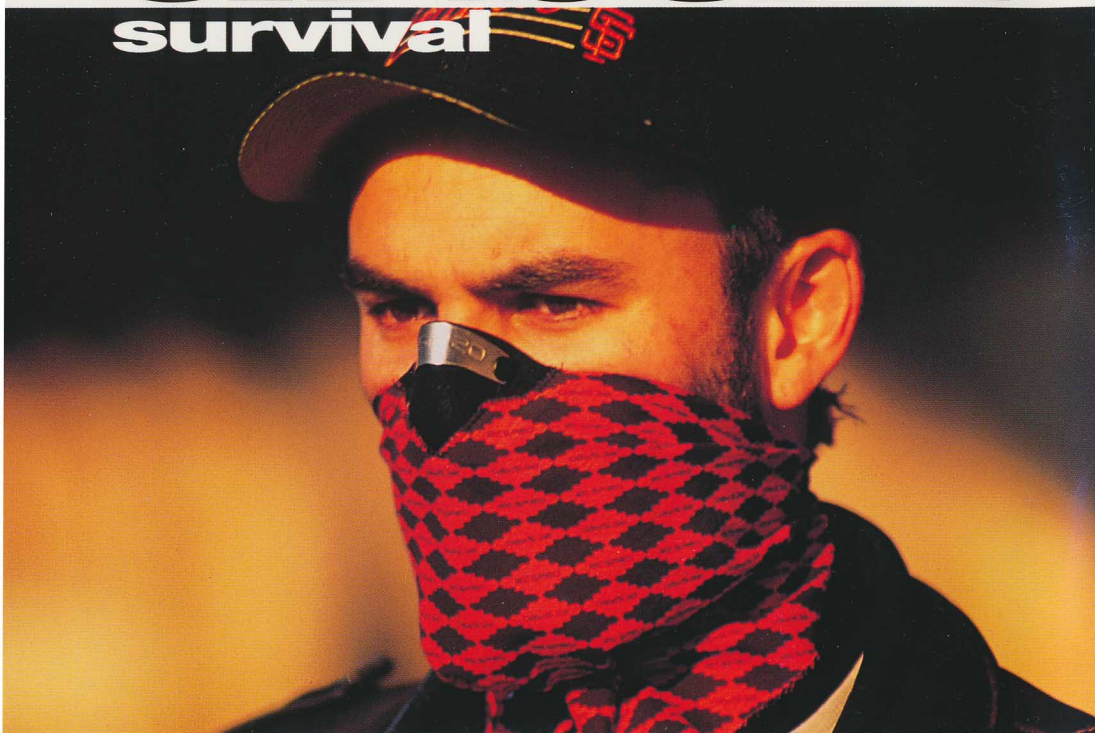


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PARIS MODELS

REPORT FROM THE PARIS SHOW



FUNDURO ON TOUR

GENEVA AND BACK ON THE BMW F650

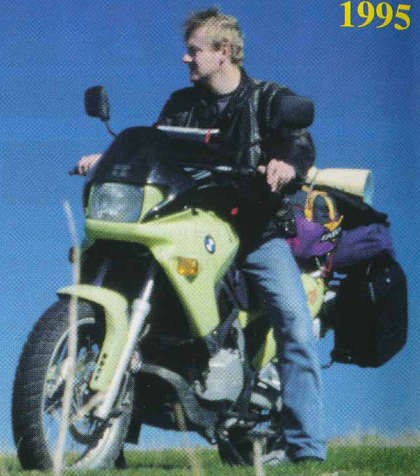


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To buying a used Trailbike

To Geneva and back
on a BMW Funduro

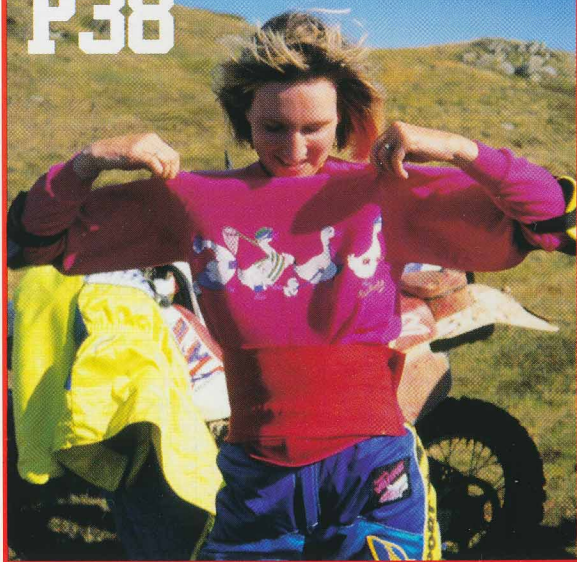
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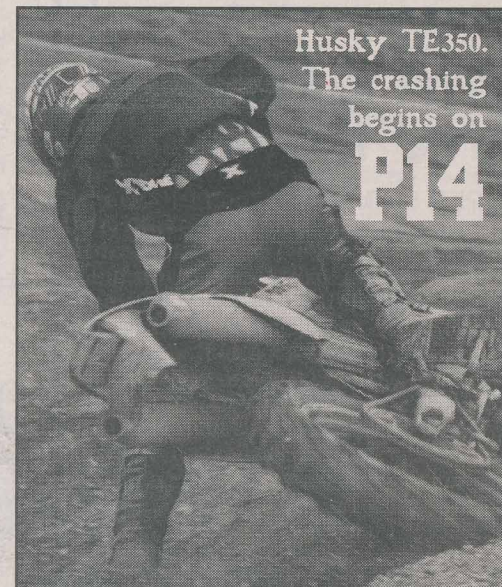
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Trail Tales

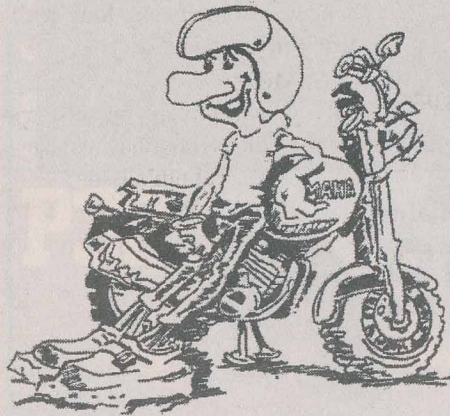
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WELL MATE, I'VE ALWAYS FANCIED USING MY TRAIL BIKE OFF-ROAD, BUT NEVER KNEW HOW TO GO ABOUT IT. THEN I DISCOVERED

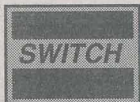
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I

T'S SHOWTIME FOLKS. The time of year when the manufacturers ply the free press with liberal amounts of hooch, in an effort to convince us that the latest models are indeed far more deserving of your Sterling than the ones they replace.

Paris, Cologne, Milan and the NEC all play host to realms of showgoers most of whom come to ogle rather than spend their way into the new year, but while all these are all undoubtedly important events in the bike buying calendar, there's one even more important event you shouldn't miss.

November 9-12 is the dates of the Donington Dirt Bike Show where you get your chance to espy all the latest off road tackle, buy some new wax for your Belstaffs and generally have a nose around what will be pre-occupying the industry over the forthcoming 12 months.

We'll be there. TrailBike Magazine has taken a modest little stand and will be selling back issues of your favourite mag, as well as hawking T-shirts, some natty new sweatshirts and anything else we can flog. So come to the show, visit our stand and buy the poorly-paid and overworked staff a beer. As the manufacturers quite rightly know, we'll believe absolutely anything with a drink in our hand.

Si Melber

PS Did anyone else spot the deliberate mistake in last month's issue?

We're very sorry. Very, very sorry in fact.....

But not half as sorry as the printers who caused it (and had to pay for it) - a sorrier outfit you couldn't hope to meet!

