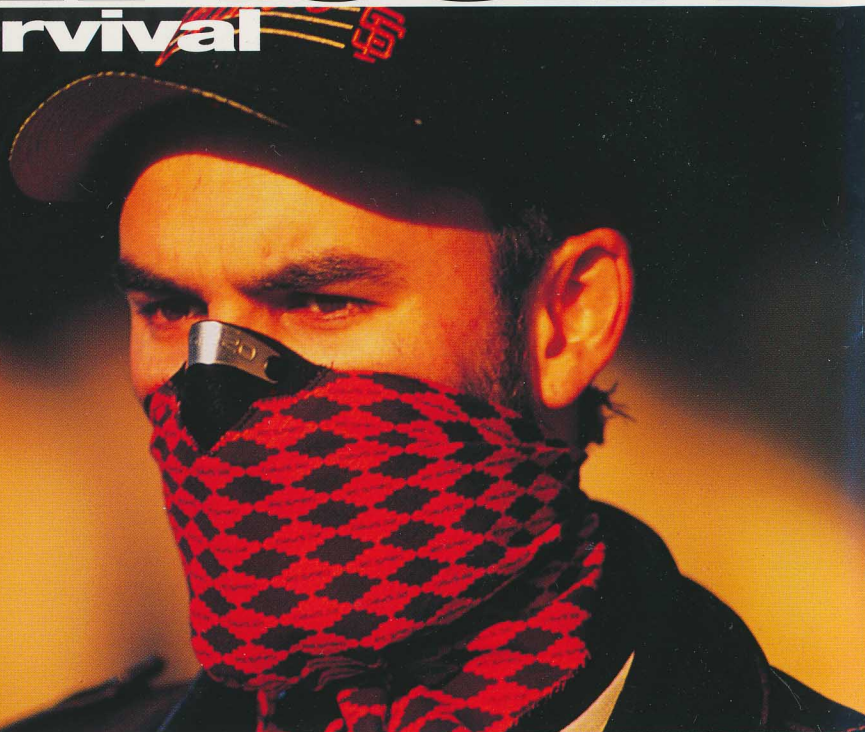


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TRAIL BIKE

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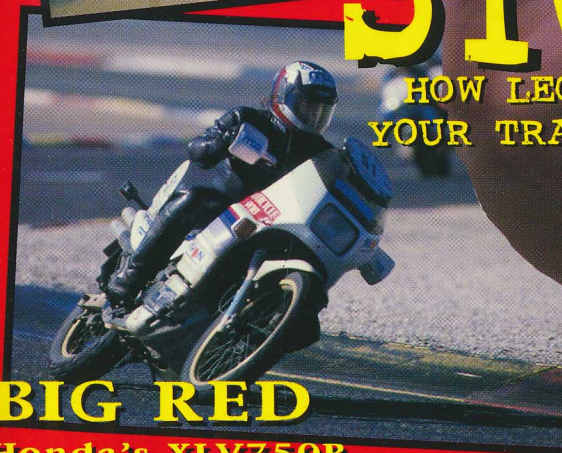
PLUS

- Honda Transalp
- Wiltshire Green Lanes
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- Trail riding in the Falklands!



STOP

HOW LEGAL IS
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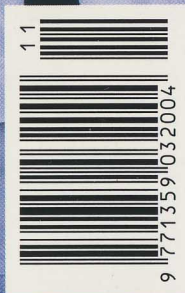


BIG RED

Honda's XLV750R

HEIGHT OF FASHION

Suzuki's height adjustable DR250 tested



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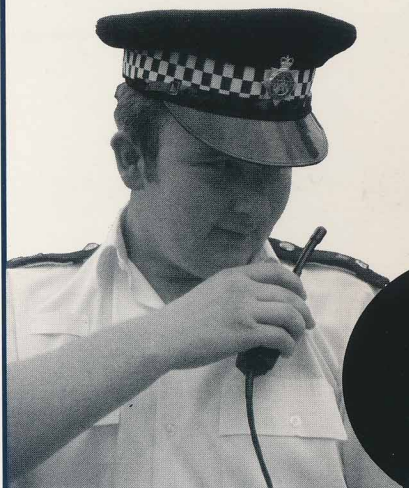
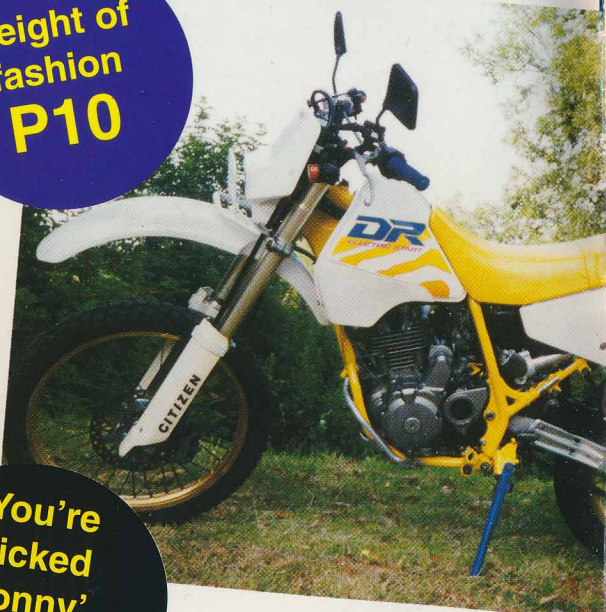
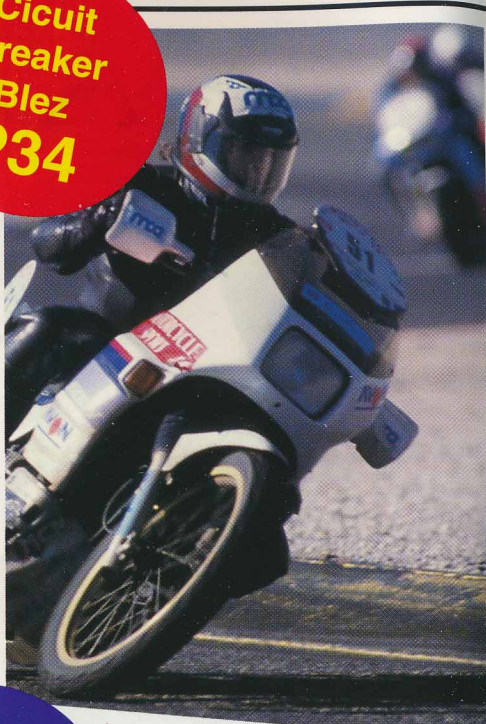
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TRAIL BIKE

M A G A Z I N E

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Eleven to Seven

We put the BMW
R1100GS through its
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The definitive guide to buy-
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Facts figures and folklore.
All you'll ever need to know.
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Advertise your trailbike
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As used by TrailBike Magazine

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T

HE ONSET OF frosty mornings may well harbour the end of yet another aerosol-induced, greenhouse-effect, globally-warmed summer, but for me it always signifies the beginning of the trail riding season proper.

You see to me it doesn't really seem like the real thing unless I'm up to my ankles in cloying mud, and there's a horizontal drizzle driving at me from a whitewashed horizon. Don't get me wrong, I don't enjoy riding in these sort of conditions, but they do tend to throw up their own particular hazards and challenges, as well as reminding me of some of the more spectacular parts of the

country I've ridden in; the sort of place whose sheer

unbridled beauty is matched only by the inclemency of the indigenous weather conditions.

One such place is Wales. Blessed with spectacular scenery it may be, but every time I've ridden there I've barely been able to see a hand in front of my face.

In a couple of days time, the whole of the TrailBike magazine staff will decamp to the

heart of the Welsh countryside to take part in the Hafren trail bike Rally.

If you've never competed in any sort of event before you owe it

to yourself to try it just once

- I guarantee you will enjoy yourself. I guarantee you'll

enjoy the challenge, and I guarantee you'll want to

do it again next year. In fact the only thing I can't

guarantee is the weather.... but I'll hazard a

guess it'll be raining.

Si Melber

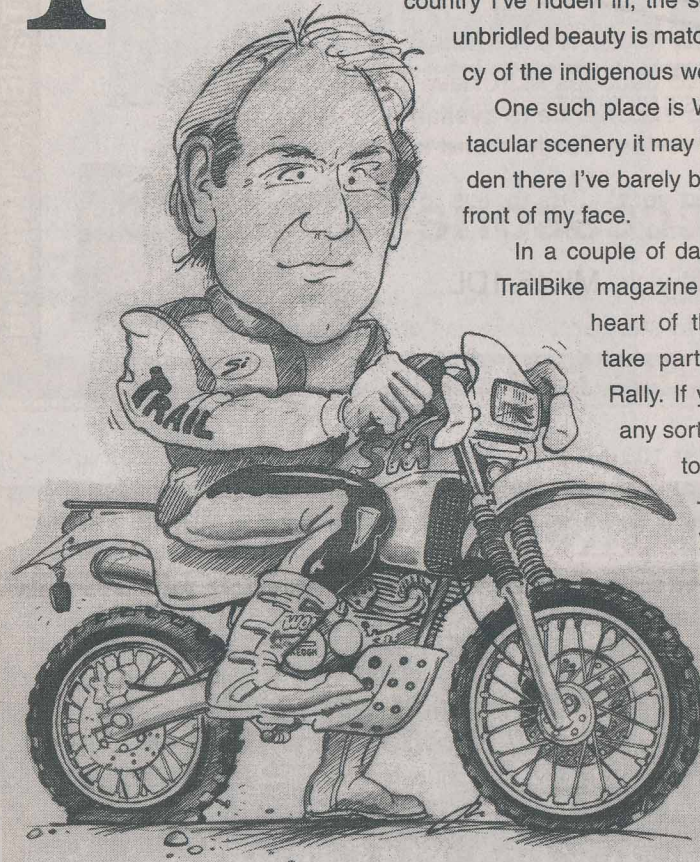


Illustration John Keogh

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96 HUSABERG

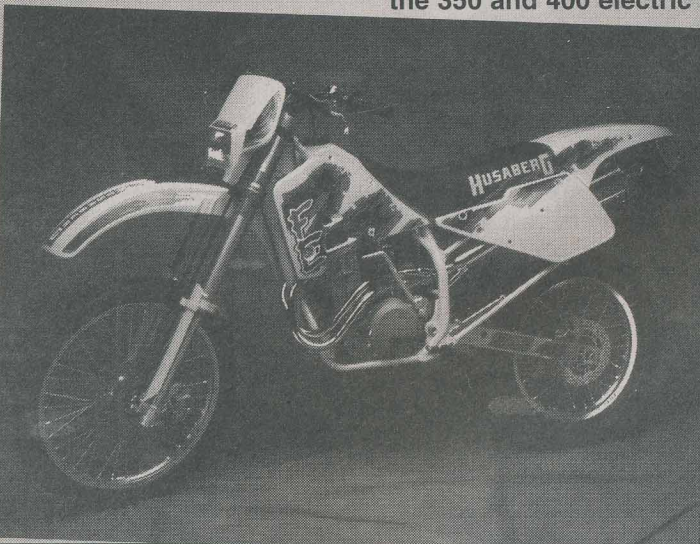
FIRST PICTURE OF NEXT YEAR'S MODELS

Next year's Husabergs look set to be even hotter with the addition of all new suspension packages across the range.

The 96 line-up which includes 350cc, 400cc, 501cc and 600cc bikes in both electric start and kickstart only versions, all feature new 57mm White Power upside down front forks and a new Ohlins rear shock as well as an automatic decompression system, and completely new wheels.

Weighing between 108-117kg depending on the model, the Husabergs are fully road legal and come with proper quartz halogen lighting (70 + 70W), registration and six months tax. Prices range from £5,895 (otr) for the 350 and 400 electric start versions,

to £5,995 (otr) for the fearsome 600. If you want more information contact Husaberg importers Colin Hill on 0181 660 3728 and ask about a test ride. We guarantee you'll be amazed.



DERBI 125 FOR UK



Derbi 125 will be styled on the existing 50cc

A new 125cc version of the best-selling 50cc Derbi trailbike is coming to the UK next year with a price tag of less than £2000.

Portosport the UK importers of the 65mph Derbi 50 which is expected to sell more than 900 bikes this year, has confirmed it will be bringing in the more powerful version in time for next spring, with a view to retailing it at £1,999.

The new model which is similar to the 50cc bike comes with uprated suspension and brakes as well as a tachometer, and will be available in either restricted 15hp form or the full power (30hp) model.

Details of exact specification and colours of the new model were not available at the time of going to press but we will keep you informed. Watch this space.

WRECKING CREW

Three brand new Cagiva W12 350cc trail bikes were destroyed during the making of the latest James Bond movie Goldeneye. The Italian bikes which were painted in camouflage green were all wrecked during the filming of one particular scene which takes place on a runway.

SIX OF THE BEST

By the time you read this the International Six Day Enduro (ISDE) in Poland will be over for another year. This year Britain fielded a particularly strong team in the form of Paul Edmonson (Gas Gas), Wyn Hughes (Suzuki), Ady Smith (Suzuki), Carl Tiley (Husqvarna), Rob Sartin (Yamaha) and our very own John Deacon (KTM) who will be writing for TrailBike Magazine about his experiences in the Dakar. And who wanted to point out that he is in fact 31 years of age rather than 36 as we reported last month. Er.... sorry about that John!

WESTON SHOOT-OUT

The annual Weston-Super-Mare beach race takes place over the weekend of 21/22 October. Five hundred bikes, three mile course, flat out for three hours. Mayhem!

Dear Trail Bike.

Lost in the 70s

Dear TrailBike

Just a note to say what an excellent publication you are producing.

Having been riding off road bikes of various types for over 25 years I am chuffed that now I don't have to spend ages in WHSmiths poring over the mainstream mags just in case there is something on trail bikes. It's also grand to see that 'Crasher Blezard' has lost none of his enthusiasm for off road machinery despite having chucked away a wide variety of makes s over the years.

I notice you are looking for articles on trail bikes. Would you be interested in recollections and photos of VMCC green lane rides of the early 70's?. I realise that you will wish to concentrate on the current scene but this

might be a little different. For example, one intrepid soul used a Brough Superior with road tyres. Not for the faint hearted!. If you think it worthwhile I will knock something together for you.

All the best with the mag.
Steve Todd
Glossop, Derbyshire

Rough-ing it

Dear Sir

I purchased a copy of your magazine (second issue) and was pleasantly surprised by its refreshingly sensible outlook on the trail scene. I like the way your magazine recognises that people who don't have state-of-the-art motocross style machines can also have fun in the mud.

I ride byways/green lanes etc. on my Kawasaki KMX200 for pleasure (and fitness) and am very interested in your feature

'The rough guide to Britain' especially if you have rides around the Bristol area (ones I don't know about). In

future issues, can you supply information about rights of way in the UK because the OS/Pathfinder maps I use are not 'definitive'. Where can I get 'definitive' rights of way info/maps?

Yours sincerely
Graeme Penhorwood
Kingswood, Bristol

Your county library should have a set of 'definitive' maps showing rights of way, so will your local TRF rep.

Loopy?

Dear TrailBike

Firstly congratulations on a magazine for us, ie normal people who want to ride on green lanes etc. without all the 25mph/"Ramblers on Wheels" bullshit spouted by the old farts of the TRF. Don't get me wrong, I think the TRF do a great job in keeping the Byways open and raising public awareness of our pastime but they should realise that they're not the only trail riders on the planet. There are some of us who are a bit too old to race any more but not quite ready for a "gentle ride" and swapping old stories down the pub type of day out.

I thought the 'Rough Guide to Britain' in issue 2 was absolutely brilliant. But how about next time you do an article like this it includes a few adverts of places to stay in the area, so we (my gang of trail riders) can organise a decent trip up there without having to waste time finding accommodation late on a Friday night (we like to go for a weekend you see). And why not raise some revenue for yourselves by offering to either 'mark up' our maps which we could send you, or sell already marked maps on request, so we can enjoy the aforementioned ride without having to take a copy of TrailBike with us.

The article on Wales Tales, in issue 2 was the business. I have some experience of Wales (Rhayader, Monks Trod, Strata Florida, Cwmderw farm etc), mind you Blez, I've had a bit of fun on the hill at Cwmderw farm and I am impressed that you 'stormed' up it. I looped out on my first attempt back in 93 doing a pretty good impression

of "Eddie the Eagle" in reverse before finally landing a good fifty feet away from my trusty steed. I'm not too bad at it now and don't leave the farm until I've made it. This outlook prompted one of my friends to explain to his wife on the phone he 'didn't know what time he'd be back, it depended on how long it took Tim to get up the hill'.

Well that's enough on my views and observations, once again congrats on a good magazine. Tim Newbrook
Hardingstone,
Northampton

We take your point about accommodation lists in the Rough Guide and you will find some relevant info in this month's, though we don't always have space. By the way be careful



about calling people old farts. Remember what happened to Will Carling....!

Just a Kidd

Dear TrailBike Mag

Please can you tell me whether the Honda XR500 that Eddie Kidd uses is the twin shock or pro-link model? Also please can you feature the Yamaha TT500 Enduro in your listings, and explain what the difference is between it and the Yamaha XT500.

Yours
Alix
Peterhead, Grampian

Er.... Twin shock, yes next month, and we'll try.

**Got an opinion?
Then write to:
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SP3 4PF**

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

**SUZUKI
DR250S
Height Control**

Suzuki's DR250S is one of the easiest trailies to ride thanks to a novel height adjustment system. TrailBike's staff shortie, Dave Cornish, took it for a spin

Everybody knows about Suzuki's DR350. It is arguably the best dual purpose machine currently imported into the UK. It has won accolades from the biking press, and praise from whoever rides it, yet despite all this it's hardly moving out of the showroom doors. It may have something to do with the general reluctance of the Brits to get their boots dirty when it comes to two wheels, but more likely it's that shorties are put off by its towering seat height and those that can just about reach the ground are phased by having to kickstart the motor into life. Suzuki has finally done something about the latter by fitting a 'leccy start to this years model, but as for the seat height? Well that's just tough I'm afraid, or is it? Back in the land of the rising bike, the technology has existed since 1990 to allow the DR's ride height to be adjusted on the move with a relatively simple hydraulically linked suspension system. The DR range fitted with the 'Suzuki Height Control' has been available in Europe and Japan but never officially imported into the UK.

With this in mind we tracked down an extremely clean Japanese import 250cc version fitted with the ride height adjuster, electric start, and some beefy looking USD forks for a thorough TrailBike on/off road test. The DR250 resembles the officially imported 350 version in size and looks but those damping adjustable USD forks hint at something a little bit special. A closer inspection reveals the lack of kick start on the right substituted by the electric starter motor on the engine's left hand side. Instrumentation is very basic, a round speedo marked in kph sits alongside warning lights for indicators, high beam, neutral and the ignition barrel. These are mounted behind a small enduro style headlamp which has a surprisingly powerful beam.

Now on to the interesting bit, the ride height



adjuster control sits on the left handlebar, turn the knurled knob to H and the system is set on the high position, but nothing happens until you ride the bike. As the suspension extends under acceleration and braking, a non-return valve fitted into the hydraulic system prevents oil from draining back into the suspension units. The end result of this is the bike attains a higher ride height. Turn the adjuster to L and the bikes suspension immediately squats down to the low position and even a stunted journo can touch the ground at the lights. Simple but effective, and the added weight of the hardware is a small price to pay for the extra convenience. The rear shock is damping adjustable for compression only and is connected through a linkage to the unique (to Suzuki) fabricated alloy swingarm which is

bolted and glued together using aviation adhesives, grease nipples are used on the linkages to make maintenance a quick and simple affair.

