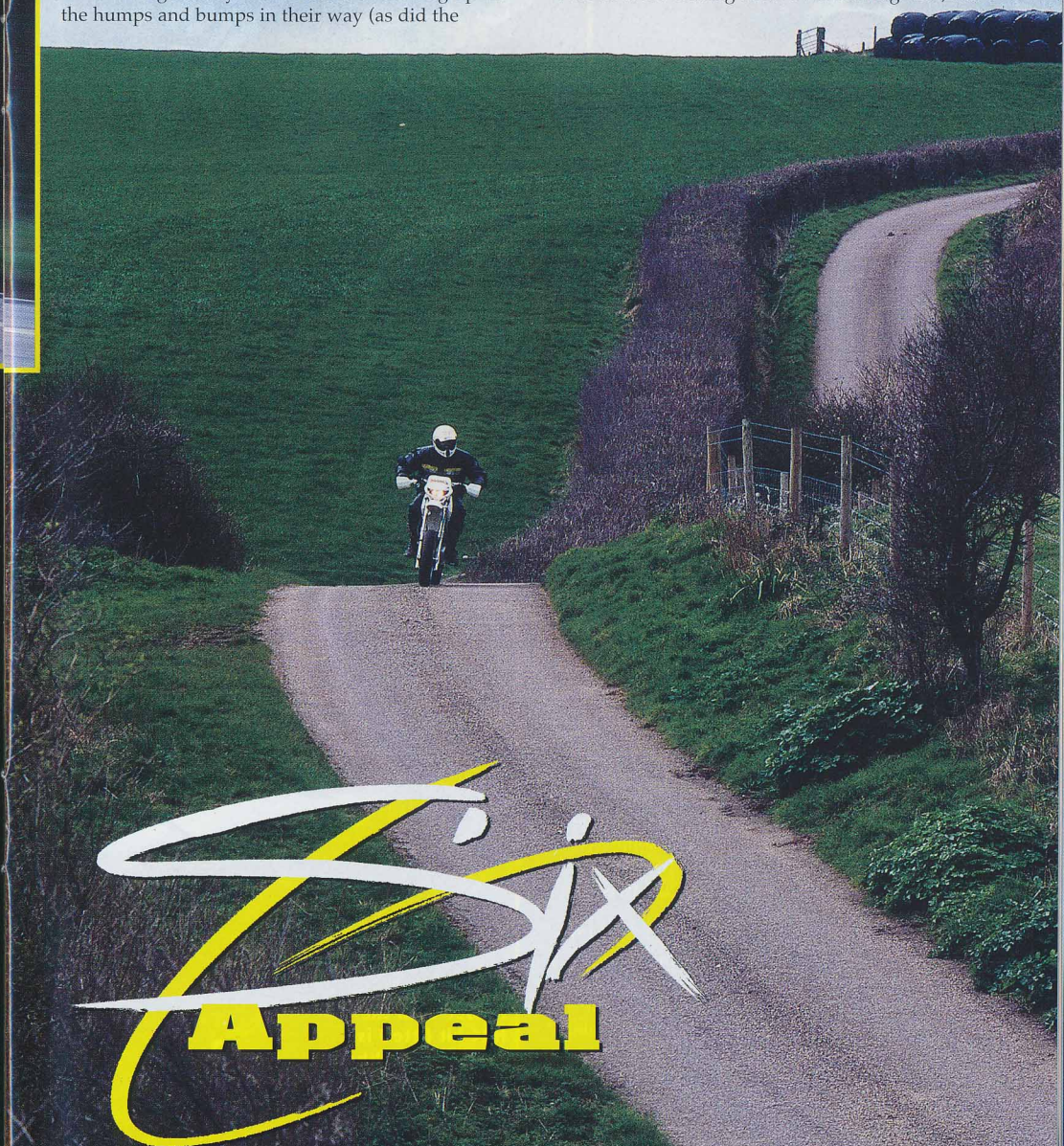
The standard front brake felt remarkably good at haul-

ing the bike down from speed as I left my braking later and later for every bend I entered, although I can't help thinking that serious track abuse may require something more akin to a dinner plate sized disc, for that extra helping you can always enjoy on a circuit. However the stock front brake lever offered plenty of feedback and made it easier to feed in the brakes progressively deep into corners, rather than upsetting things by grabbing a handful and having the front end dive dramatically. Again, the front forks were generally fine on the road soaking up all the humps and bumps in their way (as did the

shock), but firmer suspension at both ends would be advantageous particularly at the higher speeds of which this bike is capable.

The A396 from Tiverton to Dunster is pure supermoto territory - just gagging to be ridden quickly. Following the river Exe through a sinuous valley with endless bends and short straights the XR was storming along in its element, leaving the speedo registering well beyond it's 'best before' date for much of the time. Okay I must admit the small wheels were causing some over-reading here, but

Supermoto XR6 is subtly altered from standard



Six Appeal



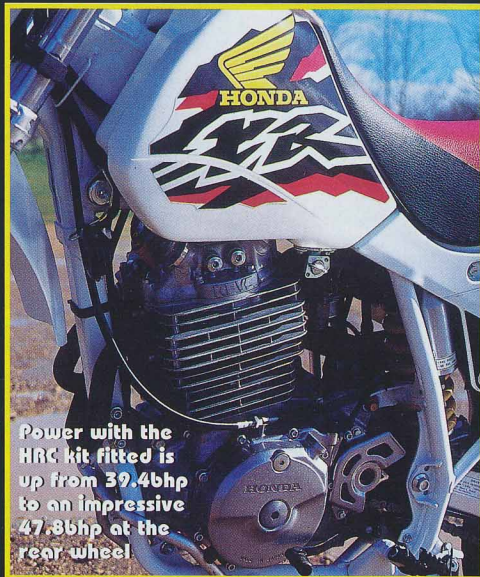
fat 160 section rear tyre and FMF pipe give the big XR serious looks



felt ill at ease compared to a stocker. Not because the 630 is too powerful, but simply because the lumpy on/off nature of the tuned mill gives the bike an uneasy gait when just scooting about. In traffic you find yourself having to use a bit of clutch to keep things smooth and the XR's lumpiness at low revs means it loses some of its composure.

Then again this is a bike built for backlane scratching. Take it out at the weekend and blast it along your favourite tight back roads and you won't believe how much speed you can carry into the bends thanks to the combination of wide bars and light weight as well as the enormous amounts of grip generated by those gumball tyres.

If on the other hand you don't enjoy that sort of manic attack of frantic fun, then my advice to you is forget the 630, forget a supermoto. In fact forget bikes altogether. Take up something like gardening or dominos, because if you don't enjoy the thrill of a big Six at full rattle, it's time you got yourself another hobby. **Neil Pidduck**



Power with the HRC kit fitted is up from 39.4bhp to an impressive 47.8bhp at the rear wheel

nevertheless the barking XR just encouraged you to press on.

Here the HRC engine work was extremely noticeable; not in terms of bottom end which is actually down on standard, but at the other end of the rev scale where the big single's eagerness to rev has you howling the thing all the way to the limiter. In fact power and torque both dip slightly below stock until about 4000rpm comes up, but after that, woah... she really starts to rip, craving more and jettisoning you from one bend to the next. Keep her on the boil and this old lady really tramps, despatching the twisties very quickly indeed - bye bye Blackbird.

Unlike the big-bore XT690 I tested back in TBM21, the XR630 has nowhere near the same amount of low-end grunt, but it sure beats it on top end power. Everything happens much higher up the rev range; in fact it's this power right up at 7000rpm that makes the XR really feel fast thrashing along backroads, taking advantage of the superb grip and endless ground clearance, really caning it and enjoying the in-your-face frenziedness of it all.

But it's not all perfect. Around town the 630 motor



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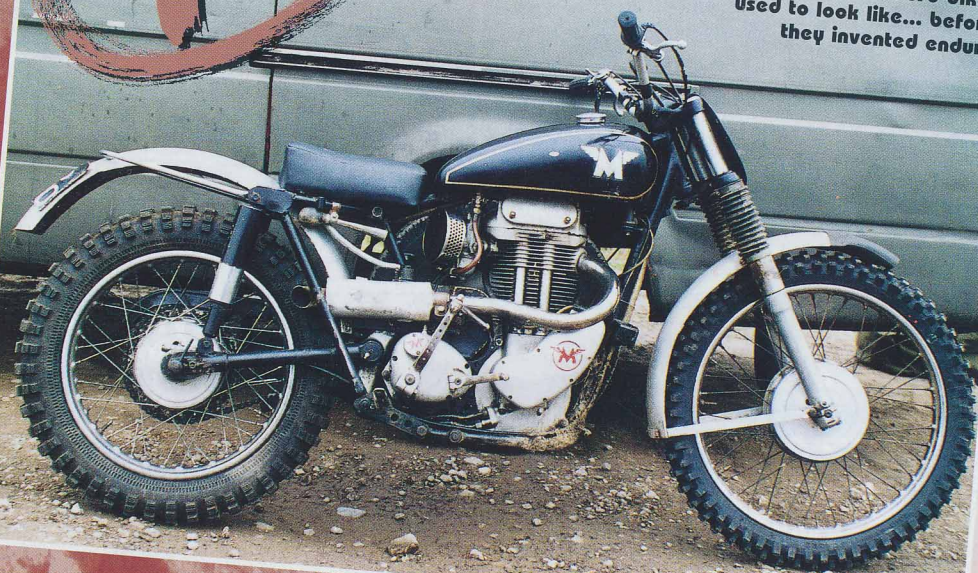
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Jurassic

BARK!

This is what enduro bikes used to look like... before they invented enduro



You don't need the latest tackle to have a go at enduros. Oddie recounts the extraordinary tale of a Matchless 350 and a day at the races...