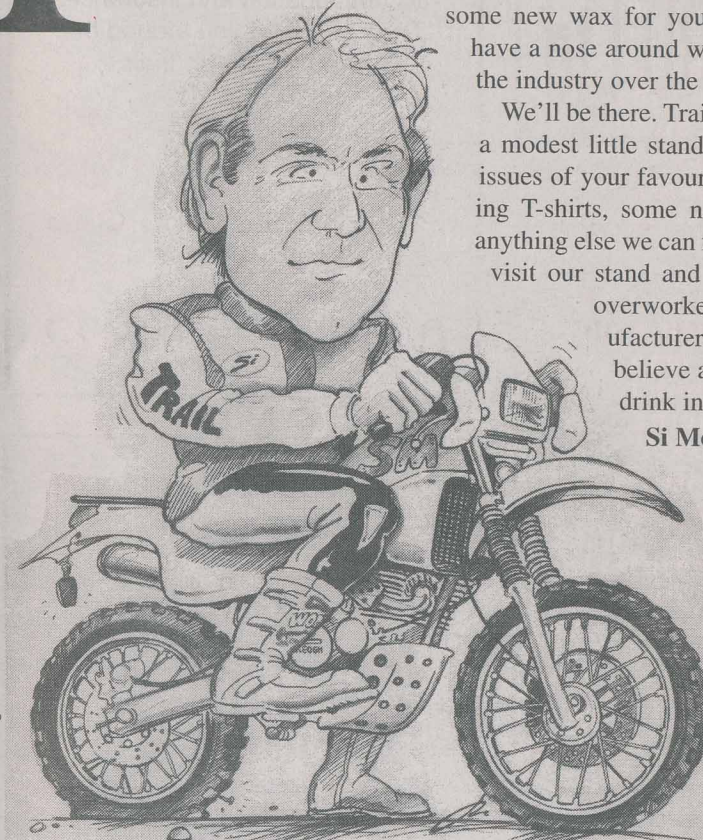


Illustration John Keogh

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Paris Show Report

Paris was the first of this season's big shows, and the Japanese used it to launch their new models aimed at stemming the rising tide of European manufacturing success. In the main the Italians kept their bikes under wraps preferring to wait until their own show in Milan before debuting any new metal.

The main thrust as one might expect, was in the sports bike category, but new models covered the entire spectrum from humble scooters to tourers. There was little that was genuinely new for the trail bike enthusiast to get excited about, with many existing machines just getting a facelift or redesign with the main core of the bike remaining the same.

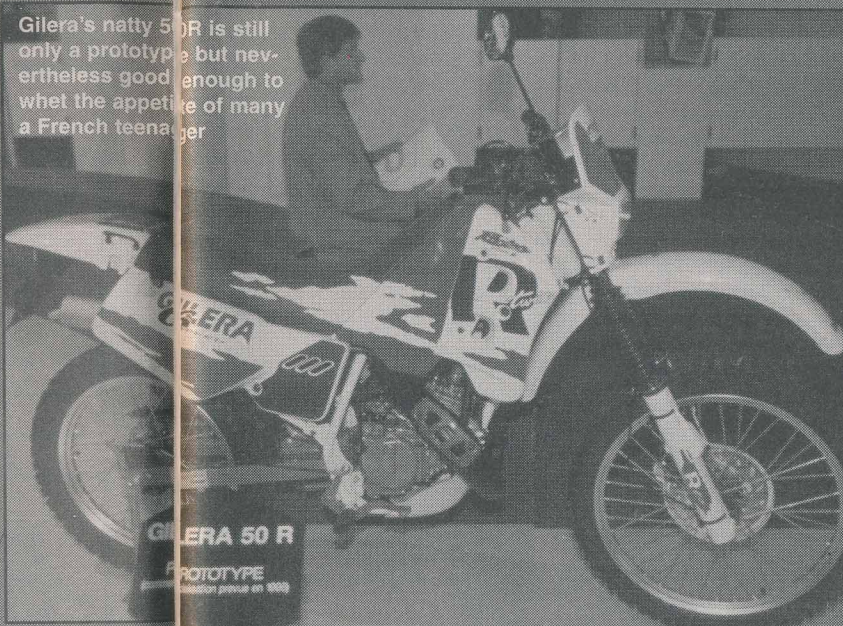
Suzuki though managed a modest fanfare for the launch of their updated DR650, which gets a spine frame, alloy swinging arm, new shock and brightly coloured bodywork. The bike, like all the others launched will get its next airing at the NEC bike show and is expected to cost around £4,600 when it reaches these shores.