The DR250 is powered by an air/oil cooled, single cylinder fourstroke, sohc, four valve, dry sump unit which resembles its bigger brother, although the 250's smaller bore and stroke of 73mm x 59.6mm makes for less torque and more rev's than the 350 (as you would expect) but a claimed 29 bhp (at 8,500 rpm) is not far behind the bigger motors output. Carburation is taken care of by a single





On the rough and on the gas. Lightweight DR can be hustled when required

33mm Slingshot Mikuni item which breathes through a foam airfilter housed inside a well sealed airbox with a QD lid. The

exhaust system exits on the right into a large painted steel silencer this set up may add a few unwanted kilos to the bike but the DR

must have the most rambler friendly exhaust note of any trail bike. Like the 350 the engine's lubrication system utilises the frame as an oil tank with the filler/dipstick sitting just behind the headstock. A total of three drain plugs have to be removed to

change the oil although the filter is easily accessible under a cover on the right. Braided hoses connect the frame tube to the motor, these are protected by a lightweight alloy sump shield combined with tubular bars which wrap around the bottom of the crankcase.

Equipment on the little DR is sparse but most of the features you would expect on a dual purpose machine are in evidence. A small luggage rack doubles up as convenient grab handle - but with a maximum loading weight of 2 KGs don't load up too many Mars bars when on the trail. An easy access tool

box sits neatly behind the left side panel next to a larger than usual battery. The serrated footrests are both wider and longer than most trail bikes, allowing a more secure footing especially off road. Our test bike also came fitted with a trick headlamp guard/grab handle which was bolted to the bottom fork yoke.

All of the Suzuki's controls are extremely light in operation. Throttle and clutch being particularly smooth and the six speed gearbox can be shifted without the need for the clutch making full use of the motors limited output. Switchgear is again noth-

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

ing to get excited about although the push to cancel indicators and large rear view mirrors make the DR more user friendly particularly for a novice rider. Both gear and brake levers have folding tips to prevent damage whilst out on the trail, and another nice touch are the tiny



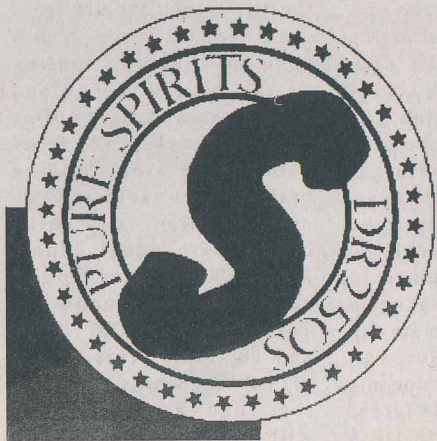
Headlight guard and grab handle are sensible accessories

Japanese rubber mounted indicators tucked well out of harms way. Obviously Suzuki expect the DR250 to be used as a pukka trailie and maybe even get its tyres muddy.

Sat astride the bike with the suspension set in the lower position, most riders will find both feet comfortably in contact with the ground giving confidence to a novice or a sub 5ft 6" rider. Starting the 250 couldn't be simpler. Pull out the carb-mounted choke, stab the starter button and the bike can be ridden straight away without any fuss. Once warmed up the motor responds quickly to the throttle and thanks to the relatively close ratio gearbox, it's easy to stay in the power-zone. Not surprisingly the 250 doesn't feel as torquy as its larger brother but the little DR's

performance is very deceptive, and up to 60mph the bike just zips along, acceleration only tailing off once the speedo gets past 70mph. Serious throttle abuse will see the speedo needle creep past the 140kph mark (87mph) although a more realistic cruising speed is around 70mph.

The anchors fitted to the little DR (250mm front disc and 220mm rear) have no trouble in hauling up the bike's 120kgs and both Nissin brakes offer good feedback at the lever without the usual bulging brake hoses suffered by most trailies. Our bike came with dual sport Dunlop K560 tyres mounted on gold anodised Takagaso rims (21" front and 18" rear). This choice of rubber works well on the road and combined with the ride height set in



HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

the low position, allows a budding supermotard to attack slower speed corners and roundabouts with ego-boosting confidence.

Riding the DR along main trunk roads and dual carriageways to reach some green lanes wasn't the most fun I've had on two wheels. The main culprit a slim, thinly padded seat which has a strap running across just where your backside wants to be. No amount of shifting from cheek to cheek or moving further back makes any difference. Funny, I can't remember the 350 being inflicted this way. The lack of wind protection offered by the

small enduro screen didn't really matter as the bike hasn't got the ability to cruise at high speeds although a pair of hand guards would be a wise investment as the OE guards were strangely absent from our bike. Every trail bike should have these fitted as standard, particularly for off roading and winter riding.

However once the DR was turned off the main road and onto the ancient 'Peddars Way' things began to look up. Bone dry trails were easy meat for the DR's smoothly damped suspension, and the motor which had seemed a trifle underpowered dicing with

traffic on the dual carriageway, now seemed ideally suited for green lane use. Smooth, thanks to its balance shaft, torquey, at low revs and with a meagre thirst for unleaded fuel (60mpg being the norm even with the throttle nailed wide open mile after mile) the DR was beginning to ingratiate itself to the TrailBike budget. Within a few miles the track became badly rutted where forestry vehicles had been sawing up timber in wetter conditions. The Suzuki quietly shrugging off most of the gnarley terrain with just the occasional deep hole sending a shock that would get through to the bars - incidentally, this would happen with the suspension in the raised position as well as the lower setting.

Up the pace a little and the DR continues to maintain its composure though at the expense of a bit more bumping and bouncing, and while in truth, it may not be quite as capable as some of the more single-minded tackle around, it's a far easier ride for most, and with the suspension in the low position reaching out for a quick dab is a cinch.

Back on the tarmac I decided to return home via the longer but more interesting B-roads. Here the DR's modest power output wasn't so noticeable as it had been on the dual carriageway, and keeping the throttle nailed was made easy thanks to its excellent road holding, nimble steering and reassuring brakes. In fact these twisty sort of roads are where trail bikes can often show a clean pair of knobbles to the average race rep jockey and the little DR is no exception

proving itself very adept at this kind of back lane madness.

In fact the only drawback to owning a Suzuki DR250SH seems to be its limited availability in this country, and finding a decent grey import may be difficult, which is a pity as this is a bike that like the Yamaha XT225 Serow would help make trail riding accessible to a far greater percentage of the motorcycling public. Suzuki's reluctance to import this model can only be on the grounds of cost, as USD forks, an electric start, and the superb ride height control presumably don't come cheap, though the good news is that a used import can be had for as little as £2,300 on the road.

For that sort of money the DR makes a brilliant greenlaner, economic commuter and as long as you aren't a trophy hunter, a capable trailbike enduro machine. No one can be intimidated by this bike, it's so user friendly that even complete novices can feel at home within a few minutes of riding. Hardened trail riders won't be disappointed with the DR either, its off road capabilities are good enough for all but the most demanding pilot and when the day's riding has finished the Suzuki has enough trick features to brag about over a pint to keep even the most ardent techno junkie happy. Makes you wonder why Suzuki has overlooked it really?

SUZUKI DR250S

Weight: 120kg
Max Speed: 87mph
Ave fuel con: 60mpg
Max power: 29hp @ 8,500rpm
Fuel capacity: 9.5L

Thanks to Ciaran at Kresta Motorcycles for the loan of the DR250S. If you want to buy it ring him on 01362 698147



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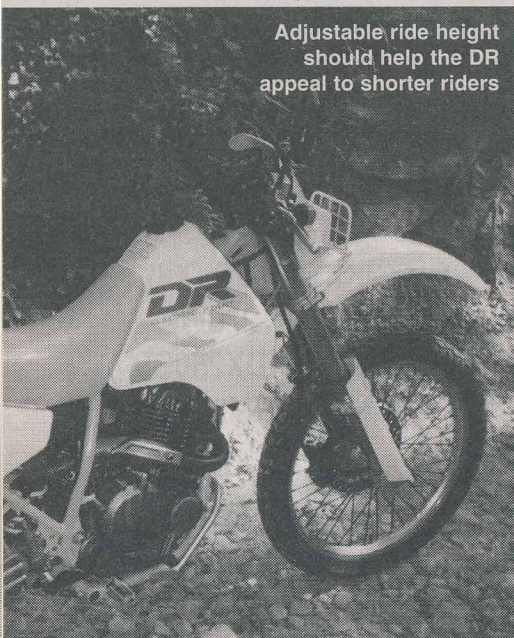
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KAWASAKI KDX250SR
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XLV750R
TW200
XT225
RING FOR DETAILS

Adjustable ride height should help the DR appeal to shorter riders



On the Trail of the Law

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SEE EXPLANATORY NOTICE AND NOTES ON THE REVERSE OF THIS SUMMONS

Complete this section of this and any other summonses and return them to the Court on the date shown on this summons.

Signature

Signature

Signature

How legal is your trail bike and what can you realistically hope to get away with? Ian Kerr takes a closer look at the law and how it affects us all



WE ALL KNOW the scenario; there you are out enjoying yourself on a few quiet green lanes when a copper pulls you in for a 'chat' as you ride through a sleepy village. As he examines your Q-plated enduro bike fitted with knobbly tyres and a number plate smaller than a book of stamps, you think to yourself 'I knew I should've got this thing taxed and MOT'd'.

The trouble with the law is that we each like to bend it to suit our own needs, snatching a bit here and there, hoping others adopt our own philosophical attitude to life. This is especially applicable when we are talking about the legality of bikes used for trail riding.

Perhaps 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, must wear a fastened crash helmet and it must be one intended for use on a motorcycle, with the

visor or goggles bearing the appropriate BS kitemark.

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, and 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 that's the law. You must have a valid certificate of insurance to cover you to ride the bike in question, and the bike itself must be road legal and have a current MOT. (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 that means that booking it in at a dealers in Cornwall in order to take in a few trails en-route is not on!)

A valid tax disc must be fixed to the bike, and though having it in your pocket may make it safer from theft, not all policemen take a charitable view. Should

you be tempted to borrow the one from your road 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's all fairly straightforward, but the legality of the actual bike is probably the biggest grey area as far as trail riders are concerned. You may think that because you spend a lot of time on tracks not normally policed by the law you can get away with most things. 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 motorway, and the chances are you will have to ride on metalled roads to get to

and from your favourite trails. Not surprisingly, you stand a good chance of getting a pull on a mud covered machine for precisely these reasons.

Many of the machines perceived as the most suitable for trail riding are not officially imported into this country, or if they are, are not sold for road use. Many enterprising souls have managed to get them registered by various means. At one time the Q-plate system was favourite, but with many insurance companies refusing to insure machines bearing a Q-plate people are now applying for age-related numbers instead.

To do this you must produce a letter from the importers giving the date of





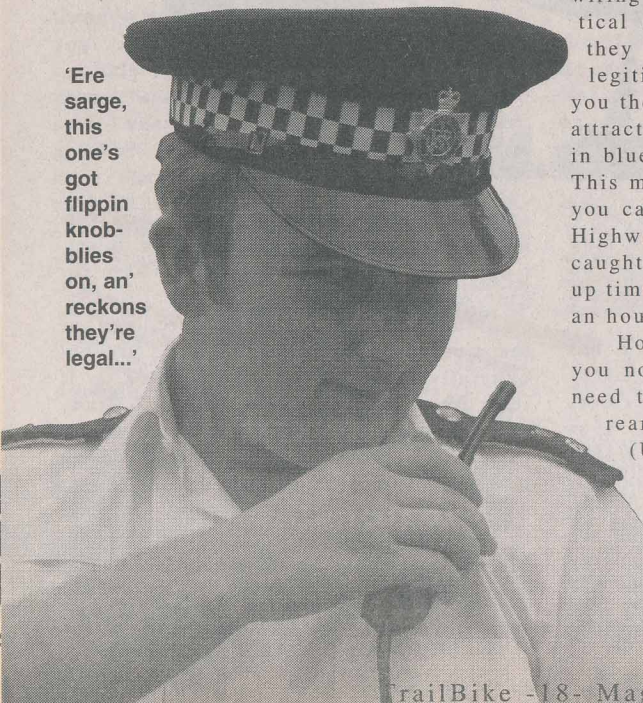
On the Trail of the Law

manufacture. Now the importers are not stupid and whilst they are obliged to date it for you they are now making a charge for doing so. They also state on the letter that the machine is not road legal.

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. If you find a licensing office willing to issue an age related number, fine. But don't forget should you ever be unfortunate enough to be involved in a serious accident that may not even be your fault (and it is found that the bike was never intended for road use - as stated by the manufacturer) you may well find yourself in a court of law, and the insurance company reluctant to part with any form of compensation.

Whether the bike is Q-plated or not, it

'Ere sarge, this one's got flippin knobblies on, an' reckons they're legal...'



will require an MOT before a tax disc can be issued. So let's consider the MOT itself, some of the points covered and 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 or anything that has a power reduction as a means of dipping the beam. A bike can *legally* pass the test with no lights if it is used (or claimed to be 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 decide to refit them so as not to attract too much attention from the boys in blue when using the bike on the road. This means that during reduced visibility you can 'show light' (as required by the Highway Code), 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). Some machines use a simple torch battery for the lighting and there is nothing wrong with this providing it doesn't run out of juice

of the Law

while you're riding.

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' (such as a trials or enduro bike, though it may throw up problems as to how a police officer would regard your 'trail bike'. Most manufacturers list a trail 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', but this is at the discretion of the tester and many now 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 so as not to attract attention when riding through sleepy villages or when passing horses. Because trail riding is generally non-competitive, performance does not really come into it and the only advantage of fitting an aftermarket exhaust is for weight or cost saving. Certainly if your bike is registered after 1 January 1985 then the law requires that whatever silencer is fitted, it must be approved to BS AU 192 standard.

Speed limits on trails are in most cases only voluntary, but on the road they

are mandatory, therefore unless your bike was registered before 1 October 1937 a speedometer is not only legally required, it also makes a lot of sense. If the bike is registered after 1 April 1984 then it should be capable of giving a reading in both mph and kph which tends to rule out the electronic bicycle items that seem to be making an appearance where there is difficulty in arranging a drive from the wheel or gearbox on a machine not originally 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 law-book 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. 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 most MOT testers will fail a bike fitted with knobblies, this doesn't actually mean they are illegal. (Remember, passing an MOT does not actually prove the bike's roadworthiness, and a current 'tick-

Remember, ignorance of the law, real or otherwise, is no defence in court

STATEMENT OF FACTS
(Drawn up by the Prosecutor in accordance with the Magistrates' Courts Act)

ON THE DATE AND AT THE PLACE MENTIONED IN THE SUMMONS USED A MOTOR VEHICLE, NAMELY A YAMAHA MOTORCYCLE, TO BE ON A ROAD WHEN YOU WERE NOT COVERED BY A POLICY OF INSURANCE OR OTHER SECURITY AS REQUIRED BY REGULATIONS THIS OFFENCE IS ENDORSEABLE WITH 6-8 PENALTY POINTS



On the Trail of the Law

et' is no defence in court). Don't worry if the tyre is marked 'Not for highway use' this term only applies to tyres sold in the United States and is not relevant on British roads. Trials, trail and FEM enduro tyres are, however, generally held to be a safe compromise.

Contrary to what some magazines may have told you, the minimum legal tread depth for bike tyres is still 1mm, and while under-inflated tyres may aid grip on slippery mud, they can get you into trouble on the main road. Another problem arises (more usually on big trailies or supermotos), now radials are available for two wheelers. If you have a radial on the front then one must be fitted to the rear as well. A cross-ply or bias belted tyre may be fitted to the front with a radial on the back, or the same tyre construction on both wheels. And remember, any tyre offence carries three penalty points in addition to any fine you may receive!

Small number plates or ones attached to the rear mud-guard 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

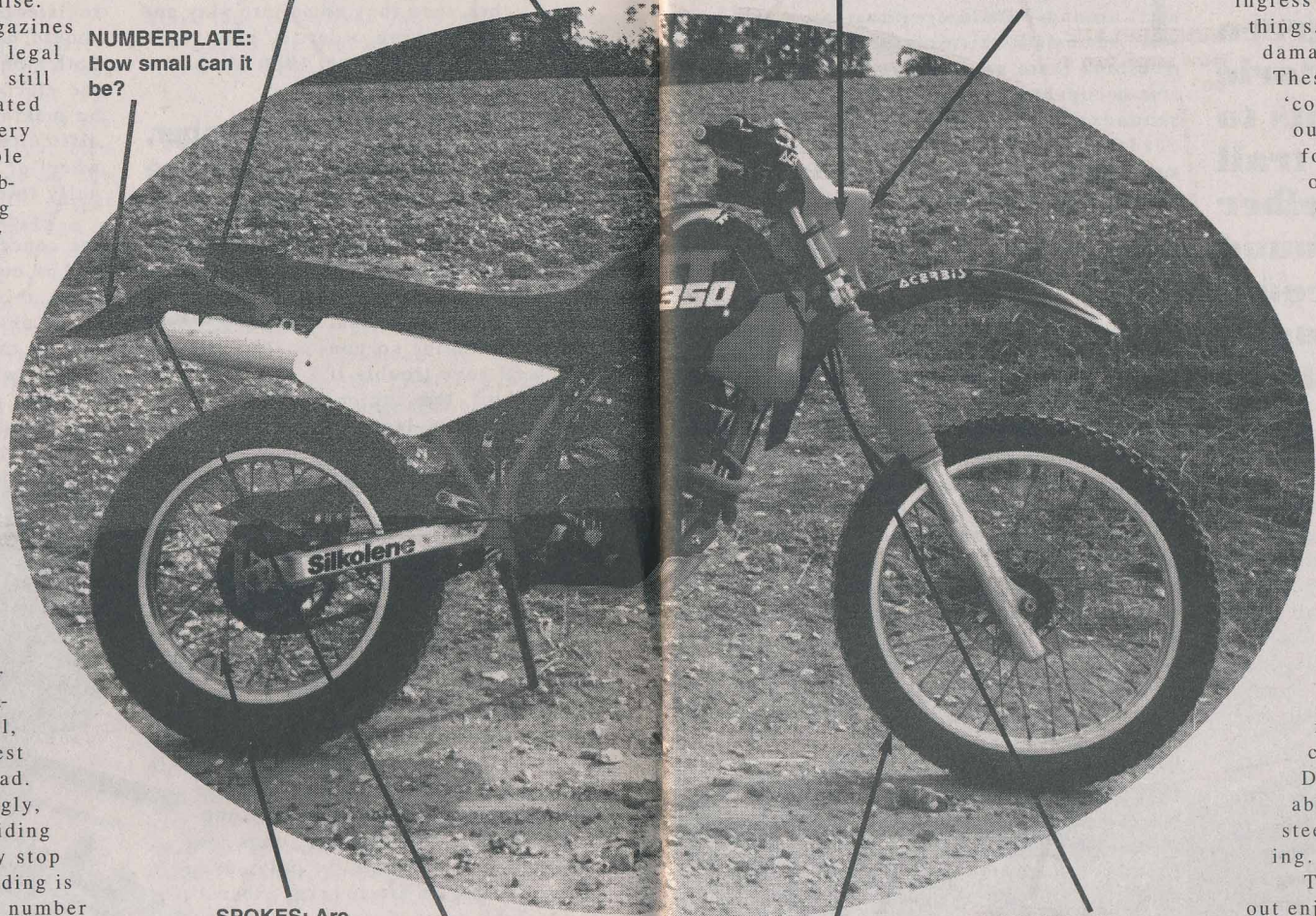
NUMBERPLATE: How small can it be?

SILENCER: Is it BSI stamped or too noisy?

PETROL TANK: Is it plastic - does it matter?

SPOKES: Are they loose or is your bike well maintained?

BRAKELIGHT: Do you need one, & must it be activated by both brakes?



INDICATORS: Do you need them?

LIGHTS: Do they have to work?

TYRES: Are they legal & correctly inflated?

TAX DISC: Have you got one & is it for the right bike?

couple of 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 ramblers 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.

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, but remember, ignorance real or otherwise is no defence. You have been warned.