It all started one Thursday evening, spotting a pre-65 Matchless trials iron for sale in the Old Bike Mart. It was only 40 miles away, our lass was up for a ride out, so we went for a quick look. Well, by Thursday midnight I was the proud new owner of a 1954 350cc pre-unit single (for readers less than 30 years old, pre-unit means the engine and the gearbox are two entirely separate entities, each of which weighs more than an entire two-stroke power unit...). Adhering to the Blez school of preparedness, a glance at T&MX revealed an enduro taking place at the end of our road that Sunday...

With no time to spare, Friday morning I took the bike down to a nearby field, had a quick blast round and decided it was running okay. Friday dinner-time

V for victory? Well almost



I managed to squeeze in a last minute entry, Friday afternoon I managed to locate and purchase a pair of motocross knobbles in a suitable size. Saturday I fitted the tyres, rebuilt the slipping clutch, fitted a new primary chain, changed all the oils, fitted a new plug, mended the leaking petrol tank, cleaned and set the points, and loaded the bike into a van full of tools, petrol, riding gear, odds and sods, and anything else I could think of. Sunday morning at 9am, we were in the pits getting scrutineered. Not a bad couple of days work, I told myself.

I was an experienced enduro rider, of course, this being my second ever event (the first one I'd at least had the sense to borrow a mate's late-model XR200). The track was incredibly rough going, about four and a half miles long, laid out in an old quarry, comprising sand, clay, mud, ditches, gullies, steep embankments, 'bombholes', etc. The pits were full of the usual new Suzukis, KTMs etc, and the next oldest bike to mine was a late-Eighties Honda CRM. I don't think half the youngsters riding had ever heard of a Matchless - I think even twin shocks were a novelty to a lot of them. Some wit asked if it ran on coal, which I took as a compliment.

It was a typical hare and hounds enduro, three hours in which to peggar yourself and the bike into the ground, rattling off as many laps as you can, before body, soul or mechanics cry enough. Despite a dodgy magneto when hot, hence a persistent misfire (dismantling the points in the middle of a deep mud hole, I did have to remind myself this was all good fun), and the weight of all that clay snapping the rear mudguard brackets, the only real problem was the deep ruts - with a ground clearance of about six inches, there was much grounding out to a stop as the poor old Matchless frame rails dug in (although I only actually flew over the bars once), and then slowly bulldozing through with the footrests ploughing great furrows on either side (much to the chagrin of any fast riders who'd rather foolishly followed me into the same rut). Still, I did manage the full three hours, last man off the course after replacing the plug twice on the last lap...

Inspired by this, er, 'success' (or should it be, undaunted by this failure), I entered another enduro a few weeks later. I rebuilt the magneto, so at least there would be a consistent supply of sparks this time, but the ground clearance would have to remain a problem. The new course wound its intricate way through a muddy wooded valley, with several

Oddie powers the old Matchy up a slippery bank



Ready for the off... and not another Brit iron in sight



Jurassic

BARK!

stream crossings, lots of snotty drops and climbs, and couple of relaxing(?) undulating grassy straights. Again the lap was several miles of pretty tough, tight, slippery going, and again the Matchless was the sole anachronism in the pits, an archaic black island in a sea awash with high-tech dayglo.

The race was reasonably eventful, one stream crossing proved impassable, even for genuine enduro bikes, and was cut after a few laps. What I lost in ground clearance I made up for in torque, thundering up the greasy clay climbs as the screaming strokers struggled to find grip. Then a young whizz kid dropped his RM right in front of me and I laid the Matchy down to avoid him (getting run over by several hundredweight of old British Iron can seriously affect your wellbeing), breaking the clutch lever in the process. Finishing the lap clutchless wasn't a huge problem, and a quick pitstop had me thanking my foresight in bringing spares. Great joy was had passing a DR350 rider flat out down one of the straights on the next lap, though having falling off enough times to learn the art of enduro riding fairly quickly last time out, I resisted the temptation to bladder through everything flat out, and was content with circulating reasonably consistently.

Then one of the lapscoreers shouted, 'Keep going, you're lying third.' This well-meant compliment of encouragement was the kiss of death to my concen-

tration and I started trying too hard. Half a lap later I misjudged a ledge and disappeared off a steep bank to almost total

oblivion. Luckily(!) a fallen tree retarded my frantic downward progress.... Eventually. Climbing out from under the bike, I then had to plough through a bog, manhandle the Matchy through a thicket, and push the slithering bike uphill to get back up onto the track, falling over several times in the process. My how I laughed... Then with about two and a half hours gone, the rear tyre punctured.

Things were starting to get tricky now, riding round with a flat back tyre, matters were only made worse when the seat fell off. Retrieving it from the undergrowth, and tying it on with some of the trackside marker tape, I managed a few more laps. With the tyre flapping around all over the place, I was using all the two and half inches of rear suspension movement available to me, but finally I lost all the

drive. Fearing a broken chain, I looked back to see the rear rim spinning furiously in the tyre - the security bolt had given up the ghost. Hmmm. There was only one real hill left that lap, but the bike wouldn't drive up, and it was too steep to push up. Fortunately there was a long low bank facing the hill, so



Nice and clean before the event

Oddie shows off the silverware. Note flat tyre, seat held on with course marker tape and silly grin



Jurassic

BARK!

with some deft throttlework and some hefty leg-work, I got the bike up the bank, and used it as a launching ramp to get enough speed to clear the hill. Using the same sort of techniques as you'd use for a slipping clutch, I eventually made it to the finish, just on the three hour limit.

If you are beginning to doubt the authenticity of this tale, I can assure you that it is in no way exaggerated for effect - what you've read is how it went. The end result may seem even more unbelievable, but it's also true. I've been around trials bikes a long time, but it was only my third ever off-road actual race of any kind, and I'm no spring chicken, being born the same year as the Matchless was built gives us a combined age of 86. And when the results were announced, we'd come second in the trail bike class, beating all the DTs DRs, KLRs, TSs, etc, and only being seen off by one guy on a quick CRM250 Honda. I think the modern terminology is Eat My Shorts, Dudes. I even thought about tying the trophy on the front of the Matchless, Marlon Brando style, for those of you who've seen The Wild One - but thought that was just rubbing it in.

So perhaps the old cliché of a poor workman blaming his tools is true after all. 43 years on, and piloted with the right attitude, the old Matchless still has what it takes. You need a brand new bike every twelve months? Don't make me laugh...

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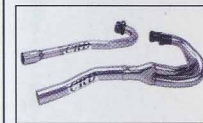
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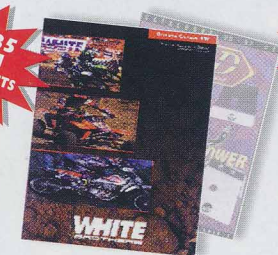
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WATER -Fall!

Sunday 15 March saw the running of this year's Wyegate Trial. The 15th year that the West Glos and Dean Forest MCC have run this classic long distance event. Supported by 112 riders this year's course followed a new route (organised by some of the younger club members) 92 miles in length and made up of some 28 competitive sections.

The course took riders into Monmouth and the surrounding areas with good tricky hillclimbs such as the one at Cottage Farm Rockfield. Despite the previous day's wet weather, near perfect conditions in the sections meant that the overall winner completed the course with the loss of just one mark.

The new route incorporated some of the most popular sections from the past years including Pant-Glas Steps, Lime Kilnwoods, and one of the most popular with riders and spectators alike - Niagara. A torrent of water flowing down over a series of rock steps, big enough to lose a bike, caught out many riders as Andy Wilson (N° 53) found out. Andy, riding for Dipstick Racing, was not hurt in this spectacular getoff at Niagara, but like many others was forced to take an early bath having misjudged one of the slippery rock steps on his Yamaha DT.

As the day progressed the weather continually improved, helping to dry out some of the muddy sections just enough to leave them with a degree

of difficulty (but not impossibility) which tested all the riders to the full.

Although there were two petrol stations en route, petrol was a bit scarce on the day leaving a few riders having to juggle fuel between bikes to make it back to the finish. One group of riders called on the help of a local farmer who produced ten gallons from his barn and sold the lot!

There was a route alteration for the sidecars as Coxton Lane and Wayne Green were only passable to solos, and out of the seven sidecar crews who started the day, only three went on to finish. Two having lost their way decided to take a shortcut back to the start down over Tregagle - this is some mean feat on a solo, never mind a sidecar.

Overall then, this year's Wyegate was a tremendous success with the club receiving several letters and phone calls of congratulations from tired but satisfied riders. In the end it was Jon Bliss who triumphed on the day taking victory in the Wyegate Solo Cup with the loss of just one mark, while in the chairs Martin Oatley and Debbie White secured the sidecar cup. Honourable mentions go to Graham Howes (Pre-65 Rigid winner), Mike Nicholson (Pre-65 Springer), Nibbs Adams (Trail 250), PJ Dunster (Trail over 250), Alan Morewood (Over 45), and Michael Hughes (Under 21).

And if you fancy taking part in next year's Wyegate, contact club secretary Ruth More on 01594 810336 and register your interest early.