Staying with the big bruisers Honda have restyled the Africa Twin to give a more modern aggressive look, and claim to have improved rider comfort along the way. Work has also been done to meet stifling noise regs and this manifests itself in the form of a huge new silencer, which though big, is fortunately not too bulbous.

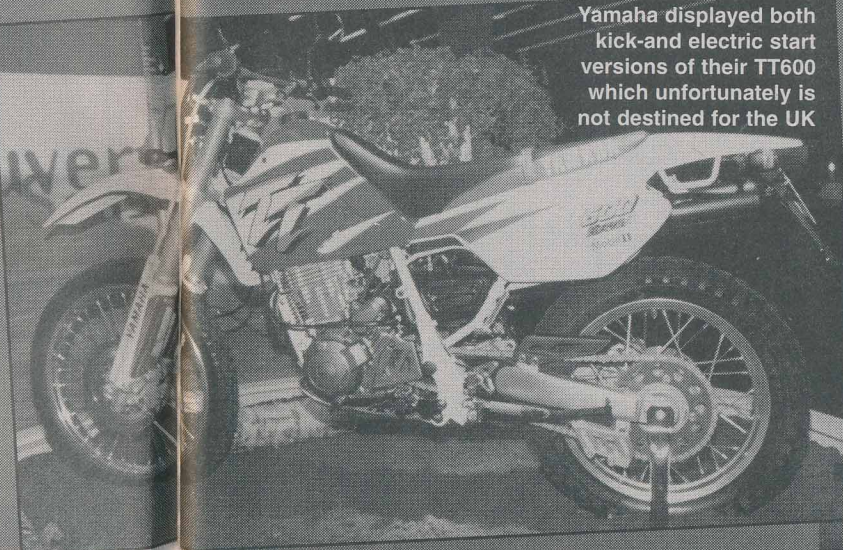
Dropping down the scale a bit comes the Dominator. Now eight years old and starting to get a bit long in the tooth, Honda has extended its life by styling and bodywork changes, paring a little weight, and centralising what there is for (claimed) better handling both on and off the road - needless to say new colour and graphics abound on both machines. Honda also chose to show the entire range of XR models including the new 400 though it's doubtful whether this will make an appearance at the NEC.

Yamaha whose new sports machines effectively stole the show, quietly slipped their TT-R250 in amongst the new models. The bike which is slightly

Gilera's natty 50R is still only a prototype but nevertheless good enough to whet the appetite of many a French teenager



Yamaha displayed both kick-and electric start versions of their TT600 which unfortunately is not destined for the UK



In Brief

SO LONG, GOODBYE

UK Yamaha importers Mitsui, have confirmed that it's the end of the road for the XT350 and SuperTenere models. The two bikes, both of which have grown rather long in the tooth have been dropped from next year's range, but with no new models waiting in the wings to replace them, it leaves just BMW, Cagiva and Honda to prop up the big, (multi cylinder), trailbike market.

WELSH TOURS

Engine tuner Bob Farnham and bike retailer Justin Ogilve who recently won this year's Bracken Rally (see page 36 for the full story), have joined forces to offer trail riding weekends in Wales. Using a fleet of Suzuki DR350s, they will guide you around some of the best trails in Wales and take care of insurance, accommodation and clothing. If you want to know more, call them on 01732 838822.

BIKES FOR BOSNIA

The MOD is busy preparing a large consignment of Honda XR250s for use out in Bosnia. The bikes which are all painted camouflage green rather than the white of the UN peacekeeping force (sic), are specially modified with heavy duty racks and long range Acerbis petrol tanks.