South Wiltshire has a wealth of green lanes and historic monuments to explore by trail bike. Si Melber takes a ride around the Salisbury countryside taking in some of the sights



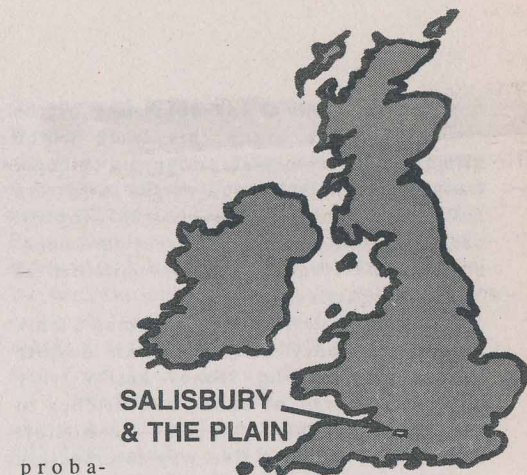
It's impossible to take a trail ride around Wiltshire without uncovering some of its historic past. Everywhere you look there are reminders of its previous occupants from *tumuli* (ancient burial mounds), to earthworks and Roman roads, and of course Wiltshire is home to one of the world's most significant archaeological monuments: Stonehenge.

Now a 'World Heritage Site' Stonehenge ranks in importance alongside places such as the great pyramids of Egypt and is an awesome sight for the beginning of any trail ride, especially when it appears shrouded in mist on a cool, damp autumn morning. Our route begins in the monument carpark near the junction of the A303 and A344 (map ref 123,424). Its a convenient place to start because there's plenty of room (for vans and trailers), it's well signposted and refreshments are available most of the day. Although Stonehenge is clearly visible from the road, it's worth paying to get a closer look at the only remaining example of standing stones with cross lintels in existence. The stone circle itself which dates from 2000BC and stands on the older mound and ditch arrangement consists of an inner and outer heel stone outside the track. Originally an avenue of stones marked the entrance to the monument which continues to be found archaeologists to this day. The Stones themselves consist of two distinct types of rock, the larger blocks (the Sarson stones) weighing anything up to 45 tons came from the Marlborough Downs in Wiltshire, while the

smaller 'Bluestones' each weighing up to 8 tons were transported all the way from the Preselli Mountains in Wales. Mystery surrounds the reason why these stones in particular were used and how this remote site on the south side of Salisbury Plain came to be chosen.

Heading right out of the carpark, you need only travel a hundred metres on tarmac before turning left onto the signposted Byway. This track gives a view of Stonehenge that many tourists miss and there are information boards next to the route. The Byway itself has been graded with hardcore and after a few hundred metres you cross the busy A303 and begin the shallow climb up the chalky ridge of Wilsford Down. At its highest point, the track swings abruptly left but the Byway continues straight on through a gate and into a field following a well trodden path all the way down to its intersection with the A360.

Here you need to turn left, then after 50 yards or so take a right fork past the aptly named Druids Lodge until the track meets up with a larger Byway running roughly north south. Though there are any number of routes you could take,



probably the best one is to turn left along this Byway then after three quarters of a mile turn right down the potholed track called Chain Hill that descends into Stapleford. Once you get to the bottom, if you turn left then immediately right again you'll find yourself on the A36 heading west and after a few hundred metres, passing the Pelican pub on your left. Now look out on your right hand side for a track about 100m past the pub and turn up this ancient road that at one time was part of the main thoroughfare between Westbury and Salisbury. If you travel this route in Autumn you'll be greeted with the sweet smell of over-ripe apples from trees over-



The Rough Guide to Britain

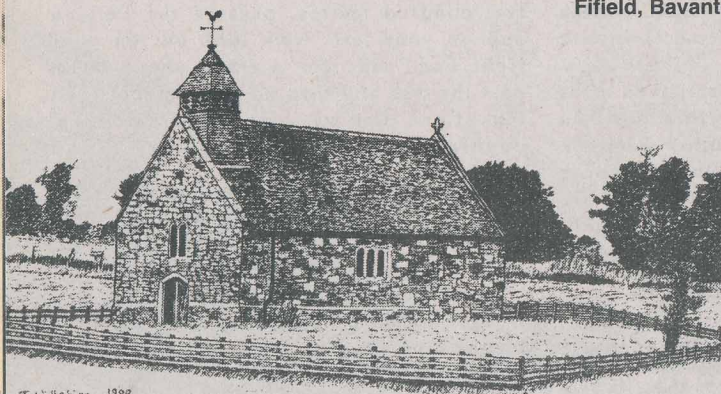
hanging the path at the beginning of the track. Continue along this track which climbs up the gentle slope of Steeple Langford Cow Down and varies in texture from tarmac through gravel to soft topsoil before crossing the A303 (great care needed) and passing the ancient hillfort of Yarnbury Castle.

It's worth getting off and taking a walk around Yarnbury hillfort which despite having no standing stones has a truly impressive array of banks and ditches to walk over. About 500m past the hillfort the route comes to a five way intersection and if you take the second left (more or less straight on), you'll find yourself on the continuation of the Byway and running alongside a grass landing strip where the army regularly practises landing Hercules Transporter planes! Every so

emerging back into open countryside.

About a mile and a half out of Chitterne look for a gate on the left and a sign saying Right of Way. This Byway which has just recently been re-established cuts straight across a field towards a small copse. As you pass through the line of trees the route swings left then emerges into open fields whereupon it swings left again through a gate (signposted Bridleway), before heading south again and dropping gradually down to the village of Codford St Peter. Where the Byway meets tarmac turn left then after a few hundred yards right and right again to the junction with the A36. More or less opposite is an unclassified county road which if you follow the right fork brings you back out onto a tarmac road. Head straight on over the level crossing (care) and follow

St Martin's Church
Fifield, Bavant



often you come across weathered milestones giving the distance to the town of Deptford which lies approximately 2.5 miles to the south. Eventually the Byway meets up with the B390 which passes through the village of Chitterne before

the road west around a number of tight 90-degree bends which take you past the village of Corton. A bit further on (at 929,406) a RUPP (Road Used as a Public Path) known locally as the Corn Way heads off sharply to the left (south east) and climbs up to Boyton Down. You pass through a small copse then as you emerge from the trees you need to turn right after a couple of hundred metres through a gate (signposted Bridleway) and into a field, while the route you've just left swings round to the east.

Here, if you look ahead of you, you can see the ancient road heading down the valley then up over the next hill, its passage marked by a break in the trees as

it disappears into the distance. Follow the RUPP down to its intersection with a small road and cross more or less straight over through a closed gate then almost immediately the RUPP (which is signposted Byway) bears off to the left around a little knoll and across Stockton Down. At the next track go straight across on to a path (ignore the OS map, it's wrong) and through the remains

This little 13th century church has the distinction of being the smallest parish church in Wiltshire

of *Stockton Earthworks* (now just a few barely discernible banks and ditches, but at one time a thriving settlement). In front of you is a gate which

leads to a muddy and well rutted track through a wood then emerges to cross the A303 and back into trees once more.

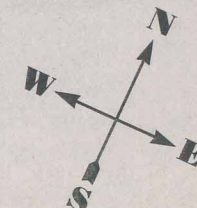
Eventually this track becomes tarmac, and at the next crossroads go straight over taking the next left onto a signposted Byway (at 983,345). The first part of this route is metalled but after about a mile and a half the track enters a small wood and you need to follow the right fork, sticking to the main rutted track all the way through the woods and out the other side. Thereafter the route ambles its way across the chalky countryside through some wonderful rural scenery and eventually comes to an intersection of tracks with a large barn nearby. You need to take the right fork (not the right turn) which takes you up a hill and across Crouch's Down. After a few miles the chalky path gives way to tarmac for a few hundred metres, and then when this tarmac turns abruptly right, you turn left (or more or less straight on really) and heads towards

the town of Wilton - the ancient capital of Wessex.

If you head west out of Wilton on the A30 after about two miles the main road turns abruptly left before crossing the River Nadder at the pretty little village of Barford St Martin. Just by this bend is the Barford Inn public house at which you can enjoy a well earned meal and for the faster riders among you they also do coffees from 11.30 onwards.

The next trail begins conveniently about half a mile south of the pub (at 057,308) climbing up to a spectacular corrie from the head of which if you turn round you can admire the views over the Nadder valley. At the corrie the track forks left, goes through a gate then straight on at the intersection with some other trails before emerging from woodland onto the main drove road. This is the equivalent of trail riding motorway with wide graded sections (apart from the occasional pothole) heading west for at least nine or ten miles.

After about four miles however you cross a small tarmac road then half a mile further on turn left onto a track (signed Bridleway) and cross Fifield down, descending into the hamlet of Fifield Bavant. Turn left onto the tarmac and follow the road for about quarter of a mile until it turns 90-degrees left. Straight ahead of you lies a farm and if you go through the yard you'll see signs for St Martins Church. This little 13th century church really is worth a visit as it has the distinction of being the smallest parish church in Wiltshire and is reputed to be the second smallest in England in regular



The rough guide to Britain

use. Inside, the unusual circular Norman font dates from 1150 and around the church are the vague remains of earthworks indicating settlement on this site for thousands of years before the church was established.

From Fifield Bavant continue eastwards on tarmac through the villages of Broad Chalke and Bishopstone turning right at the hamlet of Stratford Tony. Here you cross a ford (watchout, it's deep on the right) before the Byway takes you up over Throope Hill (keep to the left fork as you begin the climb). At the junction with the A354 turn left go under some pylons then lookout for the entrance to the byway on your left which takes you across Coombe Bissett Down and into the village of Coombe Bissett itself.

As you enter this picturesque village, cross over the A354 and head east towards Homington where you turn left, cross the River Ebble and look out for the next trail on your right hand side just after a bend. This trail which at times is signposted a bridleway, follows the path of the River Ebble, crossing a small road before emerging onto the busy A338. Turn right and head south for about three and a half miles turning left at a set of traffic lights towards Downton. You'll know you're there because the smell from the local tannery is hard to miss.

Up the hill out of Downton, look out for a road on your left called Muddyford Lane which after 100m or so bears right and takes you over Barford Down before emerging through the side of a cutting at the A36. Go straight across and up Pepperbox Hill, taking in the marvellous view over open countryside to the north. As you start to descend again, take the left fork down to the tarmac road, turn right and first

left, and keep heading straight till you get to the hamlet of Farley. At the T-junction turn left, then right after about half a mile up a metalled track, continuing straight on where the track turns left. Follow this lane down to the tarmac road turning left through the village of Pitton and continuing straight for about a mile and again heading straight on when the road forks left. At the top of this track you need to go around a locked gate, then turn right and go about 150 yards till you see a gate on

In the summer the chalky trails are firm and easy to ride on bigger machinery. Come the first rain however and things get a bit trickier



your left with a small sign saying Bridleway. Go through the gate and at the other end of the small field you will pick up the old Roman road that leads to Old Sarum - the historic centre of Salisbury.

The Roman road cuts straight across a small tarmac lane, and at its intersection with the A30 you need to fork right and follow the narrow Bridleway down the hill, under the railway bridge and across the A338, before bearing left and continuing across one minor road (another old Roman road called the Portway), to the junction with the A345. If you're on a sidecar or a particularly big trailie, this is one trail you might like to miss out, it's narrow, overgrown and metal posts limit the width of your machine.

Whatever you decide to do, you need to head towards Old Sarum. If you've done the trail this means turning left along the A345 then taking the first right past the northern end of the monument; if you've missed it out continue along the Roman road (now under tarmac), cross the A338 and head straight for the entrance to Old Sarum.

If you have the time it's well worth visiting Old Sarum, which at various times in history has been an Bronze Age settlement, Roman camp, and medieval castle. Now its a ruin and a tourist attraction, but still affords splendid views south over the new city and cathedral (established in 1220 and at 404ft, the tallest in England), as well as the picturesque farmland to the north.

From here you need to head west across the River Avon at Avon Bridge before following the winding valley north through the Woodfords to the small Hamlet of Lake. After a sharp 90-degree bend in the road (left) you take the next left turn opposite a phonebox and follow this path as it sweeps around in a norther-

ly direction as a really wide byway climbing up towards Normanton Down. Though various tracks lead off it, stick to the widest route and as you begin to crest the hill you're first greeted with the site of a number of *tumuli* (including rare disc barrows) silhouetted against the sky, before the stirring Vista of Stonehenge once more hoves into view and you head directly towards it, turning right onto the A303 then left onto the A344 and finally the carpark and a hot mug of tea.

ACCOMMODATION

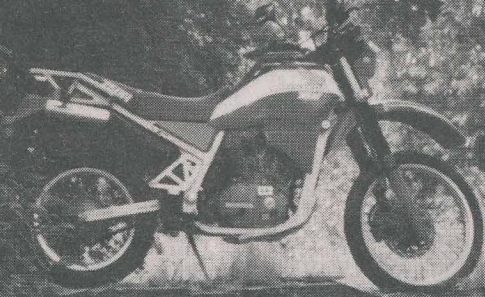
The Barford Inn
Barford St Martin
(01722) 742242
B&B £40 twin room

Little Langford Farmhouse
Little Langford
(01722) 790205
B&B - £37 twin room

Bridge Farm
Britford
(01722) 332376
B&B - £35 twin room

Manor Farm
Burcombe
(01722) 742177
B&B - £poa

NB We have not stayed at these places but all have been chosen with bike security and attractive surroundings in mind.



CAST YOUR MIND back to 1984. A time of Yuppies, the Thatcherite junta, Frankie goes to Hollywood, and £1.00 notes that bought you 4 DeutschMarks. Yes, those were the days, when big trail bikes (BeeEmms excepted), measured a maximum of 600cc and were considered only suitable to be ridden off road by the like's of Cyrillic Nevi in the Dakar. Surely 600cc would be the largest capacity trail bike to be mass produced by the Japanese?

Wrong, 11 years ago demand from our continental cousins for a real Dakar replica, prompted one of the Japanese factories to launch a new super trailie. This bike's air-and oil-cooled vee twin motor blasted in at a full 750cc, came fitted with an electric start, and sported a huge petrol tank complete with HRC paint scheme. This bike preceded the Transalp by two years, had shaft drive and looked as though it had been dipped in a vat of red paint. Still don't know what I'm talking about? Let me put you out of your misery it's a Honda XLV750.

Never an official UK import, a handful of XLVs were brought in, in the 80s by a few enterprising dealers though some, like this one, are beginning to turn up in the shops today as fresh Japanese imports.

The XLV sold in large numbers in the Japanese domestic market, the French, Germans, and even the sensible Swedes took the bike to their hearts, but the XLV's spiritual home is France and in Paris you will find them parked on most street corners, usually fitted with sticky sports tyres and covered in grime from the capital's traffic congested roads. This French obsession with anything dirty begins to make sense especially when you stray away from the main Autoroutes. Generally speaking, their roads are in a worse state of repair than our own, so a bike fitted with smoothly damped, long travel suspension is not only one of the most comfortable modes of transport, quite often it's the quickest.

If you can imagine an XL600R fitted with a Transalp power unit and a shaft drive then you have the XLV. Red is the first impression you get of the bike...., red with lots of er... red bits. The bike's engine,

HONDA XLV750

Long
the Africa
Transalp
there was a

Honda

Dave
went in

of the

before
Twin or
appeared
big V-twin
trail bike.

Cornish

search

of the XLV750

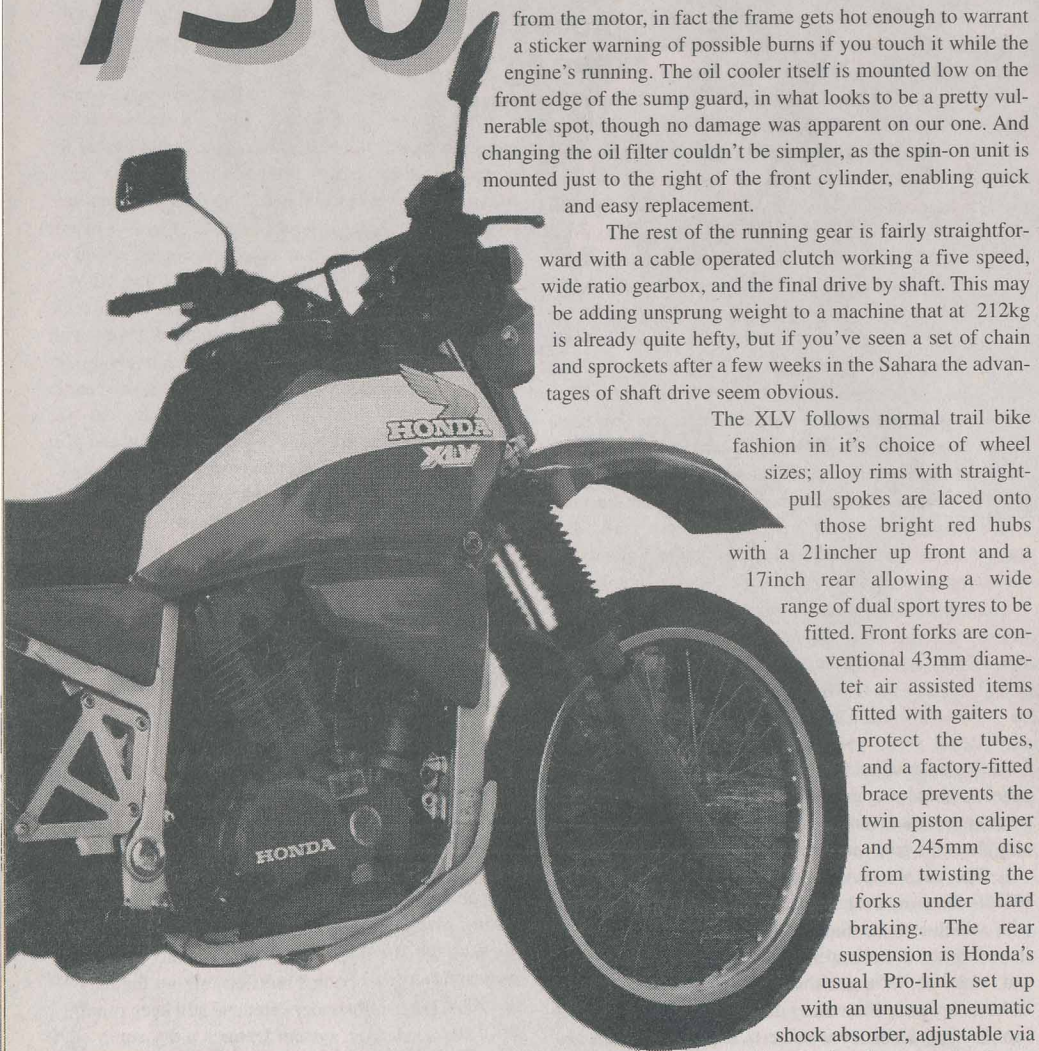
forks, hubs, mudguards, tank, headlight fairing, side panels and running gear all feature liberal coats of red paint and in the evening sunlight the XLV looks stunning though I guess it's probably a pig to keep clean.

The XLV's power plant is derived from the VT750 Shadow, a Stateside, tinsel-town custom bike with which any similarities begin and end with the shared motor. This is a 45-degree, vee-twin with a bore and stroke of 79.5x 75.5mm giving a displacement of 749cc. Air and oil cooling replace the VT's water-cooled top end, and three valve, twin plug heads ensure a good fuel burn enabling the XLV to return over 45mpg easily. Compression is slightly lower than the

VT's 9.8:1 at 8.4:1, and the valve timing is milder too giving more midrange grunt and allowing the XLV to run on third-world fuel of questionable quality! Carburation is taken care of by a couple of 33mm Keihin units which breathe through the under-tank-mounted airbox (with the intake snorkel gulping in clean air from the top of the tank), this combined with the twin exhaust headers which exit into high level, well silenced alloy bodied mufflers, allows the XLV to be ridden practically underwater and still keep running.

The lubrication system features a dry sump with most of the 3.5 litres of oil held in the frame's twin down-tubes. This also helps the cooler to dissipate heat

XLV 750



from the motor, in fact the frame gets hot enough to warrant a sticker warning of possible burns if you touch it while the engine's running. The oil cooler itself is mounted low on the front edge of the sump guard, in what looks to be a pretty vulnerable spot, though no damage was apparent on our one. And changing the oil filter couldn't be simpler, as the spin-on unit is mounted just to the right of the front cylinder, enabling quick and easy replacement.