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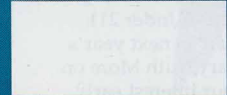
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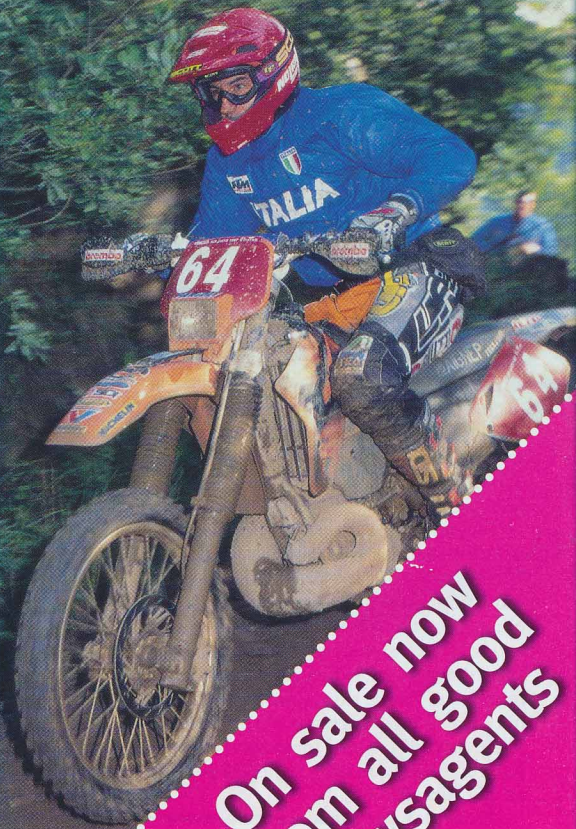
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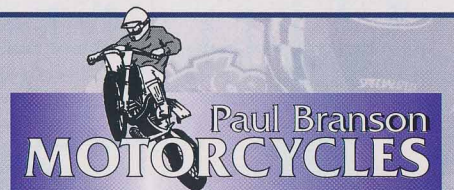
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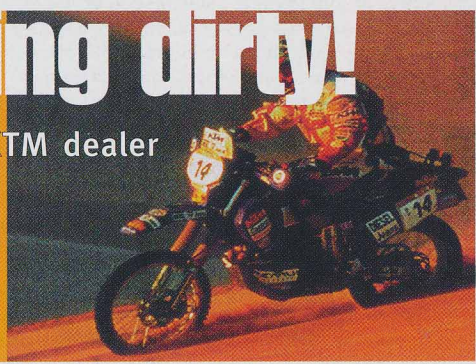
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On the Trail of the LAW

There's been much correspondence in the magazine recently as to what exactly constitutes a road legal trail bike. Back in 1995 (TBM4 - now sold out) we ran an article written by PC Ian Kerr - a serving police officer and trail rider - covering this subject. Here it is again - updated in the light of changes to the law - to assist all of you who want to know how you stand legally when it comes to your trail/enduro bike and the law...

Fortunately most people in this world are average law abiding citizens, who in their leisure time just want to enjoy themselves. Motorcyclists fall very much into this category, irrespective of some people's stereotyped views of them. Like all sectors of the public they bend the laws a little, snatching a bit here and there to suit their own ends, hoping others adopt the same philosophical approach to life. A statement particularly applicable when we are talking about the legality of bikes used for trail riding.

Like most things however, you have to know exactly what the rules are before you even begin to bend them to suit your own means. The first thing we should remember when riding legal trails is that they are classified in exactly the same way as the road outside your house. This means you, the rider, (plus any pillion) must wear a motorcycle crash helmet (not a pedal cycle or some other type of helmet), and it must be fastened. Any visor or goggles

worn must bear the appropriate BS kitemark.

Contrary to what some people would have you believe there is no legal standard of clothing. CE marking is only a guide when buying, but common sense says buy good quality clothing to keep you warm and dry. A cold, wet rider is more dangerous as they will lose concentration sooner!

Should you not have passed your driving test you will have to display L plates to the front and rear of the machine. These must be on a flat surface, not on the top of mudguards or wrapped around a fork leg. Obviously this will pose a bit of a problem in muddy terrain where a minor spill may damage them if mounted off the main bodywork - but there you are.

It goes without saying that CBT will have to have been completed before you ever venture on to the road, along with a written test! Should you be taking the Direct Access route and riding a bike over 46.6bhp you will need to be accompanied at all

times by a qualified instructor - even if you want to go trail riding!

Moving on to the bike, you must have a valid certificate of insurance to cover you to ride the bike in question. The bike itself must be road legal and have a current MoT - if it requires one. The only time you can legally ride without one is on the way to a pre-booked test by the shortest route and home again if you fail. If you live in London, booking it at a dealer in Cornwall to take in a few trails en-route is not on!

Whilst on the metalled roads, ie those repairable at the public expense, tax discs need to be affixed to the bike, having it in your pocket is not good enough. Whilst it may be safer there from theft, not all policemen take a charitable view. Should you be tempted to affix one from another bike and hope that the mud will make it unreadable, this will lead you into the realms of fraud which carries a term of imprisonment!

That is all fairly straightforward and poses little problem, but the legality of the actual bike is probably the biggest grey area (particularly if it is a grey import), as far as trail riders are concerned. They think because they spend a lot of their time on tracks not normally policed, they can get away with a lot of technicalities. What you have to bear in mind is that you are breaking the law in exactly the same way as if you ride the bike down the M1. There are very few trails you can reach without using metalled roads going to and from your favourite trail leaving you open to being stopped if your bike appears not to comply with current legislation.

You also stand a very good chance of getting a pull on a mud covered machine just to find out whether you have been terrorising old ladies walking their dogs in the local park! Here then are a few facts and pointers to make you aware of some of the main rules and regulations affecting your use of the vehicle on the road and trail.

Many of the machines perceived as the most suitable (and most popular) for trail riding are not officially imported into this country, or if they are, are not sold for road use. Most of these get registered for the road anyway. At one time the Q plate system was favourite, but with many insurance companies now refusing to insure machines bearing a Q

plate people are now applying for age related numbers.

To do this you must produce a letter from the importers giving the date of manufacture. Now the importers are not stupid and whilst they are obliged to date it for you some make a charge for doing so, and many also state on the letter that the machine is not road legal to cover themselves against any eventuality. There is nothing wrong with registering an off road bike with Swansea, in fact it is encouraged to combat theft, but registering it and putting it on the road are two entirely different matters. Just because you have a V5 (registration document) doesn't make it accepted by the authorities that the bike is legal for road use.

Should you ever be unfortunate enough to be involved in a serious accident that may not be your fault and it is found that the bike was never intended for road use (remember the



On the Trail of the LAW

means to charge a battery. You just have to pay the money, do the work and find somewhere for a maintenance free battery to sit safely! A bike can legally pass the test with no lights if it is used in daylight hours only, so the most obvious way around things is to remove the lights for the test (though you must still have a reflector). You should strictly remove all the wiring and switchgear as well, but a practical alternative is to tape them up so they cannot be seen. This is perfectly legitimate, and having passed the test you then refit them so as not to attract too much attention from the boys in blue, and use the bike on the road. This means that



manufacturers' disclaimer), you may risk finding yourself in a court of law.

If your bike is more than three years old an MoT will be required before a tax disc can be issued. So let's consider the MoT itself, some of the dodges to pass and how at a later stage they can affect you on the road. Lights are probably the biggest problem especially on enduro based machines and anything that has a power reduction system as a means of dipping the beam. Most of these bikes have no charging system for a battery so there is no reserve power. Stall your bike at the traffic lights and you have no lights!

There are of course firms marketing kits for such bikes as the Honda XR range that give the bike a

during reduced visibility you can 'show light' (as required by law), and would be okay if caught out in mist and fog or at lighting up time (half an hour after sunset till half an hour before sunrise).

However if you've refitted the lights you now need a brake light, and it will need to be activated by both front and rear brakes, adding to your problems. (Use a pre 1936 bike and you don't need one, or a 50cc bike registered before then if you are still intent on bending the rules.)

Indicators are another problem; if you take them off for the test claiming daytime use only but decide to refit the other lights then they come into play and must be in working order. A bike registered before 1 August 1986 does not require them,

nor does a bike intended 'primarily for off road use', but it may throw up problems as to how a police officer would regard your 'trail bike'. Most manufacturers list a trail bike (although not an enduro bike) as a dual purpose machine so you may well have trouble if you unbolt the indicators to prevent damage, and run without them.

The dodge for a lot of bikes to pass the horn requirement was always a bulb horn which passed muster for a good many years. The requirement is 'for an audible warning capable of being heard by another road user'. It should also be continuous and uniform if fitted after 1 August 1973. So this is now at the discretion of the tester and many feel they cannot accept the gentle peep of a bicycle horn in today's traffic.

It is in every trail rider's interest to have a quiet exhaust note so as not to attract attention when passing through sleepy villages or passing horses. Performance is not really the name of the game when on the trails so fitting aftermarket exhausts is not really a good idea apart from weight saving. Certainly if it is registered after 1 January 1985 then whatever silencer is fitted must be an original manufacturer's part or if an aftermarket one, approved to BS AU 192. Apart from the noisy silencer aspect of things there is also the leaking exhaust whereby exhaust gases escape to atmosphere before actually going through the silencer. Therefore, a constant check of the system and joints is in order so as not to offend.

Speed limits on trails are actually voluntary in most cases, but on the road they are mandatory, therefore a speedo is not only legally required (unless your bike was on the road before 1 October 1937), but it also makes sense. Another exemption is bikes below 100cc first used before 1 April 1984 or a bike not capable of more than 25mph!

If the bike is registered after 1 April 1984 it should be capable of giving a reading in both mph and kph (grey import riders please note). This tends to rule out the bicycle electronic items that seem to be appearing where there is difficulty in arranging a drive from the wheel or gearbox on a non standard machine not intended for the road.

Tyres are probably the biggest cause for concern for most trail riders: what is and is not legal on the road? In the lawbook this comes under the category of 'tyres unsuitable' and strictly speaking it's up to the individual police officer to decide whether you are capable of 'controlling' your machine on the tyres that are fitted given the road conditions. Although motocross tyres are not actually illegal on the road, it all depends upon the police's interpretation of the term 'suitable' as to whether you are breaking the law or not. The recorded cases do not set a precedent and although MoT testers will fail a bike

fitted with knobbles, this doesn't actually mean they are illegal. (Remember, passing an MoT does not actually prove the bike's road worthiness, and a current 'ticket' is no defence in court).

In any case if your tyre is marked 'Not for highway use' (or NHS) which strictly speaking is meant to apply only in the USA, then you are likely to get booked for it here in the UK as most police officers will consider that a tyre unsuitable for use on an American highway may be equally unsuitable for British roads. Trials, trail and speed rated FEM enduro tyres are, however, generally held to be a safe compromise - but even road legal enduro tyres may land you in trouble with the law if you find yourself on the wrong side of a particularly officious individual. Under-inflated tyres may aid grip on mud but have no place on the main roads, so if you let them down considerably whilst on the trail, you will have to pump them up again when back on the metalled roads. All tyre offences carry three penalty points on your licence as well as the fine!