The rest of the running gear is fairly straightforward with a cable operated clutch working a five speed, wide ratio gearbox, and the final drive by shaft. This may be adding unsprung weight to a machine that at 212kg is already quite hefty, but if you've seen a set of chain and sprockets after a few weeks in the Sahara the advantages of shaft drive seem obvious.

The XLV follows normal trail bike fashion in it's choice of wheel sizes; alloy rims with straight-pull spokes are laced onto those bright red hubs with a 21incher up front and a 17incher rear allowing a wide range of dual sport tyres to be fitted. Front forks are conventional 43mm diameter air assisted items fitted with gaiters to protect the tubes, and a factory-fitted brace prevents the twin piston caliper and 245mm disc from twisting the forks under hard braking. The rear suspension is Honda's usual Pro-link set up with an unusual pneumatic shock absorber, adjustable via a thin wire handle to set the damping to one of just two positions: one for tarmac and the other for rough riding. The swingarm itself has a steel



When the inevitable happens the XLV proves to be extremely crash resistant

box-section on one side with a shaft drive unit running inside a substantial housing bolted to the rear bevel drive. A 140mm drum brake offers plenty of feel at the rear pedal and is less vulnerable than a disc, and most of this hardware is finished in a coat of 'not too subtle' red paint.

Instrumentation is very basic with an early 80s XL-style speedo on the left which contains various idiot lights, a half-size tacho sits on the right, both of which are hidden behind an XL125 headlamp and surround.

Sat astride the XLV it's a pleasant surprise to be able to plant both feet firmly on the deck (I'm only 5' 8" in MX boots) and the overall feel and balance of the bike is just right. Pressing the starter has the motor ticking over quickly but when cold the carbs can spit back at lower revs which when amplified by the tank-top mounted air box intake sounds quite disconcerting. I'm reliably informed it has more to do with lean burning and emissions regs than any inherent carb faults and once warmed up the carburation feels almost perfect.

First gear is selected with a bit of a clunk, and feeding in the light clutch you immediately realise this trail bike is somehow different (*er....Dave fell off the bike within fifteen minutes of getting his paws on it - Ed*). The shaft drive tends to make the rear end rise as the throttle is opened and squat down on a closed throttle. It feels a bit weird at first but not as alarming as some early Bavarian Boxer transmissions. Full lock low speed manoeuvres are a cinch due to the low CofG and a steering lock almost as good as a trials bike, and this alongside the low seat height clearly makes the XLV a better city bike than it's younger sibling the Africa Twin. On the other hand the XLV's lack of fairing makes high speed riding both firesome and somewhat exciting thanks to an in-built weave that sets in above 75mph. The main culprit appears to be the high bars but if you ease your grip a little and take the weight through the footrests this tendency is reduced. Lower bars and a low level front mudguard would probably be a wise investment if you spend most of your time riding at 75+mph and maybe a small screen wouldn't go amiss either.

Out on the open road the XLV seems to be a little under-powered by today's standards, passing traffic travelling at around 60mph requires a downshift for

quick progress - not really what you would expect for a motor supposedly retuned for more torque. Maximum power is a claimed 55hp though from a seat of the pants feeling I would guess a figure of nearer 45hp (not much more than a modern single), would be closer to the truth - although of course the XLV is smoother than most singles, especially at higher revs. At lower speeds the bike can be thrown about with ease, the front end changing direction relatively quickly, although the rear felt unpredictable at any angle other than the vertical - though to be fair the rear tyre (a well worn Japlop), was well past it's best and I'm sure new rubber would improve things dramatically.

The shaft drive makes its presence felt when shifting ratios at high revs, and when hard on the brakes care is needed to avoid locking the rear wheel. The front disc/rear drum set up is nicely predictable without being outstanding and riding the bike within it's limits it is well capable of hauling up the 750's bulk.

Off road riding was confined to some easy Norfolk green lanes. Again tyres were the main limiting factor to reasonable progress, and this combined with zero give in the shaft drive, meant grip was lost not only under acceleration but deceleration too. Snap the throttle shut at the wrong moment and you end up facing the direction you've just come from!

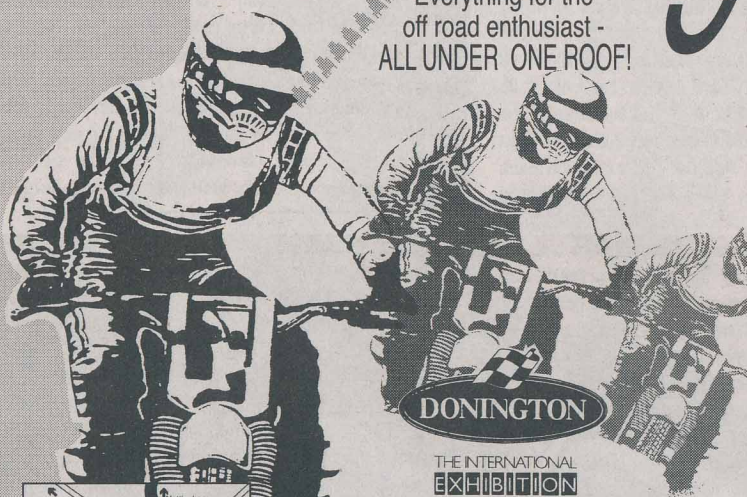
The XLV is happiest just trickling along letting you enjoy the view - as the suspension gets out of shape at even modest speeds. On the plus side, the lack of a fairing gives the intrepid off roader an uninterrupted view of the front end (something every Africa Twin owner dreams of), and when the inevitable happens, the XLV proves to be extremely crash resistant (don't ask)!

These days a fairing is almost de rigeur on a big trail bike, but if you spend most of your time in the urban sprawl or riding at slower speeds the XLV750

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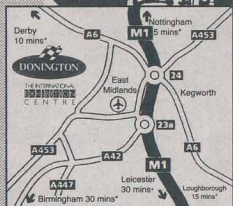
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could make a lot of sense. Low running costs (probably cheaper than those of a 600/650 single), together with simple and straightforward home maintenance (the valves are hydraulic, and air and oil filters are quickly accessible) should increase its appeal, and of course the shaft drive saves buying chains and sprockets every few thousand miles. Okay so the twin cylinder opposition can outrun the XLV but for the price of an average 600 single this bike is good value whichever way you look at it. This particular XLV750 is a 1987 Japanese import and at less than £2300 makes an eye-catching change to the usual SuperTenere or Africa Twin. This combined with the aforementioned frugal running costs only really deepens the mystery of why the XLV was never officially imported into the UK. Perhaps Honda should have fitted a shaft drive to the Transalp as a natural successor to the XLV and made the ultimate rally tourer.

Quality touches abound on the XLV, the substantial alloy rack, large sump shield and the fuel switch mounted on top of the tank are all worthy of mention, the more you look at the bike the more it becomes obvious how much thought has gone into its design. Okay the XLV can seem underpowered, prone to high speed stability problems and without a fairing it's a struggle to maintain 75mph+ for any great distance. But on the other hand it's a far cheaper bike to

own and run than many other big trailies and daily use would be no problem particularly at legal speeds. To be fair, at this sort of price the XLV should be seen as an alternative to an XT600 or a Dominator and with its low cost of ownership, practicality, and unique good looks, this grey import makes sense for a poser on a budget. It's cheap to buy, cheap to run, and unlike on the streets of Paris, you're not likely to bump into one on every corner.

Price £2,300 (second-hand).

Plus points

Low running costs,
Individuality,
No fairing to damage

Minus points

Stifled performance,
Lack of weather protection,
High speed stability

Spec

Weight 212kg

Tank 19.4L

Max Speed 108mph

ner.

Many thanks
to Ciaran at

Kresta

Motorcycle

Engineering

(01362)

698147 for

the loan of

the XLV

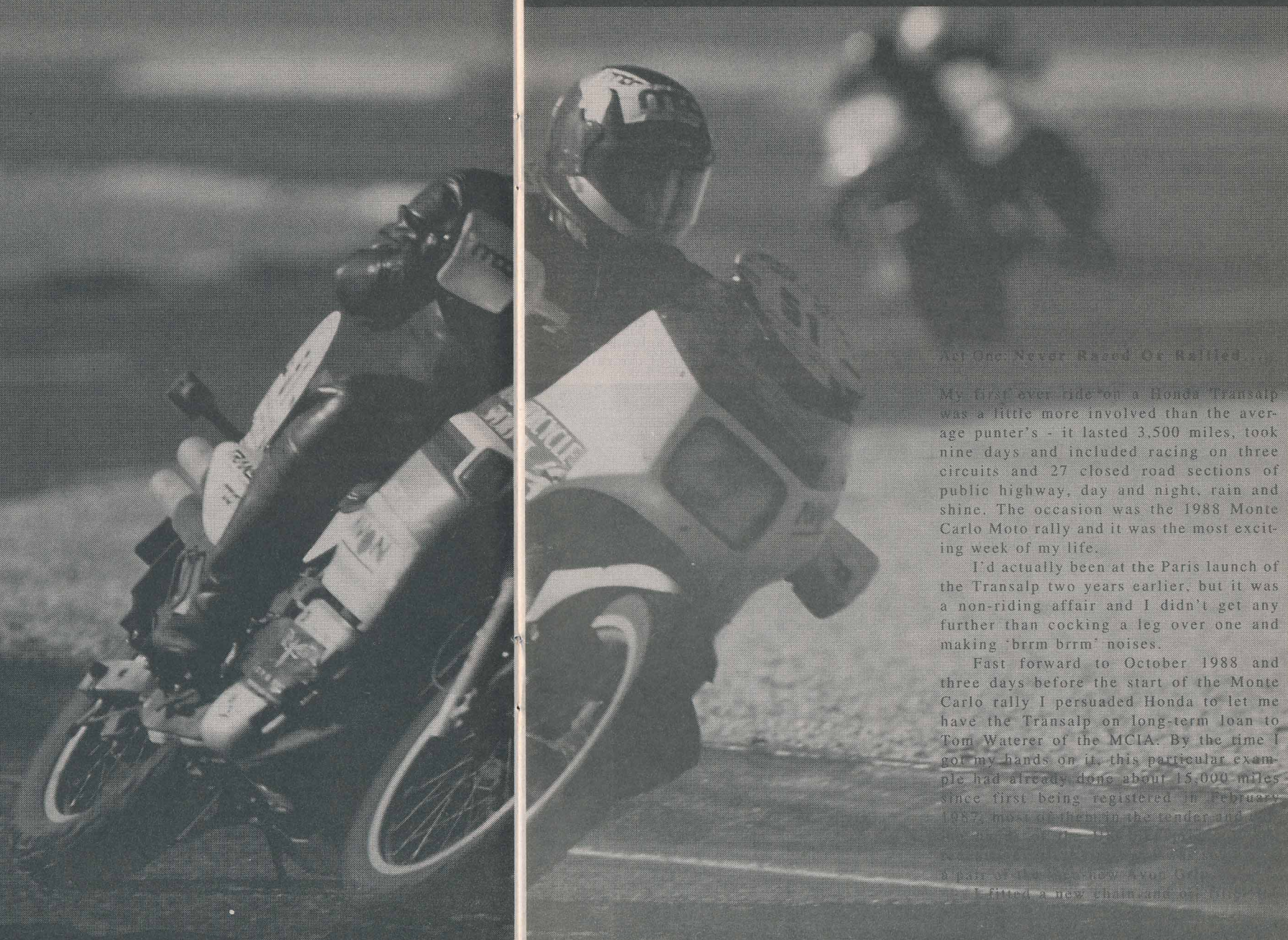
A brace of XLVs ponders a spot of off roading. Lack of fairing is a bonus on the rough



...One Careless Owner...

**Honda's
XL600V
Transalp has
been around
since 1987.
Paul Blezard
recalls six
turbulent
years on
road, dirt
and track
with this
superb
V-twin Rally
Tourer**

H O N D A X L 6 0 0 V T R A N S A L P



Act One: Never Razed Or Rallied

My first ever ride on a Honda Transalp was a little more involved than the average punter's - it lasted 3,500 miles, took nine days and included racing on three circuits and 27 closed road sections of public highway, day and night, rain and shine. The occasion was the 1988 Monte Carlo Moto rally and it was the most exciting week of my life.

I'd actually been at the Paris launch of the Transalp two years earlier, but it was a non-riding affair and I didn't get any further than cocking a leg over one and making 'brm brm' noises.

Fast forward to October 1988 and three days before the start of the Monte Carlo rally I persuaded Honda to let me have the Transalp on long-term loan to Tom Waterer of the MCIA. By the time I got my hands on it, this particular example had already done about 15,000 miles since first being registered in February 1987, most of them in the tender and

A pair of the new Avon Grip
I fitted a new chain and sprockets

night before scrutineering at the Olympia bike show; both these operations can be done without removing the plastic bash-plate, but the standard chain is an endless 'O'-ring, necessitating the removal of the swinging-arm. This was actually far easier than I'd anticipated, but the standard Transalp chain is an unusual '525' size inbetween the conventional 520 and 530 which means that no-one else's spare chain or sprockets will fit, (as journalist Neil Bruce discovered while following the Paris-Dakar rally in early 1988 - he had to push his several miles to Algiers airport because he'd sawn off the original)!

I loved the Transalp from the moment I first rode it - it's so comfortable and well balanced and the geometry is the perfect

compromise between agility and stability. And then there's that lovely torquey 6-valve V-twin motor which actually gives it one of the best top-gear 50-70mph roll-on times of any bike of similar capacity. Although it's pretty hefty in off-road terms, the Transalp is actually very light for a fully faired four stroke at under 400lbs. The standard screen is too low for high-speed comfort but I gaffer-taped my '51' Monte Carlo number plate in such a way as to give the effect of a raised screen.

However...I'd only done about 250 miles on the bike when I had one of the more memorable moments of my two-wheeled career. Peeling into a long left hander on the way to the start of the rally

proper in Paris, I lost the rear end on a huge patch of overbanding at about 80mph. As the bike went down in a shower of sparks it momentarily trapped my left hand before sliding for a full 100 yards and came to a halt inches from the armco which I nudded as I attempted to get up while still doing about 30mph.

To my utter astonishment, the only damage was to the handlebars, which were left with a dramatic droop on the left side, and a further crack in the already damaged fairing panel (it had broken when the bike had fallen over in Tom Waterer's care). The sidestand and footrests had taken all the impact (both were considerably worn down) and all four indicators escaped completely unscathed! I got straight back on the bike and was soon cruising at 80mph again and the bike still steered completely true, although it felt a bit odd riding with one hand up in the normal position and the other down near the forks like a clip-on! I rode and raced it like that for two days (making mostly clutchless changes thanks to the knackered left hand) until fellow competitor Richard Avent generously gave me a pair of Renthals which subsequently proved far superior to the standard bars.

So began a week of high-speed lunacy across the back roads and circuits of France in company with a motley mix of incredibly skilled racers and some rather gob-smacked amateurs (including 15 Brits) who could scarcely believe what they'd got themselves into. In the first closed road 'special section' the following night two RC30s crashed out of the rally and one of the Brits severely bent his Norton rotary.

I fitted a 100w bulb as the sun went down and was impressed with the improved illumination until it blew the lighting fuse and left me doing 70mph in the pitch black, racing down an unpainted single track road....Sheesh. A beefier fuse

solved the problem thankfully.

My first off-road excursion on the Transalp came the following day when I encountered cowshit on an 80mph bend. I was impressed with the way the Honda completely cleared the roadside ditch and managed to stay upright while other competitors came to grief left, right and centre. Made me glad I was on a trailbike.

On the fourth day of the rally, riding from Le Puy en Velay to Ales, we encountered rain for the first time and I put the Avon Gripsters to a severe test as I averaged 60mph for 40 miles on Haute-Loire back-roads, scratching as hard in the wet as I had in the dry to stay on schedule. By the time we got to a soaking wet Ledenon circuit I was well warmed up and managed to see off a race-tuned RG500 and had a great dice with a well-ridden DR750.

On the way to Paul Ricard the following day I had another cock-up on the time-keeping front in company with a mad sunbed salesman from Brighton called Kevin. Riding a CBR600 he and I rode flat out for nearly two hours on open roads to stay on time in one of the most exhilarating and memorable rides of my entire life. At the circuit itself I was scraping the footrests both sides for the first time and the guy with the race tuned RG500 crashed trying to stay in front of me after I'd repeatedly passed him in the corners.

By this time I had enough strength in my wrist to use the brakes to the full and discovered that while the single disc is perfectly adequate for normal solo road use, it's a bit marginal for racing and rallying (and for two-up use) and I suffered from fade on some of the faster downhill sections as the smell of burning brake

So began a week of high speed lunacy across the backroads and circuits of France

Taking a break from the action on the Aneto Raid in 1989



pads filled my nostrils.

Similarly, while the suspension is fine for normal use, the Monte Carlo showed up its limitations 'in extremis'. The forks could definitely be meatier and the rear end starts to wander and weave a little if you're really pushing hard.

On the last couple of days of the rally in and around the Alpes Maritimes we encountered some sections that were so gravel-strewn that it was more like riding on dirt than tarmac. The Transalp really came into its own here and its off-road ability and tyres more than made up for the lack of top speed on the circuits - I found myself beating really fast guys on GSXR1100s and VFRs for the first time. Mind you, the top rally

men seemed to be able to cope with gravel even on the likes of GPX750s and TZR's, they just stood on the footrests and let the back ends fish-tail as they nailed it. Ironically, my only other prang was a slow-speed one on the open road when I hit some diesel doing about 30mph. The trusty Transalp just collected a couple more scratches on its gaffer-taped left fairing panel and we were back on the road within seconds.

By the time I reached Monte Carlo (33rd out of 69 entrants and best Brit under 750cc) my faithful steed felt like an old friend and was still running like a train. It used a bit of oil thrashing back to Blighty, but by then it had done 18,500 hard miles - the last 3,500 of which had largely been covered with the throttle against the stop. I was extremely impressed, and when I regretfully handed it back to Honda I asked for first refusal when they came to sell it. I matched the derisory offer made by a dealer and by

By the time I reached Monte Carlo my faithful steed felt like an old friend

Christmas 1988 the battle-scarred beauty was mine, all mine.....

Act Two: One Careful Owner....

Within days of finishing the Monte Carlo I started a new job at Langbaugh Motorsports near Middlesbrough and the Transalp became my regular means of commuting the twenty five miles from Durham City. I developed a route which avoided main roads and towns as much as possible and included several miles of wonderful twisting unclassified roads round the back of Sedgefield. When I first had it, the lusty V-twin had averaged between 45 and 50mpg, depending on how I drove it, with a frugal 55mpg possible, but now after a couple of years and much more thrashing, it was down to 40-45mpg.

I gaffer-taped an old visor to the screen which made things much more civilised at high speed and later replaced it with a flip-up number which reduced the amount of wind-pressure on the upper body, but increased noise considerably - the gaffer-taped old visor was actually the best compromise, and it had the bonus of being able to bend out of the way when I was loading the bike into my Transit! Working at Langbaugh gave me the chance to practise my dirt riding skills on the acres of undeveloped wasteland on the site and also to hone my tarmac skills on the brand new kart track. To my amazement I discovered it was possible go so far over (without falling off) on the Gripsters that the belly pan scraped.

In March '89 I entered one of the first ever Super Moto events in this country on the Transalp, down at Pembrey in South Wales. The 'dirt' section was actually a bit of a swamp, which actually made knobbly-tyred bikes faster than those with trail boots, despite the very fast tarmac sections. I got all crossed up and plopped into the quagmire, emerging covered in

mud, like some B-movie 'monster from the black lagoon'.

Mind you, I've been blase about tyre pressures ever since - in an effort to get more grip on the mud I lowered mine to 15psi on both wheels, and was still able to scrape the footrests on the tarmac sections, though it all got a bit hairy at 90+mph.

In April 1989 the BBC's 'TOP GEAR' based an entire programme at the Motorsports site and amongst a multitude of other events we put on a SuperMoto demonstration, for which I went out on the Transalp again amongst a load of serious motocrossers and enduro machines. Our makeshift course included a fairly severe drop off the kart track onto a rough-and-ready dirt section which really tested the big Honda's suspension, and in the broadcast the Beeb used a clip of me getting all out of shape as it bottomed out.

Act Three - The Transalp's Finest Hour...

In May 1989 I entered the Total Aneto



A year later and this time it's the Aneto Rally in the Pyrenees as Blezard and the Transalp attack a rocky climb

Raid in the Pyrennees on the Transalp with several other Monte Carlo veterans. It was a completely different sort of event; a week of serious off-roading from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean for both 4WDs and two-wheelers. It was like a North African rally, complete with road book and support vehicles but without the competitive element. Most of the other bike participants were on big singles and I was one of only a handful of twins and the only one with a fairing. There was a heavily modified French Transalp fitted with BMW GS100 forks, disc and front wheel, motocross tyres and minus its fairing. My only mods were to fit Pirelli MT17 'Strada' tyres and to remove the front mudguard at the recommendation of the scrutineers.

With typically thorough preparation, I actually started the event with Finilec in the rear tyre from an un-fixed puncture and a front disc so worn that serious braking required three pumps on the lever - it was sort of concave in section, nearly standard width at the edges and worn to about half thickness in the middle.

We rode for ten hours a day for five

days, covering over 1,000 miles, of which 95 percent was off tarmac, with a fantastic mix of terrain: smooth sandy woodlands, hard-baked, blindingly fast dirt roads, muddy bogs, steep climbs and descents on rocks the size of footballs, four foot snowdrifts and river crossings of the same depth. We crossed the French-Spanish border six times, mostly off-road, and also spent a night in Andorra.

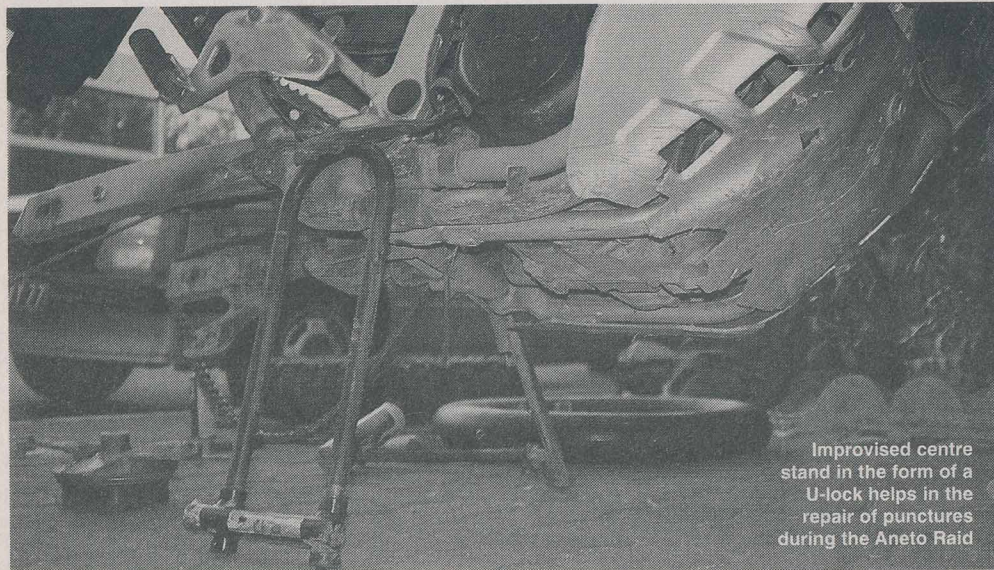
On the very first day I smashed the exhaust shield off, put a massive flat in one of the downpipes and twisted the rear brake lever like a piece of wrought iron craftwork - and that was all without crashing! But I got off lightly compared to those with cracked frames, broken linkages and engine seizures and there were several retirements.

On the second afternoon I was spat over the handlebars when I got cross-rutted on a concrete-hard dirt road. I landed on my knees and winded myself while my Transalp's clocks were smashed to bits and the fairing left hanging off. That *still* didn't stop the indicators working though,

and after the administration of a few yards of gaffer tape I was soon back on my way. That was my only major 'off', although I dropped the bike about once a day on average.

In the high altitude of the Pyrenees the bike really started to wheeze, until I realised that the airfilter was clogged with the thick red dust we'd been riding through and blew it out with an airline. There were a couple of really hard climbs, but I think I only required assistance from others three times in the whole week to keep going, while several riders on much more serious off-road machinery retired through breakdown or exhaustion. The hardest thing I did on my own was a really steep climb in which I had to deliberately lay the bike down when I realised I wasn't going to make it at the first attempt, drag it around on its side so that it was pointing back in the right direction, then pick it up *against* the slope of the hill before I could get going again - it was a bit like doing a 400lb clean and jerk.....

By the last day I'd become as confi-



Improvised centre stand in the form of a U-lock helps in the repair of punctures during the Aneto Raid

dent with the Transalp off-road as I was in the Monte Carlo on it; I was merrily hanging the back end out on dirt roads, getting both wheels off the ground on jumps and taking on fellow participants mounted on XR250s and the like. It was hugely enjoyable and to cap it all, the organisers awarded me the star prize, which was really the icing on the cake. It was undoubtedly the pinnacle of the Transalp's off-road achievement, and quite possibly my own. Mind you, by the finish the rear MT17 was barely legal after only 1,000 miles and the front disc was like a meat slicer.

There was an exciting aftermath to the Aneto a few days later when the repaired puncture in the rear tyre blew out at 85mph as I was overtaking a car on a narrow section of the A19 near Thirsk. I just managed to avoid disaster and wrestled the fully laden beast to a halt by the side of the road. At times like that I was able to use my trusty French U-lock jammed under the right footrest as an instant centre stand - dead handy. I replaced the clocks with another set from a breakers and Taff at Honda's press workshops (a fellow owner and fan of the lusty V-twins), kindly made a metal bracket to stop my Swagman throwovers melting on the exhaust. He had a VFR750 digital clock fitted to his fairing which looked so neat it made you wonder why they weren't a standard part. I also added a Scott-oiler which was really easy to fit because the vacuum tube bolts straight into one of the carb balancing bolt holes.

Many early Transalps were stricken with a faulty batch of crumbly DID rear rims (as were some Dominators), and mine was no exception. Honda were good enough to supply another one FOC and while Petite & France of Redcar were fitting it they also replaced the notchy head

bearings, piston rings, valve guides and seals in a successful attempt to reduce the oil consumption and the entire bill came to under £300 (plus VAT) which I thought was pretty reasonable considering the amount of work involved. It also got me out of doing the tappets, which is the devil's own job with the engine in the frame. Another rear wheel problem on the earlier machines was ovaling of the hub, which mine eventually succumbed to in a big way; (the Mk II Transalp avoided this problem by having a rear disc).

I did quite a few heavily laden two-up miles on the Transalp and it was perfectly happy to cruise at 90mph all day. It did make the front go a bit light, however, and I had an embarrassing prang in 1989 within a mile of the NEC show on press day, when I lost the front end on some damp white lining and deposited a friend of mine in the road. Again, the Transalp survived with just another couple of scratches to add to its battle scars.

Act Four: Like a Phoenix from the ashes....

The next major incident in the Transalp's action-packed existence was very nearly its last; any readers in the North East will know that bike theft is rife up there, and an unguarded trail bike's life expectancy is about the same as a machine gunner's on the Western Front in 1916. I knew all this, but was still gob-smacked when some local cowboys half-inched my beloved beauty in December 1990 literally from right under my nose in notorious South Bank in the Wild West of Langbaugh County. (The bike was parked in the front garden against the outside wall of the room I was sleeping in!)

They were spotted riding it three-up down to the DSS to sign on the following day, and the day after that it turned up

A few days later the repaired puncture blew out at 85mph...

down the road in Grangetown, fairingless, rack-less and burnt out. It looked a sorry sight, and the insurance company had no hesitation in writing it off, but ever-optimistic I bought it back off them for a nominal £100.

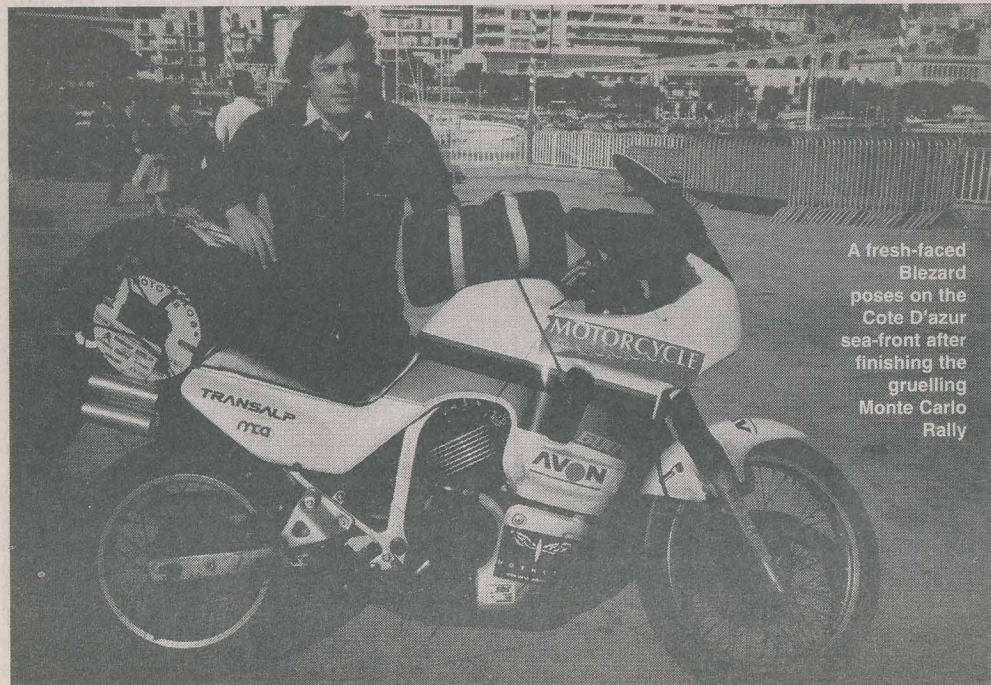
To cut a long story short (whaddya' mean this is already a long story?!) the Transalp rose like a phoenix from the ashes thanks to two things; my good fortune in finding a breakers near Maidstone with most of an engine-less XL600V for sale, and the fact that my friend Alan Seagrave took on the project as a challenge. Over the course of the next year the Transalp was slowly brought back to life and by the end of 1991 it was back on the road again.

I rode it to Paris in the Spring of '92

and up to the Yorkshire Dales in September, where I had an enjoyable day's trail riding - the last time I took it properly off road. It failed the MoT thanks to the ovalised rear hub the following year and it also developed a misfire which was largely - but not completely - cured by a carb balance at a local dealers. I ended up buying a pair of second hand wheels because the front had a good disc and mine was right on the limit - the second one worn out in about 35,000 miles.

Act Five: Parting is such sweet sorrow....

I finally sold my old friend sight unseen to an Irishman by the name of Liam Sheehan in May '94 and before



A fresh-faced Blezard poses on the Cote D'azur sea-front after finishing the gruelling Monte Carlo Rally

doing so did more spanning in one weekend than I had in six year's of ownership. I adjusted the tappets myself for the first time (what a *bastard* of a job) and changed the rear cylinder cam cover gasket because that was weeping, which may or may not have been connected with the fire. Adjusting the valve clearances finally cured the misfire which had dogged it for the previous two years - and looking back on it I wish I'd done it sooner!

In September '94 I did the inaugural Rally of Discovery and met Liam for the first time; he'd made such a smart job of doing up my old sparring partner that I did not even recognise it! Not only that, he went on to win the whole rally, so it can't have been that bad a buy, although he was a little taken aback when I told him

about the fire.!

Last I heard, he'd sold it on again and the old girl was still going strong - a testament to the build quality and robustness of Honda's original design. I'm still one of the world's greatest Transalp fans and would have another like a shot at the right price, although my ideal would be an Africa Twin which weighed the same as a Transalp. (interestingly enough, when the French top selling mag Moto Journal tested the two back to back, there was less than half a second difference in their standing quarter times and only 3mph difference in top speed.)

Finally, if anyone ever tells you that Transalps can't be taken off road, don't you believe them!

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92/J	£2755	£3625
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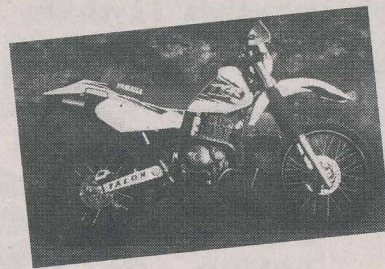
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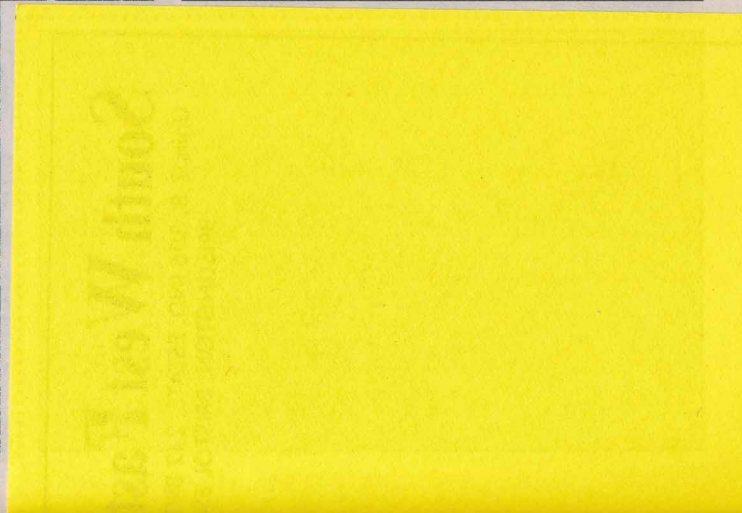


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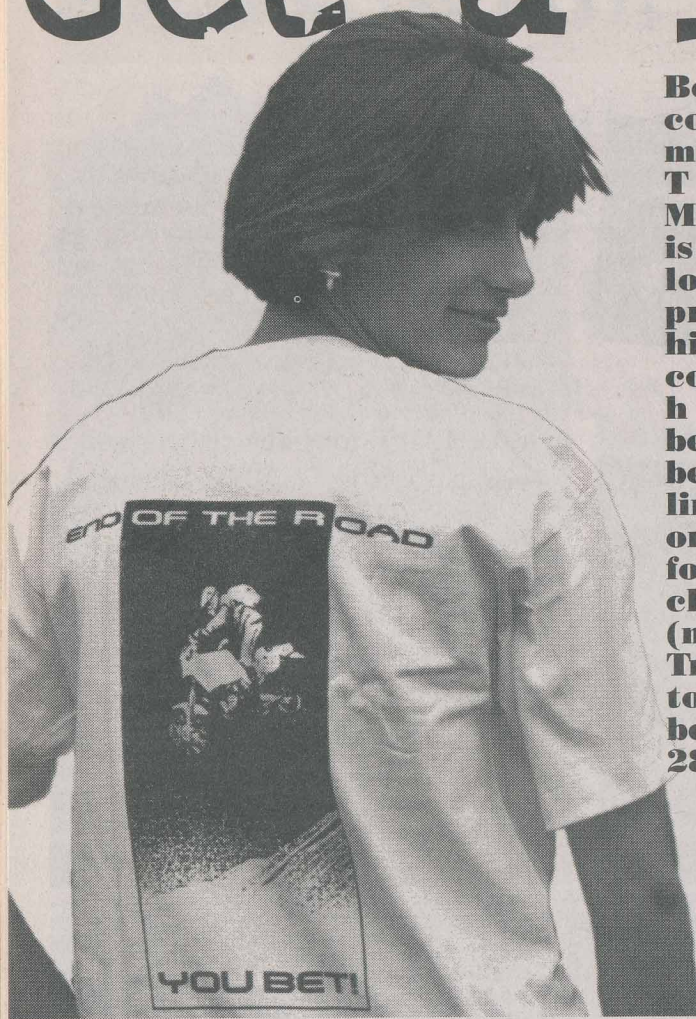
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the TRAILBIKE GUIDE

We don't claim this to be the definitive guide to all the trailbikes ever made, merely the sum total of our collective knowledge, trawled from the depths of dim and distant memories and assembled in some sort of order that you may find useful. What we do know is that no-one produces a guide to trail bikes that is as comprehensive as this, and that if you think there are revisions we should make, bikes that need adding to the list or merely things we've got wrong please feel free to write them down on a scrap of paper and stick it up your nose. Thank you.

APRILIA

Italian concern assembling rather than actually manufacturing bikes. In their short history they've enjoyed much competition success, and the products are generally well made, up to the minute and above all stylish.

RX125: w/c, 2-str, single. Superb, modern trailbike in both learner legal and full power form. Peaky and powerful engine with great suspension, and massive amounts of pose. Useful off-road. *Verdict:* A modern Italian DT.

Tuareg 50/125: w/c, 2-str, single. Smart little trailbike with Paris-Dakar styling cues designed to encounter nothing more hostile than Rome's potholed streets.

Tuareg 125 Rally: w/c, 2-str, single. Outrageously good looking Paris-Dakar styled trailie with a high spec inc USD forks, fully adjustable suspension etc.

High seat height more than made up for by poseability.

Pegaso 125: 242lbs/110kg, 124cc, w/c, 2-str, single with a claimed 31bhp.

Tuareg 600/650: a/c, 4-str, sohc, Rotax-powered single, e/s. Paris-Dakar lookalike with a high specification (USD forks etc), and flashy paintjob. Reasonably light and not overly tall for this type of bike, nice machine if you can find one. *Verdict:*

Posing tackle that works.

Pegaso 650: 1992-on, 348lbs/157kg, w/c, dohc, 4-str, e/s single, with a claimed 50bhp. Stylish and quick trailie using poky 5-valve Rotax engine, good for about 110mph with cornering to match. Lighter than the BMW F650 and the Pegaso's twin exhaust is much better tucked in, but it has a much higher, less comfortable seat (36 inches) and fewer layers of paint. 19 inch front wheel limits tyre choice, and beware iffy sidestand, cunningly hidden fuel tap and small reserve. Capable big trailie both on and off the road and good value. *Verdict:*

Flying horse, flies high.

ARMSTRONG

Grew out of Jeff Clews' CCM company of Bolton and CanAm/Bombardier bikes for the army. (Bombardier were originally a French Canadian company that manufactured snowmobile engines - they are now a massive worldwide engineering company that owns Rotax, among others).

250: a/c, 2-str, singles (Bombardier engines).

500: a/c 4-str, singles (Rotax engines) with left hand kick starts.

CCM: A few enduro bikes based on the moto-crossers).

NB: Armstrong sold out to Harley Davidson who now build 350cc electric start versions of the old 500s for the army.

ATK: a/c 4-str, sohc, Rotax-powered singles. US-made, high quality motocrossers with unique engine-sprocket mounted rear brake on some models. Any genuine trailies?

BARIGO: a/c, 4-str, sohc, Rotax-powered



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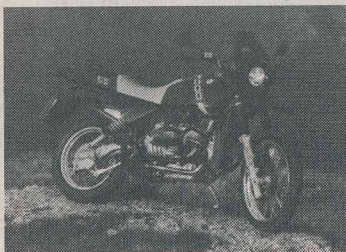
singles. French-made range of specialist on/off road bikes built by Patrick Barigault. They specialise in supermotard bikes and desert racers, both of which have had some competition success, though they also do a trail/enduro bike. The same basic rotax mill that in MZ guise churns out 32bhp produces a claimed 60bhp when tuned to Barigo's specification... but they say it's reliable. *Verdict: Gallic charm.*

BMW

Traditional air-cooled, pushrod boxer flat twins. Some rare collectibles: early pre-G/S ISDT boxers which weigh only 320lbs! Genuine Paris-Dakar machines. Specialist builders: Schek and HPN. UK expert: Jon Watson-Miller at Bracken motorcycles in South East London (0171-231-9438).