Talking of tyres, the mudguards should be capable of catching as far as practicable, mud or water thrown up by the rotation of the wheels. The moral of this is not to cut the mudguards down too much or lift



On the Trail of the LAW

For those who compete in enduros or other types of competition which utilise public highways, section 13A states that if you ride in a manner outside of what is expected at an organised event, you could end up facing a 'dangerous' charge if it all goes wrong. Likewise start doing some illegal trail riding or using the common to practice on, and you also commit an offence!

Lastly, just a word about the lunch stop at the pub. You have had a hot sweaty ride with lots of heaving the bike out of mud etc, consequently you need to replace fluid. One too many beers however could cause you serious problems, nuff said!

There is a lot to think about when out enjoying your favourite trails, these are just some of the more common rules and regulations that could affect you. Use your common sense, keep a well turned out bike, ride sensibly and most people will ignore the trivial things or perhaps turn a blind eye. Above all else enjoy yourself, ride safely with a legal mount, it will not ruin your enjoyment just enhance it, knowing you are on the right side of the law, but remember, ignorance real or otherwise is no defence. You have been warned.

Ian Kerr

them too far away from the tyres, it may stop mud clogging, but could actually get you a fine!

Small number plates or ones attached to the rear mudguard pointing skywards, may seem a good idea to prevent mud clogging the rear wheel or unnecessary damage to the numberplate in the event of a spill, but these are one of the quickest ways of getting pulled on the road. The police feel rightly or wrongly, that these are a way of avoiding speed cameras and consequently stop riders on a regular basis. Trail riding is not a legal exemption to the number plate laws and all number plates must not only be the correct size and of the reflective variety (unless the bike is pre-1973), but easily legible as well (which theoretically means clean at all times).

Plastic tanks (or rather, tanks not made of metal), used to be a problem, but the law changed a few years ago and they are now perfectly legal for road use. Any machine used regularly on the rough is going to take a pounding, and items are going to wear out due to the ingress of water and dirt among other things. Spokes will loosen, rims get damaged, items bent and so on. These all come under the heading of 'condition' in the MoT, or 'dangerous condition' when on the road for 'Construction and Use' offences, and remember each dangerous item is an endorsable offence!

Any accidents you may have on the trail are treated in exactly the same way as on any other road and you will have to stop and exchange details as you would in the high street. Also if somebody is injured, the police have to be notified unless it is just you falling off in the middle of nowhere with no one else involved.

Bear in mind, your manner of riding is now capable of getting you taken to court if it falls below an acceptable standard - a point worth remembering as you wheelie past a line of rambles showing off your precise throttle control and balance. Dangerous driving is an imprisonable offence and the fines are very steep along with compulsory re-testing.



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TRF Rights of Passage

Recently the Land Access and Recreation Association (LARA) representative Tim Stevens did battle in the High Court over the rights of trail riders.

His case exposed the inadequacies of the current legal system surrounding the reclassification of rights of way, and the outdated legislative and judicial processes involved. What effect if any does that have on trail riders, and what was the background to this case?

**TRF Rights of Way Officer
Steve Neville explains...**

Unfair Dismissal...

Well, as you may have heard the Norton Malreward case about an insignificant road used as public path (RuPP) in Somerset has been through the High Court - and we lost. Needless to say we in the TRF are none too pleased about this, especially as we thought our arguments were sound. The 'enemy' so to speak was the Secretary of State for the Environment.

To remind readers, at issue was the importance by which an inspector at a public inquiry should take into account user evidence on/in motor vehicles during reclassification in order to establish unequivocally vehicular rights of way. Recently the Planning Inspectorate has been rejecting vehicular user evidence on the basis that a RuPP was a bridleway and that it is illegal to use a motor vehicle on a bridleway. But a RuPP is not a bridleway. It is defined in statute as 'something other than a footpath or bridleway', so how could they get this wrong?

The contradiction comes with the Road Traffic Acts since 1930 which made motor vehicle use on a bridleway or footpath illegal. To make life even more complicated, other legislation states that the depiction of any particular right of way on a definitive map is without prejudice to any other (higher) rights that may exist. Government guidance has said: In ascertaining what rights exist over their RuPPs, authorities should take into account all the evidence at their disposal; that is the evidence which results in the way being shown on the definitive map and statement as a RuPP in the first place, plus any additional evidence discovered in the meantime, including evidence of use by vehicular traffic, and evidence of status in historic documents such as Inclosure and Tithe Awards.



Court in the 'Act'...

One of the key arguments in this court case was the principle that it is not illegal to ride on a RuPP on the basis that it is recorded on the definitive map as a RuPP. In most parts of the country trail riders and 4WD-ers have tended to use only those RuPPs that looked like roads anyway, and avoided the odd trails that do not look and 'feel' like old roads.

Our barrister Edwin Simpson made several key points during the two day hearing: The classification of RuPP, footpath and bridleway in the 1949 Act was intended to reflect the position at common law; carriageway, footpath and bridleway. The definition of RuPP was intended to ensure that the surveyors mapped only minor highways rather than major roads; Therefore inclusion of the track as a RuPP on the Definitive Map must mean the surveyors were

satisfied that it was NOT merely a footpath or bridleway. If it was thought to be a footpath or a bridleway it would have been a 'public path' and a RuPP is defined as a highway 'other than a public path'.

Case law used against us (Robinson v Adair) was shown to be irrelevant to this case in that it didn't apply to RuPPs. It reinforced the principle that one is guilty of an offence under what is now section 34 (1) of the 1988 Road Traffic Act if one drives a motor vehicle on any road being a 'footpath or bridleway'. But the track in question is not a footpath or a bridleway so defined - if it was, it would not have been classified as a RuPP by county surveyors. Therefore, no offence is committed under section 34 subsection (1). On these points all the judge could say was that the RTA passed in 1956 made it an offence to drive on a footpath or bridleway, missing our barrister's point completely.



Another Tack...

Edwin Simpson also said even if the inspector was right to exclude unlawful user evidence by motor vehicles as a foundation for prescriptive acquisition of a public right of way under section 31(1) of the 1980 Act, he should still have taken it into consideration as evidence of reputation of the way for the purpose of deciding whether dedication could be presumed at common law.

Finally we argued that the Inspector failed to deal properly with the documentary evidence. If he was right to discount the evidence of user, the case stood or fell on the documentary evidence alone, but the Inspector dealt simply with new documentary evidence and he nowhere balanced that new documentary evidence against the earlier documentary evidence which had led the first Inspector to believe in the existence of vehicular rights as being 'the more likely possibility'.



The Empire Strikes Back...

The counter arguments were that all the evidence of vehicular use of the track was very recent - certainly post 1930 (ie the date of the first Road Traffic Act). No new evidence of vehicular use had been added at the second inquiry. To add insult to injury the judge would not waive costs. We argued that this action had been taken in the public interest since the law

Rights of Passage

to try. Record your user evidence both on trail bike and bicycle as well. Also see if you can find any sepia toned photos of pre-1930 motorcycles on your favourite green lanes. If we can all find some of these in our granddad's photo albums we're home and dry.



To RuPP or Not To RuPP...

needed clarifying. Why should a member of the public who brings a case such as this, risk his own money and property? No problem said the judge, I'm sure Mr Stevens can find the money through the motoring organisations. Strange then that a recent case of a little old lady objecting to a successful byway claim who had her case thrown out did not have to pay costs!



Where do we go from here?...

All this legal mumbo jumbo leads us to one simple question: What does this mean to us as trail riders? This judgment only really refers to RuPPs, not byways open to all traffic or unclassified county roads. My interpretation is that we must now only ride those RuPPs on which there is some form of historic pre-1930 evidence that the route was vehicular. This really means archive evidence - and there is plenty about. The first step is to check with your local highway authority as to what evidence there is on every RuPP you ride. This does not mean that you have to find out every last bit of history about a road, just be aware of something that indicates vehicular rights; enclosure award; tithe map entry; Finance Act 1910 survey, or old pre 1930 maps are all valid.

Motoring user evidence is now not really much help unless you can trace it back to before 1930 and there aren't many octogenarian trail riders left. BUT horse and carriage use post 1930 is of use. The only problem is who owns a horse and carriage? Not many of us! However, we do all own another sort of non motorised carriage..... it's called a bicycle. Stupid though this may appear, in the eyes of common law it is a (people powered) carriage. Therefore if you have used a bicycle on a RuPP for 20 or more years then that must count as evidence. It can't count towards bridleway evidence because only a horse can do that. This is a line of argument that we need

If a TRF member is prosecuted for riding a RuPP, we will defend him or her through the fighting fund, providing that there is some sort of evidence to defend on. To secure a criminal prosecution under the Road Traffic Act, the court will have to prove that vehicular rights definitely don't exist. This is different to civil law where to get a successful byway claim, the evidence is based on the 'balance of probabilities'.

We shall be making representations to the DETR and Countryside Commission, if they will listen to us. We'll remind the legislators that they got the definitions of RuPPs and byways wrong in 1949 and in the subsequent two countryside acts. Perhaps it's about time they asked the people who actually use these roads as vehicular routes, what is and what is not, a right of way for motor vehicles. Unlike the Ramblers we are not asking for the right to traipse over every bit of uncultivated land and wood, we only want the right to ride a few thousand miles of the remaining network of unsurfaced roads that have not yet been ruined by tarmac, kerbs and all the other highway paraphernalia.

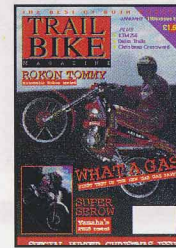


Act Four, Seen... Soon!

The Ramblers want free access to all open land - the so called 'right to roam'. We will therefore need a new Countryside Act - The Countryside Act 2001 perhaps? The last one was the Wildlife and Countryside Act in 1981 and before that the Countryside Act 1968. I guess that Part I of this Act will be about open access, Part II will deal with various environmental matters like hedges, development and landscape features; Perhaps Part III will deal with public rights of way? And maybe, just maybe the legislators can get it right this time?!

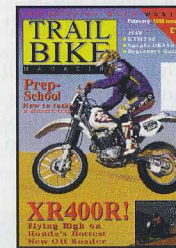
**Steve Neville, National Rights of Way Officer,
Trail Riders Fellowship**

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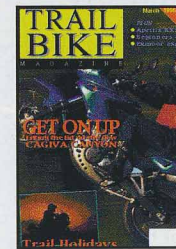
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STAFF BIKES

New for old

Si Melber
Honda - XR400R

After more than a year of ownership it was time for the house XR400R to be replaced with something even tastier - but what should it be? Si Melber takes up the story...

When the XR400R was launched I must admit that I was one of the thousands of people who lusted after this bike. It sounded perfect: a compact, gutsy, air-cooled middleweight thumper motor housed in a new box-section, lightweight chassis with yards of suspension travel, Honda reliability, and rock solid resale... Hmm, the reality has proved slightly different.

It would be churlish of me to criticise the bike unduly especially now it's on its way to a new owner, but I thought the most constructive way of bringing you up to date on the highs and lows of XR4 ownership was by suggesting areas of improvement to the bike which would make it a whole lot better.

Let me start by saying that the XR4 is still a good bike, but not yet a great one. To be great Honda needs to address a few key areas. The biggest one is starting. Plainly and simply the XR4 is in dire need of an electric starter. Stick any four stroke on its side for more than a couple of seconds and I guarantee you'll have trouble starting it - the XR is typical in this respect. On the trail this is be knacker and frustrating, but in an enduro it can make the difference between winning and losing the event. There's

an electric starter on Honda's home market XR250 and one on the big-bore Stateside XR650. Why didn't they fit one to the 400 for gawd's sake?

Next they need to address the clutch problems. All over the world XR4s have been running their clutches. We burned one out on the Welsh Two Day enduro last year, and numerous readers have contacted us to say that the same fault has befallen their own bikes. Sure some of it is down to over-enthusiastic use of the clutch lever for which I take responsibility (in our case), but we've heard of clutches failing on barely run-in machines - which just isn't good enough.

Carb problems have been the XR's Achilles heel, though for the 98 model, Honda claims to have sorted this problem out. We'll have to wait to see whether the latest models suffer from the same sort of carb problems that the earlier ones did, but surely this shouldn't have been allowed to happen in the first place.

And lastly a few other little points all grouped together: The XR4 is still too tall for the average rider. No question about it, it needs a lower seat height to make it more versatile and appealing to the majority of riders. Over six foot tall - no problem, but any less than that and you're struggling. The kickstart is a problem area too. We still hear about far too many snagged and even snapped kickstarts for our liking. And finally the tappet and locknut adjusters proved faulty on some early 97 bikes like ours. In fairness this is something Honda addressed, but if you're buying a used one be sure to check if the work has been done.

Okay that said, let's be even handed here. The Honda XR400R is still a superb dirt digger. Why? Because when you ride one you'll realise just how versatile, rugged and fun a mid-weight thumper can be. The XR4 epitomises the notion of a usable, all round, dual sportster, with superb performance and excellent handling. And perhaps the real problem is not that the XR4 is a bad bike, but in fact that we've come to expect better from the Big Aitch.

You see in the 50 years that Honda have been

manufacturing motorcycles we've come to rely on them to produce good quality, well sorted bikes with a fine reputation for reliability and engineering. There have been exceptions of course - but none so recent. My biggest problem with the XR4 is not that it didn't perform - but that it didn't perform like a Honda should.

I should qualify that remark and say that I've spent many a

happy hour on the bike. TBM staff have thraped our bike up lane and down stages and all have been impressed with the XR4's refreshing mix of useability and general urge. Undoubtedly I will mourn its passing. Despite its faults, it was and still is, in our opinion, probably the best all round middleweight trail and enduro bike currently available. In a year's time I may look back with misty-eyed fondness at its

alluring bark, its eager manner and its easy handling, and say I should never have sold it - at least not quite so cheaply! But right now my overriding feeling is that as a bike it is only 85% of what it could have been given a little more development time and some extra market research.

For now then it's farewell and adieu to the XR, and hello to... THE HUSEY.

Husaberg FE501 Elduro

'You've gone and bought a what? - A Husey? Well good luck mate!' That's been the reaction I've got from most of my friends when I tell them I've shelled out my own hardly earned dosh on a (nearly) new 98 Husaberg 501 electric start. You see, while most people acknowledge Husaberg's undoubted reputation for racing success, most are only too happy to remind you that this reputation has been partially (if not totally) eclipsed by their willingness to go wrong at inopportune moments. You can talk all day at them about world championships and famous victories, but at the end of it all they just laugh and say 'Well don't say I didn't warn you'.

Okay, so perhaps they're not the most reliable of bikes - but then again neither was my XR. Let's give



Husaberg FE501 now resides at the TBM office. Will it prove to be as reliable as the XR400R? Let's hope not.

STAFF BIKES



Headlight guard is a neat idea

the thing a chance to prove itself first and then we'll come to a conclusion about the reliability/performance trade-off. Besides I just had to have one. Ever since I rode a 501 back in 1995 (TBM2), I have had a yearning to own one of these leggy Swedish beauties. Seduced by the seamless power, the endless stomp, the lowish seat (yep its lower than the XR4), and the fact that starting it when hot was no more taxing than a quick prod of the starter button.

So I've invested in the Elduro model, the electric start version of the enduro bike. Basically the same machine but with a battery and starter, as well as a few road going accessories: indicators, dipping glass headlight, key ignition, speedo etc. Fully road legal, and ready

to rock and roll. I figured it would make a perfect long term tester for the mag this year. We'll race it, rally it, trail ride and raid on it, and when the summer comes we'll stick on a set of supermoto rims and hoon around the back roads. Then we'll tell you whether you can have your cake, and eat it; whether a specialist racer like the Berg can hack it as an everyday trail and enduro mount, and whether the TBM spares budget is really as elastic as it might need to be!

Personally, I reckon the Berg can hack it and I'm prepared to back up my thinking by putting my own dosh behind it. My mates? Well they aren't so sure, though they've all been on the phone begging for a ride on the beast. For now though they'll just have to wait. It's only just been registered and I need to put a few more Ks on it before I let it into the hands of Bodger Blez or Crasher Cornish.... I must be mad.

Si Melber



Wicked... Isn't it?

On the road again

Paul Blezard
Honda - XR600R

The XR saga continues... as Blez finally gets his face-lifted thumper back on the road and trail...

By the time I'd got my exhaust stud problem fixed (TBM 32) and found a friendly MoT tester to give my bike a fair hearing, so to speak (see MoT rant TBM34), autumn was long gone and winter was upon us.

I must admit it was a bit of a shock to ride the XR on the road again after having the use of a BMW Funduro for a couple of months. And that was *after* I'd tightened the mounting bolts on the front caliper that staff smudger Neil P had thoughtfully left nice'n'loose, just to keep me on my toes. By comparison with the F650, my XR600 felt about as light and twitchy as the Rieju 125 we tested a few months ago. And those tyres! Sheesh! Having been full of righteous indignation when two MoT testers in a row refused to even look at the bike with the radical but speed rated and street-legal Michelin Bajas fitted, I was horrified to discover that on wet tarmac they were some of the scariest boots I'd ever ridden on.

I'd almost convinced myself that the swinging arm bearings were on their way out but a quick inspection showed that most of the movement was simply side-wall flex in the tyre - even with 20psi in it. I pumped it up to 30psi and that improved things a bit, but with my snatchy throttle it still made for a pretty exciting ride around the greasy streets of the metrolops. Snatchy throttle? Well yes. Sadly, the

In for a shock? Nothing surprises us when it comes to Blez's bodging!



swap to an almost brand new carb (effected simultaneously with the 'plastic surgery') had done nothing to cure the slow-speed snatchiness which has plagued the bike for a couple of years now. In fact it made the bike a bit grumpier from cold because the standard jetting of the new carb is a bit lean for the modified air-box - a revision is imminent. The continuing low-speed throttle snatchiness is a bit of a mystery because I have now changed the cable, the twistgrip and the carb and while it ain't as bad as it once was, it's still nothing like how it should be.

STAFF BIKES

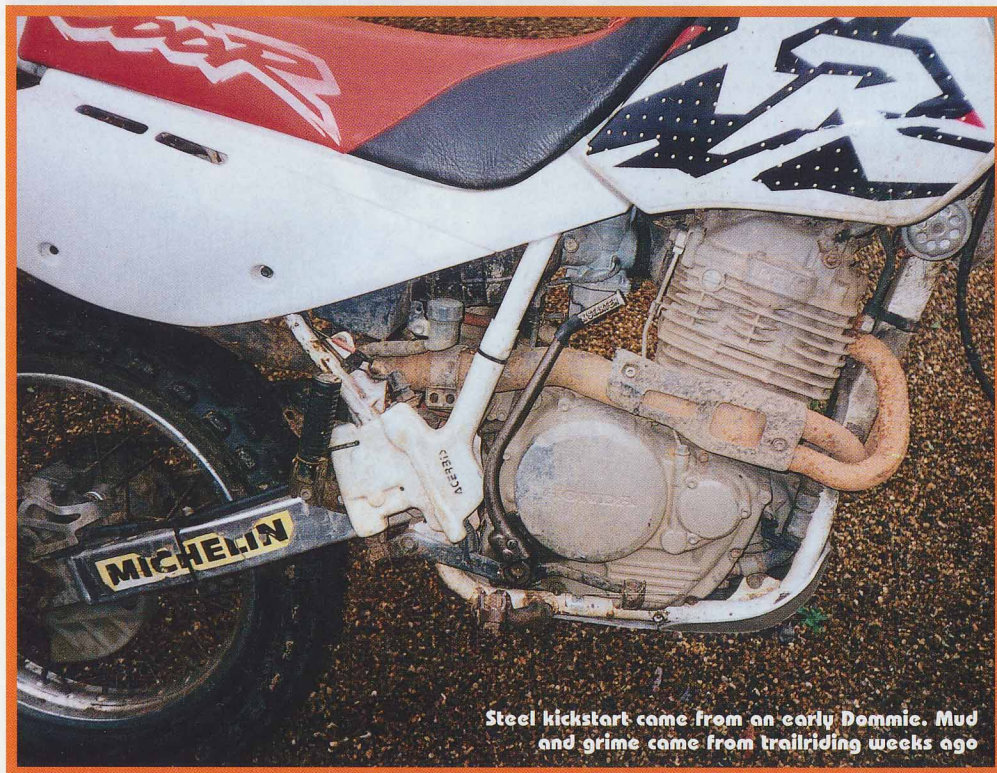
Most XR600s I've ridden have a heavy throttle action but none of them suffers from the same degree of snatchiness as mine. In fact I rode a newish XR600 the other day which had a perfect throttle so before I do anything radical I'm thinking that I might just put the 'return' cable back on instead of running with just a single 'pull' cable on its own.