R80G/S: 374lbs, a/c, 4-str, 797cc, twin. One of the first mega-trailies. Launched in 1981, Monolever rear end, kick and optional electric start. Special big-bore versions of which took Hubert Auriol and Gaston Rahier to four Paris-Dakar wins. Original 'Paris-Dakar' version of G/S was just the standard model with a big tank and bore no relation to the real desert racers, which were built specially by Herbert Schek. The most trailable of all the Beemers distinguishable by its high front mudguard and simple instruments. *Verdict: The one to go for.*

R100G/S: 1988-on, 220kg/484lbs, a/c,



4-str, twin, e/s. More powerful 60bhp engine complete with double-jointed drive shaft (Paralever) and much improved

suspension front and rear. Colours were white/blue and black/yellow (the wonderful 'bumble-bee') with mini-fairing. One of the most versatile motorcycles on the planet with neat panniers, clock and heated handlebars all available from the BMW catalogue. Superb go-anywhere tourer with surprising off-road-ability but a bit thirsty on the motorway

(35mpg). *Verdict: A two-wheeled Land Rover.*

R100GS: a/c, 4-str, twin, e/s. Revised in 1991 with proper fairing and more garish paint job. Final revision for UK in 1993 with 'P-D' version when humungous plastic tank (already available on the continent) finally became legal, also sported a set of external fairing crash bars. Single-seat with extra large rack available as option. Last officially imported in 1994. *Verdict: Big and butch.*

R80GS: a/c, 4-str, twin, e/s. Small bore version of the above with same dimensions and 50bhp.

R1100GS: 1994-on. 209kg/461lbs, o-a/c, 4-str, 8-valve, 1086cc, twin, e/s, 5-speed, 80bhp. Mega-Monster trailie based around the brand new four-valve boxer engine mated to Telelever chassis. Huge stomp plus ABS which can be turned off if desired. Superb road bike but not nearly as off-roadable as the old boxers. Recall in '94 for problems with Telelever ball joints. *Verdict: The first trailie superbike.*

F650 'Funduro': w/c, 4-str, dohc, 652cc, single, e/s, 48 bhp (claimed). Aprilia-built, Rotax-engined trail bike launched in 1993 to bring BMWs to the masses. Based on Aprilia's Pegaso, but with four valves instead of five, more expensive, heavier and more 'roadified', with larger tank, stainless exhaust and much lower seat, although still eminently trail-able. Great fun to ride on or off road, and surprisingly quick - these babies will make a genuine 46bhp at the rear wheel. Beware clunky gearboxes, 19in front wheel limits tyre choice. Sold like hot cakes thanks to legendary BMW build quality. *Verdict: Solid and sensible.*

CAGIVA

Italian manufacturer that now owns Ducati, Husqvarna and Morini.

W4: w/c, 2-str, 50/80cc, single, 6-speed gearbox trail moped. Looks like a pukka enduro tool but restricted model wouldn't pull the skin off a rice pudding. 80cc version much better bet.

Super City: 125kg/276lbs, w/c, 2-str, 124cc single, e/s, 7-speed, 34bhp. Outrageously styled super-moto available in learner legal and unrestricted flavours. Even the full power model is hard work

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due to peaky and raucous engine inherited from the Mito sports bike. Fast and handles well with sticky road tyres. Could be fun for humiliating bigger bikes on the road but otherwise pretty pointless. Makes a TDR feel civilised. Off road? Only for super-moto racing, for which it had its own class in France. *Verdict: Teenage kicks.*

WMX500DE: 1986-88, w/c, 2-str, single. Strange specialist desert racer with large tank, limited lock and high quality components. Very few around.

W8: 264lbs, w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single, 6-speed, 31hp. Excellent trailbike version of above but with a couple of ponies less and no upside down forks. very few sold in UK.

T4: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 450cc, single. A few imported to UK in 1989 by Moto Vecchia. Fore-runner to W12 and W16. Plastic tank holds 4 gals. e/s option as well as kick-starter. Alloy rims and swing arm. Poxy rose joints on gearchange broke early on.

W12: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 350cc, 4-valve, single, e/s 6-speed, 25bhp. Simple, no frills trailbike (as used by Italian army), a bit like an Italian XT350 but not as tough. Very few were sold in UK. *Verdict: Something different.*

W16: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 601cc, 4-valve, single, e/s, 34bhp. Tasty looking, but a little underpowered at only 34bhp for new learner laws. Looks similar to Yam XT600E but lighter, lower and more colourful - and less robust off-road.

Elefant: mid-eighties. o-a/c, 4str, desmo, V-twin. Engine originally derived from Ducati Pantah. Started as 650cc in mid-eighties, grew to 750cc by 1988, though there was a smaller 350cc version available to suit learner laws in other countries.

Elefant 350: o-a/c, 4-str, desmo, V-twin, e/s. Middleweight version of the lovely 750, with much less power but almost the same weight. Not many imported for the simple reason that no-one really wanted one. *Verdict: Curiosity value only.*

Elefant 750: 1988-1990. 188kg/414lbs, o-a/c, 4-str, desmo, V-twin, e/s. Distinctive looking big trailie with white/red/blue/blue paintwork, angular styling and gold anodised rims (21 inch F, 17 inch R). 750 motor was nice, but suf-



fered from poor carburetion at bottom end thanks to Bing carbs. Nimble handling and good off road ability.

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

ENFIELD INDIA

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

GILERA

Now defunct part of the Piaggio group with legendary road-racing history. **50/125:** a/c, 2-str,



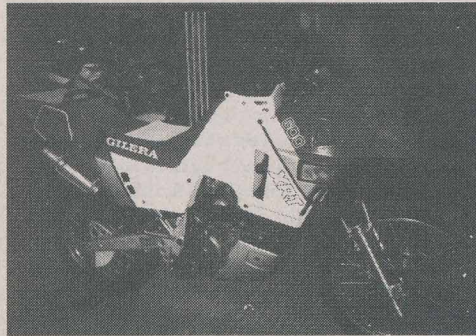
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single. Learner bikes - not officially imported.

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

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

XRT600: w/c, 4str, 558cc, single, e/s.



Clumsily styled, Paris-Dakar influenced big trailie that uses the stock Gilera lump in yet another manifestation. Big, heavyish and extremely rare in the UK. *Verdict: Ugly duckling.*

HARLEY DAVIDSON

Not the V-twins, but a mish-mash of European-made stuff with the H-D badge. **H-D 90:** a/c, 2-str, 90cc, single. Aermacchi-made 1970s mini-trail funbike. Very rare these days. passable off road. CCM sold the rights to the Armstrong army bikes to H-D circa 1992, and H-D duly won the British army contract. Now electric start (after heavy squaddie casualties with the old left-side kick-starts) and reportedly more robust but down-sized from 500 to 350cc.

HONDA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TLR200: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 199cc, single. Pukka outdated trials machine with road legal ability. Ideal for really snotty green lanes and long distance trials events, but not as comfy as some trail bikes and not really built for speed. Still available new as personal imports at fairly attractive prices.

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

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

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

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

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

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

XL500S: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Practically identical to the XL250 apart from the bigger cylinder and head and a longer frame although it is possible to squeeze the bigger engine into a 250 chassis. Only 32bhp, but loads more stomp and the same crappy front brake - green racing linings help a bit, but beware low-speed lock-ups! Fortunately the 23 inch wheels can be re-laced with 21inch rims which actually improves the handling and provides a vast increase in tyre choice!

Beware starting problems and low revs misfire caused by furring of the alloy earthing plate - solution is to take a lead direct from engine to coil.

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

XL350/400: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Grey import originally built for French and Japanese markets - a big-bore version of the 250 rather than a sleeved down 500. *Verdict: Very rare.*

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

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

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

XR75/80: a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Small

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wheel mini-bike with poky engine for teenagers, but we know of at least one street-legalised one used as a fun green-laner after modification with big wheels.

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

XR200: a/c, 4-str, sohc, single, 5-speed. Early twin shock bikes (originally based on the XL185) made brilliant green laners. Still fairly popular though later mono-shock versions are better and more plentiful. Drum bakes let it down though some late Japanese spec models come with discs. Light enough to pick up if need be. *Verdict: Still a great trail bike.*

XR250(R): a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Based on both XL250S and 250R with identical frames but more suspension travel, disc front brake and slightly hotter cam giving small power increase. Early monoshock with twin carbs could be a sod to start when hot - go for the later single-carb model. The XR250 makes a very good off-road all-rounder - light weight and adequate power (30bhp claimed) makes it perfect for trail riders and clubman

enduro riders alike, and tolerable on the road. All Honda 250s need to be revved hard if you want to get a move on. New ones come with



electric start and there's now a Baja version available with huge twin headlamps, among other detail changes. *Verdict: Popular and versatile trailie.*

XR250L: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Grey import with road-legal lights, speedo and indicators. Slightly heavier than R.

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

weight.

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

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

XR650L: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 644cc, single, e/s. Grey imported, fully street legal version of the XR600 using electric start Dominator engine and some of the roadgoing niceties. Slight weight penalty, but a real beauty if you can find one. Balancer shaft makes this a much nicer animal on the road, and not much worse off it. *Verdict: Worth searching out.*

NX125: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 123cc, single, 6-speed. Mini-mini Dominator for continental learner market, based on the XL125

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motor. Popular commuter in France, not seen much over here.

NX250/350: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single, e/s. Mini-Dominator, much smaller and lighter than big brother and surprisingly quick (85mph) thanks to a relatively highly tuned water-cooled engine. Ideal for the vertically challenged and for doubling up as an economical commuter. 350cc (Sahara) version built in Brazil for South American market.

AX1: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single, e/s. Japanese home market version of the NX250, built for the street only, with cast wheels and twin tail lights.

NX650P Dominator: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 644cc, single, e/s. The definitive civilised big-single four-stroke trail bike, with genuine off road ability. Torquey 44bhp motor with handy electric start - early versions had kick-start as well. Classy cosmetics make crashing expensive and despite the mini-fairing still much more tiring than something like a Transalp on M-ways. Nevertheless a good touring bike providing you don't want to go too fast. Watch out for rotted wheel rims on early models. Plentiful in UK but high build quality means secondhand prices are quite steep.

XLV600VP Transalp: w/c, 4-str, 6-valve, sohc, 583cc, V-twin, e/s. Called the Rally Tourer, its name befits its description. True dual purpose machine, great all-rounder. Engine based on the VT500, and larger versions now power the Bros and Africa Twin. Unburstable and torquey motor churns out a claimed 55bhp but can be tricky to work on unless out of the

frame. Expensive cosmetics worth protecting if you're going to venture off road. Early versions easy to spot

due to hub rear brake which was prone to going oval. Suffers from rotting wheel rims (like Dominator) in certain cases,



and single front discs (identical to CBR600s) can wear fast. Slight facelift in 1993 improved fairing protection slightly. Later versions also come with handy centre stand which was an option on earlier models. Beware handlebar rubber-mountings wearing out giving 'twisted' and remote feel to bars. Sensible secondhand prices. *Verdict: Superb trail bike for touring on.*

XLV750: a/c, 4-str, sohc, V-twin. Mid-80s precursor to Transalp but featuring shaft-drive, and distinctive red engine. Never officially imported into UK, but quite common in France.

XR650 Africa Twin: w/c, 4-str, 6-valve, sohc, V-twin, e/s. Even closer to HRC P-D specials, mass-produced monster trailie that was extremely popular in Europe in 1989. About 100 were specially built for HRC-supported mass entries to Paris Dakar.

XR750 Africa Twin: w/c, 4-str, 6-valve, sohc, 742cc, V-twin, e/s. Bored out from 650cc to 742cc in 1990 to make an impressive but rather top-heavy Paris-Dakar styled mega-trailie. Much more expensive than the competition at the time, though they had high build quality and came with trick on-board computer. Better off road than you'd imagine, especially on fast and dusty trails.

XR750-S Africa Twin: w/c, 4-str, 6-valve, sohc, 742cc, V-twin, e/s. Lightened, lowered and improved 1993-on version of its forbear. Superb, top quality all-rounder but still relatively expensive.

HUSABERG

KTM owned Swedish range of mainly competition four-stroke machines which use what is basically a two-stroke bottom end mated to a four-stroke barrel and head. Light, powerful and can be vibey.

FE350: w/c, 4-str, 349cc, single, e/s. Cross between a balls out enduro mount and a trail bike. Beautifully made, fast and light. Left hand kickstart negated by new electric boot. *Verdict: A serious tool.*

FE501: w/c, 4-str, 501cc, single, e/s. As above but more so.

FE600: w/c, 4-str, 595cc, single, e/s. As above but even more so.

HUSQUARNA

Previously Swedish, but now Italian-

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owned company (Cagiva) manufacturing a range of (essentially) competition bikes (Enduro and Motocross), not to mention a rather nice line in lawnmowers. Both two and four stroke machines are renowned for their power to weight ratio and high quality components, though left hand kickstarts can be awkward.

WRE125: w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Modern, superb, high specification trailie with powerful revvy motor and top-notch suspension. Though classified as a trail-bike it makes a better clubman enduro mount than pure green laner thanks to tall seat height, and peaky top-end power delivery.

JAWA-CZ

Penta 125: a/c, 2-str, 123cc, single. 12 bhp learner legal trail bike from the Czech manufacturers - unknown quantity.

KAWASAKI

KE = a/c, 2-str, trail.

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

KLR = w/c, 4-str, trail.

KLX = w/c, 4-str, trail/enduro.

KMX = w/c, 2-str, trail.

KDX = a/c and w/c, 2-str, enduro then trail.

KE 80/100: a/c, 2-str, 79/99cc, single. Very basic disc valve learner trailie with drum brakes both ends. Has been around for donkey's years and value will be dropping as new learner laws come in. Ideal second hand bike for the vertically and financially challenged to start trailing with.

KE125/175: a/c, 2-str, single. Early twin shock, disc valve trailie dating from the Seventies. Popular then, but most will have rotted away by now. Easy to learn on many were used as farm bikes. Later versions styled to resemble KDX. Lengthy production run means Kawasaki must have got it right. *Verdict: Long lived.*

KMX125: 216lb/98kg, w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Very able little trail bike powered by reed valve and KIPS power valve engine, which can easily be de-restricted to double power output to a lively 24bhp.

KMX200: 1987-92, 221lb/100kg, w/c, 2-str, 191cc, single, 6-speed. Big-bore version of the 125 with a claimed 30bhp, which makes a much more able all-rounder capable of motorway cruising

and a top whack of nearly 90mph. Not as reliable as the 125 and if used 'in extremis' off-road the suspension, and especially the forks are not as good as later generation KDXs. Fuel range to bone dry is only 90 miles with 10 mile reserve, and KIPS valve can give trouble, as can clutch and radiator (no fan fitted!). 200 also lumbered with a 17 inch rear wheel, so it's quite common to fit the 18 inch from the 125 to improve off-road tyre choice. **KMX** also suffered from indifferent build quality, and could be fragile off road. Pads and discs wore out if you so much as looked at them. But seat height is much more accessible for shorties than KDX. Has not been imported for a few years now, if in good nick, an excellent trail bike for most conditions.

KDX125SR: w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. 124cc. Similar engine to the **KMX** (with KIPS power valve) but with the stronger competition-derived 'perimeter', square-tube chassis. Later ones had upside-down forks, but were slower than cheaper **KMX** in restricted form.

KDX175/200: a/c, 2-str, single. originally sold as a competition only machine with no speedo or horn and a plastic tank when they were still illegal on the road. Fine for enduros but a bit uncivilised on the road. Peaky and raucous, the first models were however lighter, lower and torquier than the later w/c models.

KDX200: w/c, 2-str, 199cc, single. Based on **KDX125**, completely redesigned from a/c version with increased suspension travel, revised Uni-Track rear end, and more top end power. Basically a clubman enduro bike, very few haven't been raced.

KDX220R/SR: w/c, 2-str, 220cc, single.

As above but updated for '95, and with more power and torque. The **SR** is the street version. *Verdict: Yummy.*

KL250: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 246cc, single. Late seventies twin shock trail bike derived from the 200cc road bike commuter. Pretty basic (no balancer shaft), but also pretty reliable, and extremely



frugal.

KLR250: 1987-on, 260lbs/118kgs, w/c, 4-str, sohc, 249cc, single. Reliable if rather unexciting trail bike with just 23bhp on tap. Despite the complexity of w/c engine they're very robust, and easy to service. More than capable of economical daily commuting, but not very fast on or off the road. Revved as a budget trailie alongside more expensive **KLX** having been dropped when they first came in. *Verdict: Excellent starter trailbike with good manners.*

KLX250: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 246cc, single. Enduro version of the early twin shock **KL**, with less road manners.

KLX250: 1994-on, w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, 249cc, single. The four-stroke equivalent of the **KDX**, with similar motocross-derived perimeter chassis. Looks the business with handling and suspension to match, but performance of the 25bhp street-legal trail version is a bit flat. The lighter 30bhp enduro version is a lot more satisfying to ride, but early ones had carburetion difficulties, and both need to be revved hard to produce their power. Quite tall in the saddle.

KLE500: 392lb/178kg, w/c, 4-str, 8-valve, dohc, 498cc, parallel twin. Slightly oddly styled 'town trailie' which shares its engine with the **EN500/GPZ500** whose motors were in turn, effectively one half of a **GPZ900R**. The revvy little **KLE** makes 50bhp but is far less trail-friendly than the torquey **Transalp** and more tiring on the road especially with its uncomfortable (pink) seat and minimal fairing. Quite fast for the money and pretty good around town, but definitely not going to suit everyone's taste or backside. *Verdict: Unique.*

KLR600:

1984-on, 430lbs, w/c, 4-str, dohc, 564cc, single. Big banger trail bike which

started out with a kickstart but became the first big trailie to be fitted with an electric boot. Some had balancer chain



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problems and early ones overheated due to poor siting of the thermostat, but otherwise a fine handling road machine with plenty of trail-ability. *Verdict: Sensible thumper.*

KLR 650: 1987-on, 286lb, w/c, 4-str, dohc, 651cc, single. Bored out version of the 600. Like the **KLR 250**, recently re-introduced as a cut-price all-rounder now that insurance rating system no longer unfairly penalises over-600s. *Verdict: Competent rather than spectacular.*

KLR 650 & (Tengai): 1989-on, w/c, 4-str, dohc, 651cc, single. Bored out to 651cc in 1987, Kawasaki have never had any success in the African rallies, but the **Tengai** (launched in 1989) is their be-fairing homage to the genre.

KLX 650: 337lbs/153kg, w/c, 4-str, dohc, 651cc, single. Bigger version of the 250 with the same drop-dead motocross looks, but with **USD** forks. Early ones were designed without enough clearance between the rear wheel and the mudguard which meant the wheel hammers into the **CDI** box at max compression with expensive consequences. No bashplate either. Not as torquey as the **Dominator** or the **Pegaso** but great for smooth dirt roads or gravel-strewn tarmac. Ideally suited as a supermoto or town bike. Fast and furious, but not much plonkability. Enduro version and later models didn't suffer the same suspension problems. *Verdict: Good but not good enough.*

KTM

Mainly enduro two and four-strokes of dubious street legality. Older enduro bikes are sometimes trailied, but generally rather fast/peaky/specialised for green lane use.

400: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Trail bike version of an existing enduro bike, but with the added civility of a balancer shaft. Fast and exciting on forest roads, but not much of a chugger. Great on the road though lack of screen may be a problem for some. Tall seat height and left-hand kickstart make it tricky for shorties. Top notch suspension, but not as light as it looks. Also quite pricey. *Verdict: Specialist tackle.*

620: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. As

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above but more so.

Duke: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Strangely-styled but quite unique Supermoto version of KTM's big-banger. Stylish little headlamp fairing contains two small headlights, and of course the bike rides on 17 inch wheels with wide, sticky rubber. Lots of fun, lots of cred, but expensive and rare since they're only imported in strictly limited numbers. *Verdict:* Street rod.

LAVERDA

DR650 Atlas: a/c, 4-str, sohc, twin. Strange overweight trailie produced from the dying embers of the Italian Laverda concern. Using the Montjuic engine as its source the Atlas' only claim to fame is the inexplicable 'Soft Ramble' sticker that graced the swingarm. *Verdict:* Rare with reason.