The other cheap option would be to fit a slower action twistgrip to regain some precision over the initial throttle opening. There is also a modified 'cam' that you can fit to the pulley on the carb which I tried on an old '85 twin carb XR during our trip to Burgundy last year. It's horribly expensive (about £30 I think) for what is just a little triangle of alloy, but if it made my throttle as smooth and light as that one was, it would be worth it. The weird thing is that when the engine isn't running, the throttle action seems perfect and snaps back and forth like a good 'un. Given that I've already tried changing the

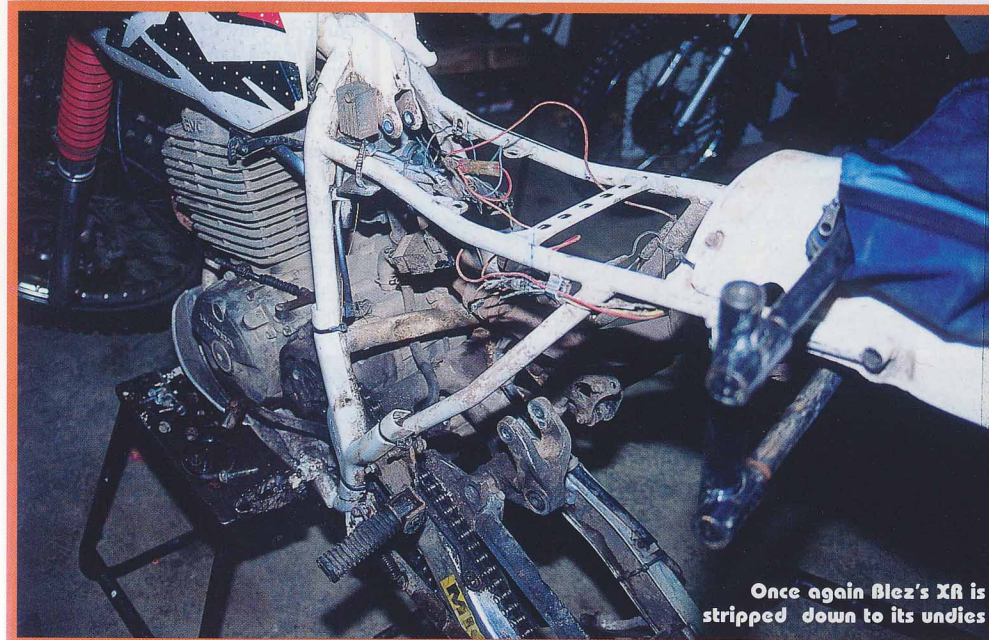
carb, this makes me think the problem might even be something to do with piston slap in the cylinder bore or something. But for all its age and abuse, the old girl has actually only done 14,000 miles from new and otherwise works fine. Mind you, she's well overdue for a tappet check so I guess I should make that a priority some time soon too...

Anyway, notwithstanding all these minor irritations, the XR and I did finally make it back out on the trail together on a TRF run with the South London and Surrey group between Christmas and New Year. We'd only done a couple of trails when I contrived to lose my balance and topple over just waiting by the side of the road - well, I like to put people at their ease. This little mishap bent the front brake lever which Si had straightened for me back in June despite the smart new Acerbis hand protectors. I'll give them the benefit of the doubt for now because they do need to be in high tension, a bit like a crossbow just before firing, in order to work properly and I suspect that they weren't.

The Surrey trails were well slippery that day, which apart from providing plenty of entertainment, also gave the Michelin Bajas a chance to redeem themselves and I'm pleased to report that they per-



Steel kickstart came from an early Dommie. Mud and grime came from trailriding weeks ago



Once again Blez's XR is stripped down to its undies

formed excellently on the snotty stuff. However, on the damp tarmac roads in-between the trails they were a-slippin' 'an' a-slidin' all over the place - even in a straight line!

After riding a good variety of trails on both sides of the A25 west of Dorking, we moved on into Sussex to tackle a really demanding triangle of green lanes between Plaistow and Mackerel's Common. My friend Jeremy had been struggling a bit on his old Armstrong because it was shod with a worn out 'cat's paw' trail tyre so we swapped steeds. I was just congratulating myself for having fought the old MT500 through the snottiest, muddiest, most slippery bit of jungle so far when I heard a shout from the forest behind and looked back to see Jezza gesticulating wildly. I tramped back on foot to be greeted with those immortal words 'You'll never guess what - the kick-start's come

off'. But it was worse than that. It hadn't just come off; the bit of the kick-start that clamps onto the gear shaft spline had actually sheared clean in two. 'Oh dear', I said, or words to that effect. 'I dunno Jezza, I lend you my bike for five minutes and you break the soddin' thing'.

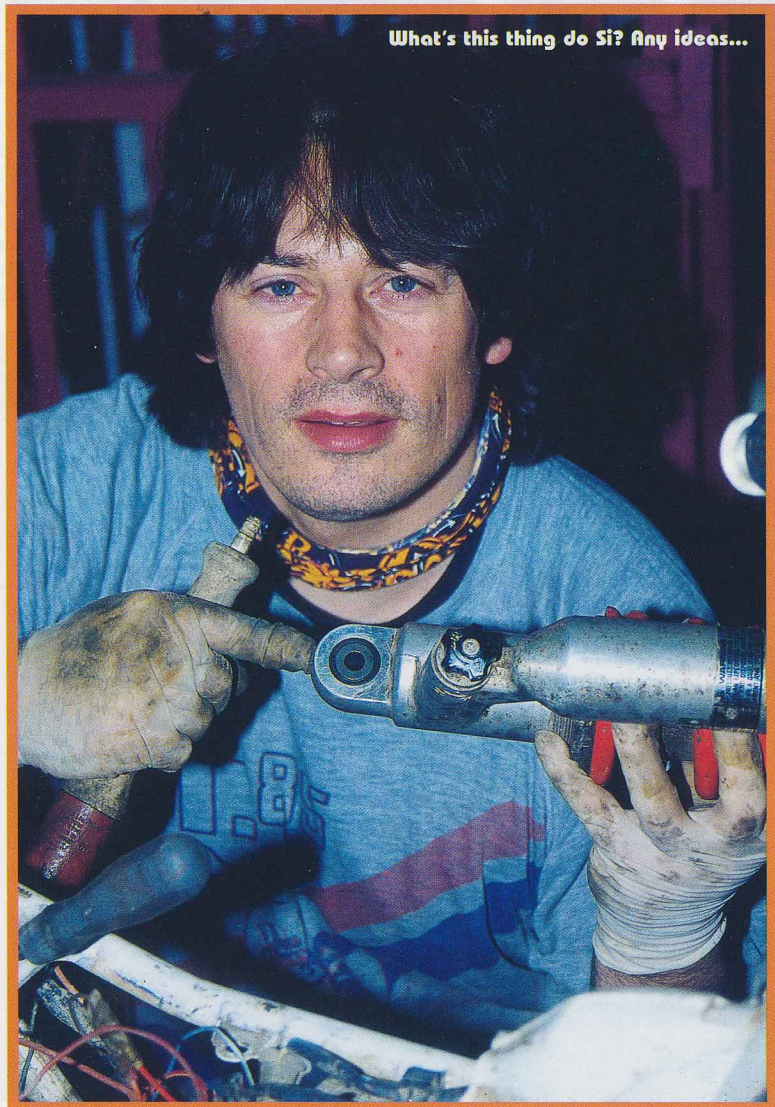
After a pointless and futile attempt to use my Mole-grips as a substitute kick-start, I realised there was nothing for it but to attempt a bump-start in this



Old kickstarter gave up the ghost

STAFF BIKES

most unpromising territory. We found a sort of passage through the woods about 20 yards long which might, just might, make a 'bump' possible. With three stout fellows pushing, I released the clutch with my fingers and the decompression lever with



What's this thing do Si? Any ideas...

my thumb while simultaneously dropping my 15 stone bulk onto the saddle and, Lord Be Praised, the XR roared back into life. All I had to do then was fight my way back the way we'd come without stalling which, after a fright when I nearly dropped the bike, I just managed to do. Phew! There was more excitement still to

come though, courtesy of those pesky Bajas. (That should be pronounced 'Bar-hars' by the way, unless, like Neil, you can't be arsed with any of that Spanish nonsense, in which case just call 'em 'Badgers').

First I had the back end step right out on the way into a very tight left-hander (with his Armstrong's dodgy brakes, Jezza continued straight on into the scenery) then, on a sweeping right-hander which I was gently bimbbling round at about 50mph, the front tyre started to let go, swiftly followed by the rear and I had my heart in my mouth as the XR drifted across the wet tarmac for several seconds but fortunately regained grip before I ran out of road. Phew again!