MORINI

Camel: a/c, 4-str, ohv, V-twin. Oddball twin shock, V-twin trailie utilising the heron-headed Morini lump. High saddle and limited spares can be a problem, but otherwise quite robust and great fun if you can master the left-handed kickstart. Not very plentiful, but fairly cheap. *Verdict:* Eccentric transport.

Kanguro: a/c, 4-str, ohv, 344cc, V-twin. Looks like an accident between an XT350 and a Transalp. Lovely engine is a bit dated really, but the Kanguro (couldn't they spell Kangaroo?) is definitely worth a look if you're after something a bit different and don't mind the left-hand kickstart. Sold very slowly and remained in production for a number of years, so it's possible to still find new ones, and they're very cheap for an Italian bike. *Verdict:* Strangely alluring.

MOTO GUZZI

350TT: a/c, 4-str, ohv, V-twin. Middleweight Guzzoid with all the attraction of chicken pox. *Verdict:* see below.
V65TT: a/c, 4-str, ohv, V-twin. Middleweight Guzzi trailie of average ability. Hard work on the dirt... and on the road. Not many around. *Verdict:* Masochists only



need apply.

Quota: a/c, 4-str, ohv, V-twin. Big Guzzi that like Triumph's Tiger is really just a road bike in trail bike clothing, but without the Triumph's impressive on road performance. A truly monstrous beast with a seat-height that requires a ladder if you're under 6ft. It makes even the Tiger feel small by comparison. Agricultural engine with torque reaction from the shaft and dangerous lack of ground clearance both on and off road. Good fuel consumption thanks to fuel injection and high gearing, are about all it has going for it. Incredibly expensive when it was launched, but prices did come down. Strictly for straight dirt roads and motorways. Should come with a government health warning. *Verdict:* Proves that big is not necessarily beautiful.

MZ

Ex-East German manufacturer with a reputation of making stodgy but solid bikes. A few a/c, 2-str, 250 ISDT specials around, though most road MZs are robust enough to be 'trailified'. Cheap and cheerful. *Verdict:* Worth a trip around the Bloc.

500 Saxon Country: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, Rotax-powered single. Old-fashioned looking trail bike, that's really just a roadster with a set of trail clothes on. Expensive for what it is. *Verdict:* Obsolete.

ROCON

340RT: a/c, 2-str, Sachs-engined, 340cc, single. Obscure Canadian bikes using a snowmobile engine with a pull start and an automatic gearbox. Manufactured during the seventies with a twin shock chassis. *Verdict:* Wild, but bizarre.

SUZUKI

TS = a/c then w/c, 2-str, trail.

PE = a/c, 2-str, enduro.

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

DR = o-a/c 4-str, trail.

RV125: a/c, 2-str, single. Strange looking fun bike from the seventies with small wheels and balloon tyres designed for riding on sand. Looks a bit like a full size monkey bike. Quite fun, but rare and more than a bit odd.

TS120 Trailcat: a/c, 2-str,

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single. One of the first purpose built trail bikes to come into the UK in the early Seventies, with unusual, Land Rover style high and low ratio 3x2 gearbox. Lightweight and easy handling twin shock chassis. A bit of a collector's item if you like that sort of thing. *Verdict:* For anoraks only.

TS125/185: a/c, 2-str, single. Early seventies twin shock trailie with distinctive high level pipe which was unusual at the time. Not many left now.

TS125/185ER: a/c, 2-str, single. Peaky learner bike from early Eighties still with 'twin shocks' *Verdict:* Not bad considering.

TS250: a/c, 2-str, single. Much the same as the early 125 but with punchier 250cc motor, and low-level chrome front mud-guard.

TS250ER: a/c, 2-str, single. Early Eighties trail bike that's a bigger version of the 125 with twin shocks and electronic ignition.

TS50: a/c, 2-str, single. Undistinguished twin shock trailie.

TS50ER: a/c, 2-str, single. As above.

TS50X: w/c, 2-str, single. Modest trail moped with a roaring 3bhp on tap, and 'full floater' monoshock suspension. Good for a 50 though.



TS125X: w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Very competent learner legal trailie. Better than the equivalent DT at the time. *Verdict:* Good secondhand buy.

TS125R: w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Latest version of above with power valve fitted that just needs connecting up to get full power.

TS200R: w/c, 2-str, 199cc, single. Grey import with its own French championship. As above but with more poke. Not many around.

PE175: a/c, 2-str, single. Basic twin-shock clubman enduro bike from the seventies, styled on the RM motocrosser. Poky at the time, but not by today's standards. Last ones had 'full floater' suspension. Reasonable number of tatty ones still about that can be had for not much money.

PE250: a/c, 2-str, single. Similar to 175 but with a better spread of power. Lots of fun, but noisy as hell.

PE400: a/c, 2-str, single. As above but with more power than most people could use in this chassis off-road. *Verdict:* Wild.

SP370: a/c 4-str, sohc, single. Early eighties twin shock trailie that seemed to go on and on. Frugal, robust and reasonably reliable despite lack of balancer shaft. Good, cheap hack.

SP400: a/c 4-str, sohc, single. As above.

DR125: o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Small and not very powerful trailie but with the benefit of being robust, reliable and frugal. *Verdict:* Slow but solid.

DR125 Raider: o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. As above but with false header pipe and (marginally) bigger P-D style tank.

DR200: o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. As above but despite bigger motor, still a bit underpowered. Not sold as street legal. Beware rear wheel collapse on early ones.

DR200

Djebel: o-a/c,

4-str, sohc, single,

e/s.

Japanese home market version of above with more street mods (including electric boot), and less trailability.

DR250: o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Grey import baby brother of the 350 we get here in the UK, only with USD forks and a brilliant ride height control making it more accessible to little people. *Verdict:* Worth searching out.

DR350: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Superb little trailie with dry-sump motor, excellent suspension, but tiny petrol tank. A bit cheap in places, but lightweight and fairly robust. Better off road than on it.



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Front disc brake not very powerful and wears out rapidly. Can look tatty quite quickly. Unfortunately kickstart only (until 95), and high seat height rules it out for sub six footers. Engine feels unburstable and will rev and rev though some have been known to drop valves occasionally. *Verdict: Great trail bike.*

DR350(E): o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Enduro version of above which is slightly 'harder' all round. Available in the UK but very few sold, and no 'leccy start available. *Verdict: Rare but good.*

DR400S: 287lbs, a/c 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 396cc, single. Updated SP400 from the mid-Eighties with alloy petrol tank, but still twin shock and 6-volt. Beware camshaft rattles at high mileages. Very economical, but without the benefit of balance shafts. Watchout for things shaking loose like engine bolts or perhaps your leg. *Verdict: Shake, baby shake.*

DR500S: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Foreign market, bigger-bore version of the 400. None known in the UK.

DR600S: 136kg/299lbs, o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 589cc, single. Classic big banger with modern monoshock rear end and balancer shaft motor. One of the best (and most sensible) of the DRs, but a bit overgeared and heavy. Can be a bugger to start when hot till you get the knack. *Verdict: Good secondhand buy.*

DR650RSE: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 640cc, single, e/s. More road than trail bike, longer, heavier than earlier DRs and with civilised half fairing and twin silencers. Good road bike, but first gear very high for trails and despite half decent suspension, still a bit of a handful on the dirt no thanks to its seat height.

Engine sounds like a tractor and vibrates like one. Carbs can give iffy running at low revs. *Verdict: Okay I s'pose.*

DR650: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single, e/s. Latest version of above without the half fairing or twin



exhausts. Still overgeared, still rather tall, but with the best suspension in class. Not very refined and feels a bit cheap, but definitely heading in the right direction.

DR750: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. The original 'Dr Big' - Suzuki's first attempt at a Paris-Dakar style big trailie. No-one has built a bigger single - except Suzuki themselves. *Verdict: Not for the faint hearted.*

DR800: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. The ultimate ultimate. Monstrous single with gargantuan tank, massive seat height and weird styling. Could win awards for ugliness, but pretty good handler and surprisingly nimble. Massive tank gives good range. Dropped from the UK range in about 1993, suffered badly from Norwich Union's capacity-based insurance grading, but should be much cheaper to insure now. Many engines found their way into singles racing. But there's a few around if you really must have one. *Verdict: Why bother?*

TRIUMPH

Tiger: w/c, 4-str, 12-valve, dohc, 885cc, triple. Brilliant but expensive road bike from the new Triumph factory, styled to look like an off roader for the German market. Grunty engine makes it quick on the road but don't bother venturing off road, as suspension leaves a lot to be desired. Rear linkage hangs down below frame rails and catches on practically everything. Tall seat height makes low speed manoeuvring tricky. *Verdict: A trailie in name only.*

YAMAHA

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

IT = a/c, 2-str, enduro.

WR = w/c, 2-str, enduro.

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

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

TW = a/c, 4-str, trail/fun.

BW = a/c, 4-str, trail/fun.

DT125/175: a/c, 2-str, single. The DTs are the bike that brought trail riding to the masses! Started out as a basic twin shock trail bike back in the late Seventies before adopting can-

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tillever rear ends. They built up a reputation for being an extremely competent trail tool and taking an amazing amount of punishment. The 175s were dropped when the 125 learner laws came along in 1981. *Verdict: Still one of the best trail-bikes ever.*

DT125(LC): 1987-on, w/c, 2-str, single. The DT came of age with the adoption of watercooling, motocross styling, and most important of all, a power valve. Lost some of its torque but gained a revvier motor and lots more top end together with sophisticated suspension front and rear. In 12bhp restricted form they're as flat as a pancake, but unrestricted make a capable 24bhp. Although in the fashion stakes they've been overtaken by trickier looking tackle, they still top the sales chart because of their hard earned reputation. Still good at off roading though they're taller and peakier than ever. Stripped down and tuned up they will pass as a good clubman enduro mount. *Verdict: The king lives on.*



DT200(R): w/c, 2-str, single. Grey import big bore version of the 125. Extra oomph makes it easier to ride. *Verdict: Competent all rounder.*

DT250: a/c, 2-str, single. Late Seventies cantilever shocked version of the smaller bikes, more power but less agility.

DT400: a/c, 2-str, single. Hairy chested version of above, not many left now.

IT125/175/200: a/c, 2-str, single. Early eighties enduro tool. Useful off road, but a bit hairy on it no thanks to drum brakes. Use of premix is a bit of a pain, 175 is the better bet if you can find one.

IT250: a/c, 2-str, 246cc, single. Less peaky, bigger bore version of above with

enough power for any off road activity. At the time it boasted more power and much less weight than the equivalent water-cooled RD250LC twin!

IT425/465/490: a/c, 2-str, single. Fire-breathing, hard to tame, monster stroker for serious enduro freaks. Only for those with lots of skill or very large gonads. Not the most reliable bike in the world. *Verdict: Melts visors at 50 paces.*

WR200: w/c, 2-str, single. Brilliant clubman enduro bike with lightweight chassis and 'soft-tune' engine, but plenty of power. Rear suspension oversprung, and they need gearing down for low speed trails. Good if you like your bikes tall. Easy to ride with a nice light front end. *Verdict: Modern classic.*

WR250: w/c, 2-str, single. As above but with 'hard-tune' engine. Essentially the enduro version of the YZ motocrosser but with wider ratio gearbox and more fly-wheel. It also came with a lighting coil, but no lights! *Verdict: Peaky and poky.*

WR500: a/c, 2-str, single. As above but using air-cooled YZ motor.

TDR 250: w/c, 2-str, parallel twin. A TZR250 in trail clothing. Great road bike with demon brakes thanks to dinner-plate sized front disc, and all or nothing power-band. Peaky motor makes it difficult to use off road apart from on fast fire roads, supermotard or competition road rallies for which it is ideal. A thoroughly uncivilised motorcycle - raucous, peaky and excruciatingly uncomfortable with an unquenchable thirst for fuel - and absolutely fabulous. Beware seizures on left hand cylinder, and high speed wobbles on the road. Has a few passionate and delinquent supporters. *Verdict: For petrolheads everywhere.*

XT125: a/c, 4-str, single. Learner legal motorcycle without the need for restriction! *Verdict: Reliable but intensely boring.*

XT225 Serow: a/c, 4-str, dohc, single. Small but perfectly formed grey import trail bike with kick and e/s versions, but sadly not both together, although retro-fit kick is possible. Light, manoeuvrable, and easy to ride. Brilliant attention to detail such as mini indicators and sensibly placed grab handles marks this out as a

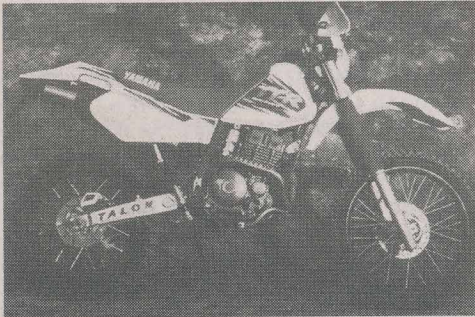
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superb green laner. Small engine needs to be worked hard especially on the road to get decent performance, but its a small price to pay for such a good bike. Reasonable numbers brought in so far. *Verdict: Makes sense.*

XT250: 248lbs, a/c, 4-str, 249cc, sohc, single. Early Eighties Cantilever shock trailie of some note. Light and strong with balancer shaft engine, they can still be found for not much money and make an excellent secondhand buy if in good condition though occasional early ones suffered valve problems. Nice and low though not very fast. *Verdict: Good all-rounder.*

XT250: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Foreign market mini XT350 with all the benefits but slightly lighter. Rare

TT250-R: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. e/s. Modern lightweight trailie/enduro that is Yamaha's version of the Honda XR250. Revvy motor and a rea-



sonable spread of power, but rather expensive.

TT250-R RAID: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single, e/s. As above but slightly more roadified, with large, single, (Baja-style) headlamp and protective guard.

XT350: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Plain Jane trailie that's better than it looks. Early versions boasted 31bhp, but later ones emasculated to 17bhp due to noise regs. Chassis and suspension a bit limited but nevertheless still pretty competent. Plenty of bottom end, not too tall in the saddle, and excellent economy (80mpg possible if you try hard). Long production run means it must be good, but demand for secondhand ones ensures prices stay fairly high. *Verdict: Carry-on*

trailing.

TT350: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Grey import enduro version of above, with improved suspension, more power, and more basic instrumentation and lighting. Not that scarce considering, they make a nice trailie with similar reliability to the XTs. *Verdict: Nice one.*

XT500: 304lbs, a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. The original big banger trailie that started it all. Produced for years and years, even when superseded by later versions. Twin shock, 6-volt, character building bike that could often get into more trouble than it could get out of. All sorts of special parts were produced for it for the would be overlander over the years. Vibrates like a jack hammer, and very basic by modern standards but the lack of sophistication is part of its charm, and the low seat height makes it much easier to 'paddle' than some of its more monstrous successors. Can be horribly unreliable and a pig to



start, but its easy to work on and plenty still around. Classic buffs have inflated the prices, but don't pay over the odds. *Verdict: Your dad would love it.*

XT550: 1982-on, 292lbs, a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 558cc, single. Updated version of above with 4-valve engine, twin carbs and cantilever rear end. Smoother than 500 but hard to get excited about, and some had gearbox problems. Not many around now. *Verdict: Not as good as the original.*

XT600 Tenere: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Superb Paris-Dakar inspired big trailie with unburstable engine, supple suspension, mammoth tank and comfy saddle. Loved by overlanders the world

over. Huge touring range, and clever attention to detail (for instance air filter positioned under tank to avoid being clogged by sand and dust). Later versions inherited a full fairing but lost some of the attention to detail. Feels like riding a great big cosy armchair, and regardless of Yamaha's claims to the contrary seems to have more power than later 'cooking' versions. Real off road ability in most hands. *Verdict: Best of the big Yams.*

XT600E: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. No frills version of the much loved XT. Heavier and more sluggish than the original thanks to steel rims and generally lower spec. Unsophisticated especially in the suspension department, but thoroughly crashable and a respectable plodder. Heaps of grunt. *Verdict: Not as good as the original.*

TT600: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Grey import enduro version of above, with improved suspension, more power, more basic instrumentation and lighting, and plastic tank. A few around, they make a more suitable serious trail bike than an XT. *Verdict: worth looking out for.*

XTZ660: w/c, 4-str, 5-valve, dohc, single. Another attempt at making a long-distance overland/road version of the venerable XT. Heavier, with less range and not much more power than the original. Less crashworthy than the first and the taller saddle may put some off. Nevertheless it's had a lot of succes in desert racing form and with some mods is eminently trailable. *Verdict: Another good Yam.*

XTZ750 Super Tenere: w/c, 4-str, 10-valve, dohc, parallel twin. Yamaha's answer to the Africa Twin. Cheaper build quality makes it a good value, comfortable all-rounder on the road with plenty of touring potential and 200 mile tank range. Engine is strong but lacks a little bit of bottom end, and gearbox is atrocious to use. Genuinely fast and not too bad off road especially in the dry, but the standard

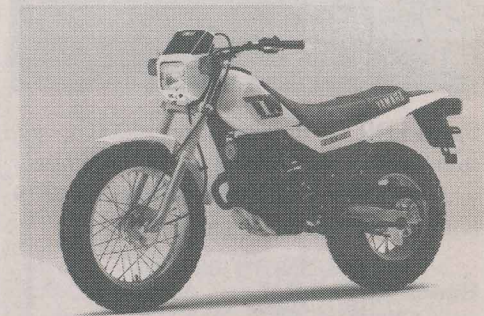


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exhaust is rather wide (catching on ruts). Decent suspension, but a bit bouncy on the road. *Verdict: A good try.*

TDM850: w/c, 4-str, 10-valve, dohc, parallel twin. 'New sports' road bike with trail styling developed from the XTZ750 but with much gruntier 850cc lump. Lower seat height, much torquier engine and better brakes and handling. Early versions had appallingly clunky gearbox and exhaust collector box rules out an after-market centre stand. Not really a trail bike unless it's high summer nice and dry and the trail is easy. Soft suspension limits speed off road. *Verdict: Brilliant trail influenced roadie.*

TW200: a/c, 4-str, 18bhp, single, e/s. Fattish-wheeled fun bike which makes a brilliant and economical (though odd-looking) trail bike for the short of leg, with both electric start and kick. Surprisingly good on the road, and makes a competent



commuter (70+mpg possible), but let down by lousy SLS front drum brake and needs an extra gear. Suspension a bit basic and tyres can be expensive. Gearbox sprocket a special part due to outrigger bearing. Will embarass pukka trail bikes in the right hands. *Verdict: Strangely attractive.*

BW200: a/c, 4-str, single, e/s. True beach balloon-tyred version of above but not street legal. Not recommended for anything other than sand. *Verdict: Sand sled.*

BW350: a/c, 4-str, single, e/s. Hairy-arsed version of above. *Verdict: Get out the bull worker.*

Classified ads

BIKES

Cagiva DE500, as featured Sept issue, recent rebore, piston, YZF front brake, 18" wheels, suit super moto, road race or enduro, mega quick, vgc registered, MOT, £1,295. Tel 01403 732864 (Sussex).



Suzuki DR350 Enduro, L-reg, 4000m, vgc, stainless exhaust, road legal, rear footrests, well maintained, £2,290. Tel 01666 502639 (Glos).

Honda XLV750R, E-reg, Australian model, black & red, 16,000 miles, shaft drive trailie, the ultimate go anywhere bike, £2,150. Tel 0181 694 0207 (Mark).

Suzuki DR600, 1985, 5 months MOT, top end rebuilt, including cam, new tyres, sprockets, totally original, lovely condition, £1,450 ono, p/x taken, why. Tel 01730 892496/0585 585684.

Kawasaki KDX200, 1985, taxed & MOT, original condition, new rear enduro tyre, £575 ono. Tel 01780 740914 (Peterborough area).

Honda XL185, W-reg, white/red, engine stripped, gearbox bits needed to re-build, otherwise ok, new chain & sprockets, £175 ono. Tel 01462 730223 (Hitchin).

Yamaha XT600E, M-reg, Feb 95, datatag, disc-lock, immaculate, taxed, 1,800 miles only, £3,495. Tel 01793 723551 (Paul, eves, Swindon).

Rickman Scrambler TS250 motor, reasonable condition, £220. Tel 01793 723551 (Paul, eves, Swindon).

Honda MT50S moped, 1990 with only 142 miles on clock, one owner, good condition as very rarely used, £900 ovno, off road used only. Tel 01438 832553 (Nr St Albans).

Suzuki DR350S 1992, Q-reg, full enduro trim, WP front forks, Acerbis plastics, tank bag etc, T&T, excellent condition, £1,550 ono. Tel 01609 772629 (North East, eve's).

Honda XL500R, vgc, low mileage, 1983, £900. Tel 01892 669377.

Suzuki GSX750F, 1991 (J), perfect condition, datatag, 14,000 miles, one owner, fsh, £3,450, will swop for Africa twin. Tel 01932 869008 (eves, Cobham, Surrey).

Kawasaki KLX250D1, August 1994, M-reg, Virtually as new, one owner, brand new DID, HD 'O'-ring chain, Talon sprockets, regular oil and filter changes, single bike trailer, some spares, £2,750. Tel 01480 413449.

Classified ads

Honda XL250S, 1979 V-reg trailbike, taxed/tested, orange, occasional use only, concours condition, carefully used in dry only, first to see will buy, offers around £1,500. Tel 01984 632235.

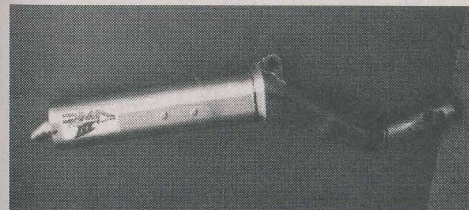
SPARES

Twin bike trailer, new tyres, bearings and light board, very sturdy, £120 ono. Tel 01233 626471 (Ashford, Kent).

KMX 18" rear wheel, useable tyre and sprocket, £30 ono. Tel 01278 452858 (Somerset)

XTZ750 exhaust system, unused, unmarked, complete system, £130 also DR350 front forks and yokes, excellent working order, £80. R Winspear, 273 High Street, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL7 8DW.

Suzuki DR350 alloy exhaust, as new, DMA racing type, cost £130 new, accept £75 ono. Tel 01740 631170.



Suzuki long travel trail moto-X forks, plus front wheel 300x23, various plastic mudguards, several 400/410x18 trials plus 250x21 tyres, various Harley SST250 parts, Montesa headlamp brackets, toolroll etc. Tel 01268 710946.

FOR SALE

The editor's Yamaha XT350



Spec includes
Acerbis front and rear mudguards
Acerbis headlamp
Renthal handlebars
Acerbis Barkbusters
Up-rated suspension
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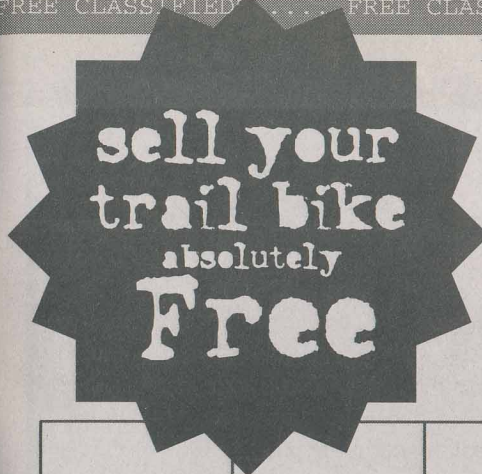
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DEEP SOUTH

It may seem a long way to go for a trail ride, but it's not every day you get to ride around the Falkland Islands. Phil Berrecloth donned his khaki Belstoffs and headed south



I suppose if you have to go to the ends of known civilisation to defend the Free World you might as well enjoy yourselves. Ralph and myself were enthusiastic road riders and I owned a tidy KLR250 for pottering around on the Ridgeway, however when we received notice that the RAF were posting us to the Falklands for four months we decided to take our toys with us.

Ralph bought himself an 'unraced' KDX250 and after considerable persuasion of the crew, we loaded the two bikes onto a Hercules bound for the frozen south. Whilst we travelled in comparative luxury on a Tristar the bikes bounced the 9000 miles via Dakar, Ascension Island and Rio de Janeiro, despite this they arrived in Good condition and were duly registered with the Falklands Government and ready to ride.

The terrain and weather in the Falklands are notoriously hostile, snow can fall at any time of the year and it is almost always windy. So, arriving in July in the middle of a freeze made it difficult to start some serious riding. Four ton trucks were being blown sideways on the ice and it just wasn't biking weather.

Two days later it was like a different country so having arranged our day off we set out from RAF Mount Pleasant toward Mare Harbour using an old track. The KDX soon showed its superiority over the deeper snow with lots of power and less weight. The KLR was better on the icy

stages with gentle power delivery and ease of handling but we soon found the thing that made riding there so interesting (apart from the minefields) was the peat bogs. Once dug into the thick black treacle it was a two man job to extract the bike. Some of the bogs go down several metres so it's not worth fooling around.

Climbing the hills was a demanding experience, most tracks had been beaten up by Land Rovers and tracked vehicles, leaving piles of rocks around bends with interesting drops to the side. Once on top though, the views were magnificent, the air is so clear you can see great distances, even to Port Stanley 35 miles away. On one occasion we were carefully negotiating the dry land between two flooded tank tracks when I glanced in my mirror to check on Ralph. He had disappeared and by the time I turned around and went the 400 yards back he was looking a bit wet and his bike was nowhere in sight. The tank track turned out to be eight feet deep and the KDX had gone in front wheel first, engine running and on top of its rider. Fortunately his Gore-tex top and bottoms gave him the buoyancy to bring him up and save me some difficult explaining. The KDX was not going to restart after that so it was towed by a surprisingly capable KLR across two miles of rough ground back home.

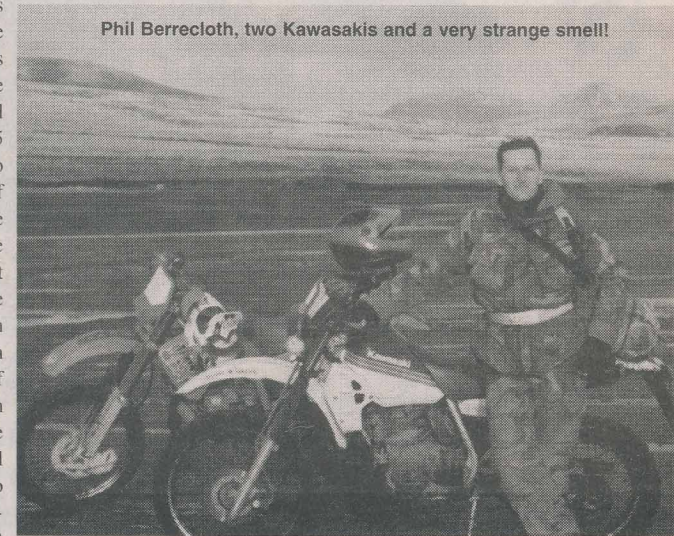
Now feeling unjustifiably confident

we planned a two day trip from Mount Pleasant to San Carlos despite the fact that the track was not yet officially open. Local rules insisted that we carry sleeping bags, emergency rations, water and maps. Armed with this, a VHF radio and a personal locator beacon we set off. It may sound like a lot of precautions but it wasn't for my sake, Ralph being an air-crew (winged wonder) he was considered too valuable to lose despite what the rest of his crew said about him. The route is about 15 miles by gravel track to Darwin and then 25 miles of rough, wet terrain to San Carlos where the owners of the Blue Beach Lodge were expecting us for the night. We visited the world's most southerly suspension bridge where we had lunch and then set off across country to San Carlos. Even as we turned off the road the first snow storm hit which made spotting the ditches very difficult. The local Islanders insist that the way to cover ground quickly is to travel slowly and look carefully at what you are about to encounter. This did not seem to be necessary at first until we realised just how often we were getting stuck. The whole of East Falkland is criss-crossed with two foot wide drainage ditches and you either go through them very slowly or you jump over them. The brown peaty water was always deeper than it looked and very, very cold.

The next interesting obstacle we encountered was blue kelp. This I discovered, was old rotting seaweed that had been covered with sand and mud and lay around on the beaches waiting to catch the unwary. One moment I was riding

along at 40mph with red headed gulls flying around me; the next I was three feet deep in thick black mud with a very strange smell. The effect was very much like quicksand and it was a long, tiring and hazardous job getting the KLR out. At one stage Ralph was stuck in the kelp and the action of pulling him out threatened to dislocate his hip joint.

Phil Berrecloth, two Kawasakis and a very strange smell!



Eventually, smelling a bit dubious we arrived at the Lodge for the night and slept very well.

Keeping the bikes serviceable during the winter months was difficult without the backup of a Kawasaki dealer or your own garage. Despite this neither bike broke down (with the exception of the KDXs sub-aqua trip) and provided many miles of excellent recreational riding. Well and truly hooked we decided to risk our only formal time off (5 days R&R) moving the two bikes to a remote Island off West Falkland and explore it on two wheels. (to be continued...)

NEXT MONTH



- **Funduro on tour**

To Geneva and back on the BMW F650

- **Paris show report**

We take a look at all the latest trends in the trailie market as the first of the big international shows gets under way

- **Husky to the Hafren**

We borrow the latest Husqvarna and enter the Hafren Rally in Wales

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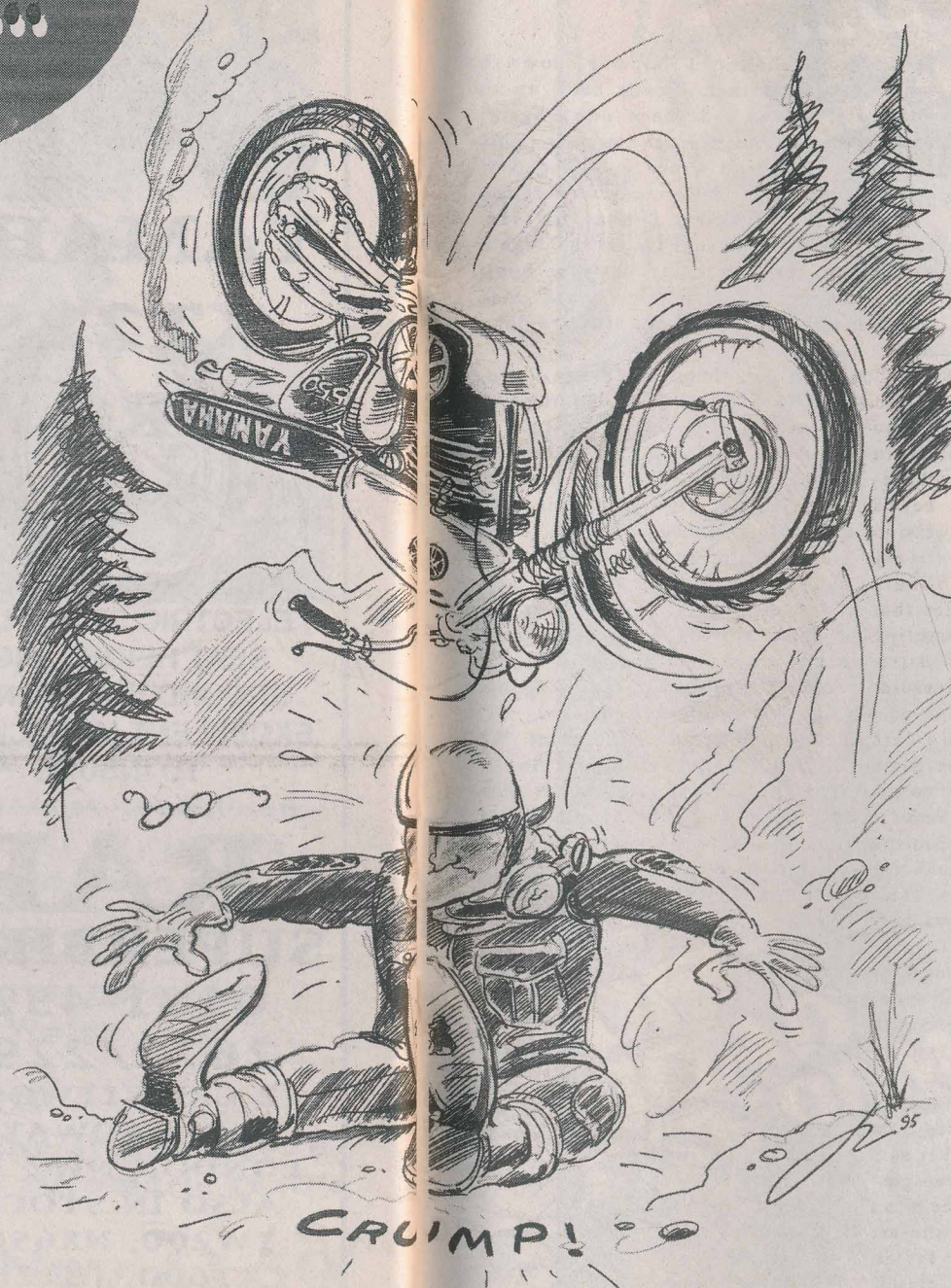
TRAIL TALES...

ROGER WILLIS IS CRIPPLED BY CONFIDENCE

Most novice off-road riders suffer from a major lack of self-confidence. This is unsurprising, really. Instead of the comparatively smooth grey monotony of tarmac, they are suddenly faced with so much choice. Virgin countryside is green, brown, orange, yellow, and even puce – and a multifarious selection of shades in between. The going may be rutted, rocky, rubble-strewn or just downright rough. There are berms and bogs, crucial climbs and cruel crags. Indecision about where the front wheel should be positively placed is compounded by a reluctance to blindly adopt the contrary throttle operation principles that the *metier* of muck demands. Hoary old scrambling sages declaim: 'If in doubt, gas it.' For the roadster, of course, the reverse is a judicious hospital-avoidance truism.

Several decades ago, more than one would care to admit, I was no exception. I was new to the game and therefore crap on a dirtbike; I lacked confidence; I was pathetically slow and indecisive. Several decades on, I'm still fairly crap on a dirtbike. But the serial acquisition of doses of 'confidence' haven't helped. All they have meant is pain, bruises, fractures and, probably worst of all for we media personalities, terminal ego damage.

This trait first came to the fore back in the days when I believed I was fit enough – and would eventually become skilled enough – to ride the South Eastern Centre ACU Enduro Championship. And my stupidity of the time was compounded by replacing a perfectly workpersonlike but seriously pre-owned PE250 Suzuki stinkwheel with a big, ruffy-tuffy Yam four-stroke, principally because I had blagged it as a long-term tester through the magazine that was gesturally employing my scribbling talents. Never mind that the bike, a then spanking new, state-of-the-art XT550 trailie, had both power and weight far in excess of its modest suspension or chassis potential. I'd got a big, butch thumper; I was up there wth the



big boys. Not for long.

A former ad manager of the journal for which I worked, a dapper little chap who had an absolutely breathtaking dirt pedigree and regularly carried off the SE Championship title, articulated an entirely accurate prediction of what was about to happen to me. 'You're getting dangerously over-confident, Willis,' the aforementioned Charlie Harris opined. 'You're going to hurt yourself soon.' He wasn't wrong. Cresting a heavily wooded hillock on Weaver's Down in Hampshire during a one-day event shortly afterwards, I hurtled into a steep gully, power bravely on. The front wheel picked up a rut; the back wheel clipped a tree. Suddenly, it was

THE SEPARATION OF BODY AND BIKE WAS NOT TO LAST..... WE MET AGAIN. OH HOW IT HURT

Bish! Bosh! Bash! and I and the bike individually cartwheeled towards the bottom. The separation of body and bike was not to last. We met again. Oh, how it hurt.

However, I failed to step onto any sort of long-lasting learning curve as a result of this experience. The mishaps kept on coming, their severity in direct relation to my degree of confidence. I acquitted myself quite well in the first Weston-Super-Mare beach race in 1983, for instance. The fact that I was riding a 125 so light that one could have picked it up and carried it around the difficult bits – as indeed I did – might have had something to do with it. But no, I thought I was getting good. The following year's event straightened me out, in a manner of speaking. Rammed from the rear, I went over the bars and was again chased down a hill by my own bike. One end of its handlebar impaled my inner thigh when we met again. Blood vessels burst. The leg went blue. Riding the bike further wasn't even an issue; driving the van home was.

A couple of years later, I got rather

TRAIL TALES...

confident about my ability to master a Suzuki Quadracer. Freshly appointed editor of Bike magazine at the time, I orchestrated a photosession at Golding Barn motocross circuit in Sussex. One moment I was in control. The next, the Quad was climbing the half-buried truck tyres marking the outer perimeter of a fast turn and launching itself and me into the stratosphere. I let go, to no avail. I remember seeing an aerial view of the tidy yellow lap-scorer's hut and thinking I was going to land on the roof. Luckily, I missed it, but the hard chalky ground couldn't be avoided. Lying face down on the deck, my aching reverie was interrupted by the helpless giggles of the smudger. 'Can you do that again,' he chortled. 'I missed it.' Next stop was Worthing hospital to have both - yes, both - of my arms set in plaster. It was now true what they'd been saying about me anyway. Bike's new editor couldn't even wipe his own arse.

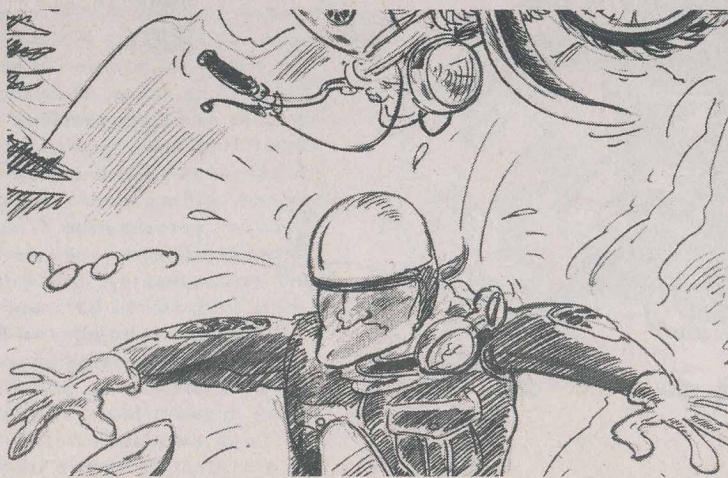
There were other subsequent incidents in those years: the 776th place in the 1986 Le Touquet enduro that nearly did for my cardio-vascular system; crashing out of the Natterjack (twice); crashing out of the Welsh Two-Day; either houring or crashing out of everything I ever entered. Nevertheless, the confidence just kept on resurfacing - and then sinking.

Having grown older, if not wiser, I now just go trail riding. But the spurts of over-confidence and consequent endos and injuries continue. Last year, Derbyshire did for my right knee. The steep forestry climb up from Ladybower reservoir was the scene. My companion got stuck half way up. But my trusty DR

thundered to the top. I rode back down to mock him; and then I rode back up to show off; then I rode back down again; and up again; but not all the way. This time, the front end wiped out on one of several cut logs maliciously decorating the rubble. Completely beyond my sentient control, the knee kissed the bike's clocks and then viciously butted a boulder. It hurt - lots. fellow hack Mac McDiarmid, for it was he, laughed long and loud.

The next day, limping heavily, I ventured to the Yorkshire Dales. Just north of Penyghent, near Hull Pot, Mac got stuck in a bog. I laughed - and then promptly went in too, the bike plunging past its bars and rearing up, stern in the air, like the Titanic's death throes. Getting it out of this glutinous grave was another story. First, I had to cope with the fact that, as a result of my catapult-style exit over the bars, the same already dilapidated knee had managed to collect the only bit of solid scenery for miles. I was in agony. Mac was in agonies of amusement.

And that, of course, is the point. We ride dirt to make ourselves happy. And if our confidence quotient rises faster than our skills, we make other people happy too, wetting themselves laughing at us.



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