Poor Jezza was mortified by the kick-start catastrophe and gallantly offered to pay for the damage, but back at the ranch, close examination of the broken part revealed rust and corrosion in an old crack - the whole thing had obviously been weakened for a long time and it was just bad luck that it sheered when he was riding it. 'It's no big deal', I reassured him, it's not as if I have to replace the whole kick-start, it's only the knuckle at the bottom that's broken'. Ha! Famous last words! A quick call to Honda dealer

Tippets elicited the following apologetic response: 'I'm afraid you can't order the knuckle part separately on post-85 XR600s and a complete kick-start assembly costs £83'. Gulp. 'The knuckle alone is available for the earlier XRs, but even that costs £43'. Double gulp.

This encouraged me to search the breakers' ads and I discovered that Bernie's in Aldershot had no less than six Dominator kick-starts sitting on their shelves, so I bought one of them for the princely sum of £17 plus VAT. (The early Dommies came with kick as well as electric start). That's more like it! The lever bolted straight on and the smooth movement as it hinged out and the ball bearing clicked into place made me realise how knackered my old one had been in that department too. And while it's steel instead of alloy, so what? The difference in weight can't possibly be more than a pound and I've lost six times that in the three days since it broke having to push start the thing on a morning.

My kick-start troubles weren't over yet though. A few days later the XR provided a challenging mount for my friend Liz on her first ever excursion onto the Green Lanes of England. They weren't looking very green though, since it was actually dark by the time we got to the normally easy trails around Five Lanes Ends in Hampshire, and to add to the challenge they were more slippery than I've ever known them. Anyway, Liz was coping er, manfully, until she attempted to plough her own furrow in a particularly muddy section and came a reet pearler. I attempted to re-start the XR for her and guess what? The new Dommie kick-start sprung off its spline and disappeared into the surrounding slime. Even with her Funduro's searchlight-like headlight beam illuminating the whole trail, the kickstart escaped detection for several worrying minutes until Liz finally found it by 'feel', well-buried in the foot-deep mud. Turned out I just hadn't tightened the pinch-bolt enough - despite being brand new it had been eaten away in the middle in less than 50 kicks - yet the original bolt had lasted seven years! Another new bolt has now been done up really tight with a lock-nut on the other end for good measure and the Dommie kick-start has given no further trouble. Other bits have though...

As the rear end continued to wobble about (er... the bike's not mine), I got a couple more people to have a look at it. All were surprised by the amount of sidewall movement of the Baja rear tyre but one reckoned the brand new wheel bearings had some play in them as well. My mate Alan Seagrave (who knows all about XRs) agreed that there was a tiny amount of play in the bearings (shock, horror, probe



Biez's bearings continue to give trouble. Mind you it might help if he cleaned the thing once in a while

but diagnosed a knackered rose-joint at the top of the rear shock - a problem he'd encountered before. He added that he'd ridden on worse tyres than Bajas too, but couldn't get over the amount of spray coming off the front mudguard. I explained that my good friends Si and Neil had cut the brand new Acerbis unit short while I'd been out of the room making some sandwiches because it was fouling the downtube. 'Why didn't they just add uneven spacers to the mounting bolts so that it tilted clear of the frame?' he asked incredulously. 'I guess it didn't occur to them' I replied, feeling like a complete mule. Alan pointed out that he's actually added length to his XR's mudguard with a bijou little mudflap so that the spray off the front wheel isn't fired straight at the spark plug, and funnily enough, I remember fitting one to my XR500 15 years ago.

Anyway, Gary Taylor at Aye Gee's in Welling (a fellow XR600 owner) got me another rear shock rose-joint in double quick time (about £20 including the dust seal and retaining ring), along with a 155 main jet for the new carb, and Dakar hero Si Pavey kindly offered me the use of the Archway Project workshop in beautiful downtown Thamesmead so I could fit it.

While Si P and his mate slotted a new piston and cam into his Dakar-surviving XR600, I removed the

STAFF BIKES

rear shock from my own machine for the very first time since it was built in 1991. To make life easier I took out both the rear wheel and the airbox but it was still a hell of a fiddle to get at the mounting bolts. Once removed, they were revealed to be in excellent condition - far better in fact than the ones in Si P's '98 XR. Si reckoned there wasn't much wrong with the rose joint either - showing some signs of wear, but not enough to account for all the wheel wobble. But having got that far I was determined to replace it anyway. It's a press fit in the top of the shock and we removed it with the help of the project's press (having first removed the dust seals and circlip of course). Putting the new rose joint in was not quite so straightforward - in fact the exercise very nearly turned to disaster. Unfortunately for me, Si and his mate had gone out to get something to eat when I was attempting this rather delicate operation and found the remote reservoir got in the way. Being of little brain I couldn't work out how to get around this problem with the press, so I resorted to those two precision instruments, the hammer and vice.

I had the sense to use a socket of the right size inbetween but to my horror the brand new rose joint cracked its outer shell almost immediately. I was still gnashing my teeth, rending my raiment and wailing 'woe is me' when Si returned and pointed out that the 'crack' was just a slight displacement along the manufacturing join. He showed me how to get around the press problem by making use of an extension bar and as we pushed the new rose joint into place, the 'crack' closed up. Unfortunately it had created a 'lip' in the alloy as it went in crooked so we ended up pressing it out again, smoothing out the alloy and finally pressing it back in straight. Nothing is ever simple when I start spannering!

I finally got the whole thing back together some time after midnight and guess what? It didn't make a blind bit of difference! There was far more noticeable effect from putting a new 155 main jet in the carb, which stopped all the popping and banging when cold.

No, the sad truth is that the poxy wheel-bearings are knackered again - or rather, I suspect, the housing in the hub is knackered. That's the only explanation for having play from a brand-new bearing - the XR has now

eaten five sets in 14,000 miles. Drastic measures are called for and I'll report on them next time. The play is not that bad - there's actually far more movement from those bizarre Bajas, so in the meantime I'm still tooling around town on the old warhorse.

But while I'm spannering on the wheel bearings again I'd ideally like to replace the well worn rear disc. In fact I'm tempted to replace the whole wheel and disc as a unit. I'd buy a brand new Talon one if I could afford it but I can't so if anyone knows of a secondhand XR600 (or XR650) rear wheel in good condition, I'm definitely in the market for one. Likewise, if anyone has any experience of up-grading the output of a US-spec XR600 alternator I'd also like to hear from them. Of course, if I had any sense, I'd sell the beast now while it's still looking presentable, so if anyone is desperate to own this uniquely desirable and carefully maintained machine, make me an offer over £2,000 and I might be tempted. Don't all shout at once now, form an orderly queue please. **Paul 'Spanners' Blezard**



Is that the reservoir you've clamped tightly in the vice Paul?

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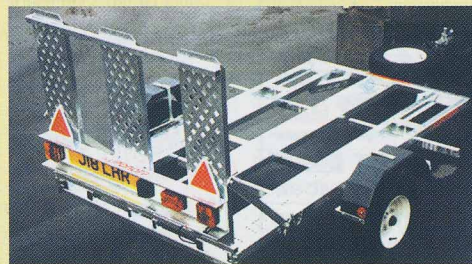
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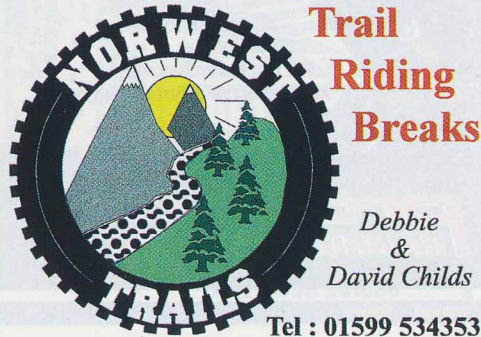
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KTM 400EGS, 1995, vgc, 10,000km, road & green lane use only, new tyres, only two owners from new, £3250. Tel Iain on 0179 384 8399 (Wilts)

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Kawasaki KDX200, 1995 model, absolutely mint cond all round, few extras, £2300 ono or may p/x for moto cross '94 model onwards. Tel Mark on 0130 286 3507 (Doncaster)

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Kawasaki KDX200, 1997, R-reg, taxed, factory Graffix, DEP pipe, Bark Busters new Nov '98, O-ring, Renthals, £2750 ovno. Tel William on (mobile) 0385 515485 or 0124 226 1063 (Glos)

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Suzuki DR500S, twin shock, 1983, Y-reg, T&T, new clutch, vgc, £950, no offers. Tel 01525 383920 after 6pm (Beds)

Suzuki PE175 enduro, 1980/V, T&T, Renthals, good cond, £350 ono. Tel 01328 821024 (Norfolk)

Yamaha YZ250, 91, enduro spec, large tank, brush guards, new engine, well maintained, receipts, Werx graphics, £1100 no offers. Tel 01530 835771 (Leics)

Suzuki DR350S, 93, 7000m, MoT, Renthals, white & yellow, injury forces reluctant sale, £1800. Tel 0958 349524 (Dorset)

Suzuki DR350SET, e/start, P-reg, Renthals, Acerbis bits, braided front brake hose, 3000m, good cond, £2800. Tel 01132 531850 (Leeds)

Yamaha XT350, 87/E, fantastic cond, fully serviced, many new parts, genuine bike, extras included, new bike forces sale, £1295. Tel 01773 831751 (Derby's)

Suzuki DR385 enduro, H-reg, T&T, 5000m, Supertrapp, many new parts, full lighting kit, vgc, £1675 ono. Tel Paul on 01458 250943 (Somerset)

Suzuki DR350, 1992 trailbike, T&T, low miles, service history, vgc, £1900 ono. Tel 01179 353733 (Bristol)

Yamaha XT225 Serow, H-reg, e/start, blue & white, low miles, T&T, vgc, £1400 ono. Tel 01323 761895 (E

Sussex)

Kawasaki KDX250SR enduro, vgc, 91/H, £1650 ono. Tel Dave on 07771 714916 anytime (Kent)

Kawasaki KLX650, 95/N, green, Datatagged, good dual purpose bike, may p/x cheaper bike, £2095. Tel 01724 861025 (Lincs)

Husqvarna TE610, 100 miles from new, R-reg (Feb 98), £3950, may p/x for KLX250/XR250 plus cash, save £1300 on new price. Tel 01792 702247 (Glamorgan)

Suzuki DR350 e/start, 95/N, T&T, good cond, well maintained, low mileage, £2700 ono. Tel after 7pm 01202 605241 (Dorset)

Honda XL600RM, C-reg, e/start, small tank, new c/s, must go, £1500 ono. Tel 01342 717182 (Sussex)

Honda XR400R, HRC kitted, 97/P, Excel rims, Talon hubs, B+B baffle, lods of spares and extras, John Rushworth prepared, green lane use, £3500. Tel 01629 734921 (Derby's)

BMW R1100GS, 96/N, FSH, excel cond, D/tag, Datatool alarm, £6000 ono. Tel 01384 232711 (W Mids)

Kawasaki KX250 enduro K-reg, T&T, lighting coil, heavier flywheel, ceramic barrel, new P&R, C/S, Acerbis guards, FMF exhaust, excel cond, £1800 ono. Tel 01482 219511 (E Yorks)

Yamaha DT250MX, 1980, T&T, new chain, seat, battery, mirrors, good cond, £575. Tel Stuart on 0181 402 4981 (Kent)

Suzuki PE250, 1980, t/shock enduro, Mot, good cond, new shocks & brakes, perfect g/laner, very quick classic. Tel 01420 511529 (Hants)

Suzuki DR350SE, 95/N, e/start, 8500m, Renthals, brush g/s, frame protect, MT81s, some spares, serv hist, immac cond, £2695 ono. Tel 01202 848245 (Dorset)

Honda XR400RV, 96, 4000ks, one owner, UK model, green lane use only, £2895 ono. Tel Rodney on 01253 810338 or 812997 (Blackpool)

Kawasaki KDX125SR, 1990, 3600m, T&T, outstanding cond, spare tyre, green lane use only, £1150 ono. Tel Karl on 0973 228269 (W Mids)

Honda XL250RE, E-reg, eng req attn, scruffy but all orig, new tyres, ideal project, offers please. Tel 01782 848034 (Staffs)

Yamaha XT600Z Tenere, 89/G, 27,000m, T&T, new tyre, good cond, £1499 ono. Tel Andy on 01703 555556 (Hants)

Honda XL600R, 84, big Acerbis tank, MoT, Italian import, good cond, red & white £1400. Tel 01428 682238 (Surrey)

WANTED

Wanted petrol tank to fit 1984 KTM 500-600 Rotax Enduro. Tel 0170 955 0800 (S Yorks)

Wanted Armstrong MT500 panniers and racks, tool box, tool kit, Scottoiiler or similar. Tel 0173 675 2628 (Cornwall)

Wanted Husqvarna 510cc 4-stroke engine complete, can you help? Tel Jem on 0976 580387 (Lincs)

Wanted plastic side panels, hard panniers and rally screen for 1987 XT600 Tenere; also kick start lever for

Honda XL500. Tel Keith on 0122 576 0415 (Wilts)

Wanted pillion footrests for Honda XR600RT, must be in top cond. Tel Chris on 0134 462 4337 (Berks)

Wanted luggage rack to fit Yamaha XT250 and XL250S/XL500S; also wanted Honda XL500S, 79/80, must be in very good cond; genuine Honda workshop manual & owners handbook for XL500S and XR500S Enduro. Tel David on 0190 449 0764 (York)

Wanted Honda XR or similar, 4-stroke, enduro/trail bike, up to £2000. Tel Andy on 0198 361 7232 (IoW)

Wanted red seat for XT350. Tel Brian (eves/week-ends) on 0181 797 2569 (M'sex)

Wanted Aftermarket tailpipe for CRMI25 - any help please. Tel 0181 444 7708 (N London)

Wanted XT550 manual, 1982. Tel 01309 673875 (Scotland)

Wanted parts for XT600ZE Tenere, fairings, panels, twin h/lights, clocks & bracket, rear fender, tail light and housing etc, anything considered. Tel 01702 307848 (Essex)

PARTS

Yamaha XT600E, CRD stainless steel exhaust, brand new, never used, offers around £150. Tel Troy on 0132 784 2185 or 0976 428186 (Northants)

Suzuki DR350 performance kit, stainless steel wide-bore header pipe, Cobra silencer and airbox, exc cond, £170 ono. Tel Adrian on 0181 789 9673 (London)

Genuine Yamaha DT front mudguards, red or blue, £15 each; blue side panels, £18; Acerbis double halogen headlight unit, unused, £25. Tel Jim on 0961 857423 (M'sex)

Haynes manual for Yamaha DT175MX, £10; worn spare brake shoes, £5; Gripster rear, £10; front exhaust, £10; rear box, £10. Tel Stephen on 0138 083 0857 (Wilts)

Kawasaki KLR600 front forks, c/w yokes and gaiters, £40. Tel 0171 531 1153 (London)

Honda XR6000 SuperMoto wheels, 320mm disc, Brembo caliper RGV master cylinder, good tyres, £650; Yoshimura YRD tail pipe, XR600, £160; 1988 XR600 front forks, c/w yokes & front spindle, £160; also pre '95 XR250 big bore kit, Mikuni carb, exhaust, all for £175 ovno. Tel Ian on 0124 645 6267 (Derbys)

DT175MX, non-runner but complete, for spares or repair, prefer to sell as one lot, buyer collects. Tel Simon on 0181 240 0408 (Surrey)

Haynes workshop manuals for XL/XR80/100/125/185/250, XL250/350, KMX125LC, DR125, DT100/125/175, XT500, £5,50 inc postage. Tel Sean on 0120 268 5847 (Dorset)

Quadrant shock for Transalp, '88-'90, brand new, still boxed, £125. Tel 0155 475 0573 (Carms)

Off-road clothing, everything you need, Gaerne, O'Neale, Wulf, MSR, Answer, Bell, Oakley, Scott, my whole wardrobe, everything is as new, suit 5'-11", 12 stone, 32" waist, 38" chest, size 9 feet, further details available. Tel 0155 367 1765 (Norfolk)

Power valve kit complete for Yamaha DT125R, including cables, pulleys, etc, £150 ono; DEP silencer, good cond, £25 ono. Tel Robert on 0181 989 7890

(London)

YZ250 rear shock, fits '94-'96 bikes, exc cond, little use, just serviced, £100. Tel Andy on 0137 727 2005 (E Yorks)

Transalp centre stand, other parts, XL500R guard, KLR600 stator, DT175MX front end, carb, DT125LC forks, DR600S bits, Bombadier front end, DT250 carb. Tel Kelvin on 0171 250 1094 (London)

KMX200 black & red fuel tank, unused, £35; exhaust end can, unused, £20, both from '89 A3 model. Tel 0117 973 2103 (Bristol)

Yamaha Monoshock frame with V5, suit most engines, £100. Tel John on 0193 367 9195 (Northants)

Single bike trailer, with lighting board, spare wheel, mudguard, pivoting ramp, allows one person to load/unload easily, no time-wasters, £150 ono. Tel Kevin on 0137 989 8342 (Norfolk)

Two bike trailer, vgc, new lights, Indespension units, ideal Trials, MotoX or for Quad, £160. Tel 0144 239 4839 (Herts)

Triple bike trailer, full refurb inc electrics, bike stolen, hence sale. £60 ono. Tel Richard on 0127 462 0683 (W Yorks)

KLX650, 17" Akront wheels, Dynojet kit, new Laser pipe, late '97, £650 the lot, may split, also new Dominator front wheel & disc, £75. Tel Chris on 0468 766028 or 0165 264 8969 (Lincs)

DR350 Dunlop tyres, K560, front 80/100 x 21, £20, rear 110/90 x 18, £25. Tel 0116 283 3376 (Leics)

Yamaha WR250 tank & seat, brand new, unused, 94/95, £75; Sinisalo race pants, 36", green, used twice, £40; Dunlop D752, 110/90/19, brand new & unused, £40. Tel 0172 387 1172 (N Yorks)

Dunlop KT732, two unused quad/trike tyres on Yamaha trike front wheels, size 23 x 8.00-12, £30 each or £50 the pair. Tel 0143 772 1325 (Pembas)

DEP Sport tail pipe for KMX200, aluminium, as new, £20. Tel Bob on 0128 354 3563 (Staffs)

Acerbis tank for DR350, nearly new, £100; clutch cable, brand new, £15; front brake caliper, £15. Tel John on 0170 837 0393 (Essex)

Suzuki DR650, SET spares, very low mileage, Marzocchi Monoshock, open 13.5", closed 11", suit Gas Gas, even Street Fighter Project, £100. Tel 0190 288 4046 (W Mids)

DT175MX expansion chamber, new and unused £40; also used spares for above - you want it, I've probably got it. Tel 01604 460465 (Northants)

Gold Excel rims, front 21x1.6, rear 18x1.85, brand new, £150 ono. Tel 0181 444 7708 (N London)

DT250MX frame, forks, swing arm, wheels, three engines in pieces, and other bits, £100 or will split. Tel Darren on 01372 376507 (Surrey)

XL125 wheels, frame eng, XL185 eng, also forks see ad last month. Tel Andy (eves) 01235 767036 (oxon)

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Pirelli MT 16 3:00 - 21	29.75
Michelin MP 11 120 / 90 - 18	34.99
Pirelli MT 16 4:00 - 18	38.99
Michelin M12 130 / 80 - 18	48.49
Pirelli MT 21 110 / 80 - 18	48.59
Pirelli MT 21 120 / 80 - 18	51.99
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Scott 6-day Fanny pack	34.75
Scott Safari large capacity pack	24.99
Bell padded helmet bags	37.75
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Gaerne Off Road boots RX	133.75
Malcolm Smith Extra Thick socks	13.25

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