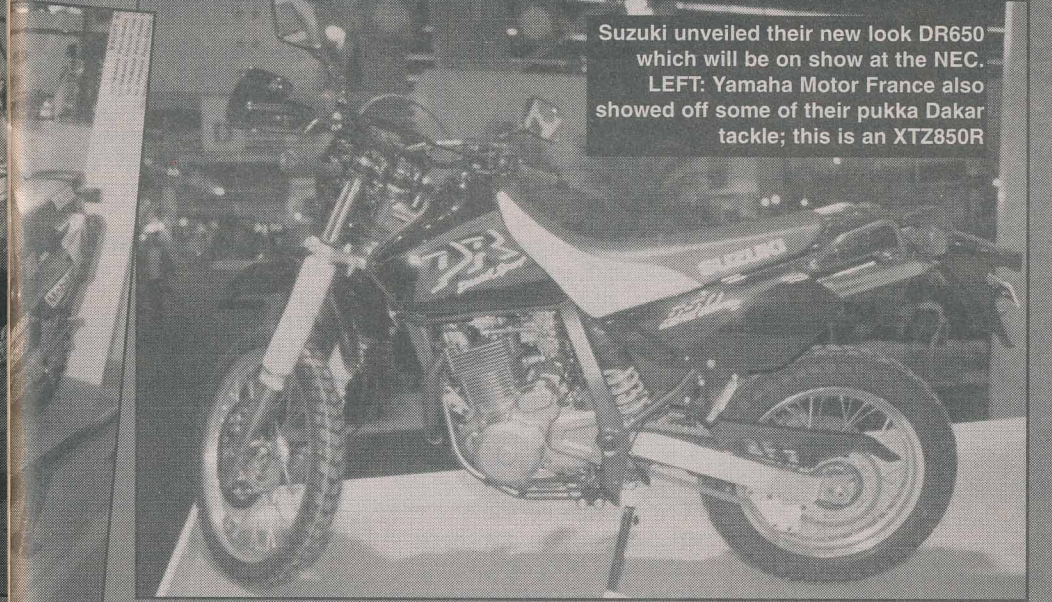
updated from the model tested in TrailBike earlier in the year is now officially destined for the UK, though only 40 machines are confirmed with a price tag of around £4,500 each! The TT600 was amongst other serious dirt bikes gracing the official Yamaha stand, (both in kick, and electric start versions), while Paris-Dakar machines were on show at the French importers stand next door, complete with battle scars and sand.

Kawasaki had little to show apart from colour changes to their existing range of machines, most of their effort being placed on the custom market. Strange when they have dual purpose machines that would certainly benefit from a bit of tweaking here and there. They did however exhibit the 96 KDX200 enduro bike which makes a welcome return to these shores next year.

On the European front, Cagiva showed their heavy metal bikes like the Elefant and Canyon, along with a military version for the armed forces. KTM exhibited a whole range of trail bikes ranging from 50 to 620cc, and Gilera who according to Piaggio (their parent company) are no longer part of their master plan, exhibited a 50cc trail bike prototype that had Parisian youngsters agog. Fantic too - better known for their trials irons - had the odd trail bike on show among their rock hopping display.

As always at these foreign shows, the tantalising glimpses of trail and enduro machines not destined to be officially imported gets you thinking about what might be if off-roading enjoyed the same kind of prominence in the UK as it does on the continent. Still there is enough on offer to make a trip to the NEC worthwhile.

Ian Kerr



Suzuki unveiled their new look DR650 which will be on show at the NEC.
LEFT: Yamaha Motor France also showed off some of their pukka Dakar tackle; this is an XTZ850R

Spanish manufacturers GAS GAS better known for their World Championship winning trials and enduro bikes, have launched a new 250cc trail bike known as the Pampera.

The new dual sport machine combines the engine, forks and swinging arm from their Contact trials bike with a modified version of their Endurocross chassis, to produce a swift but exceptionally easy to ride trailie.

The machine which was originally conceived for the South American bike market comes in black & red with a polished alloy frame and weighs just 85kg (that's 24kg lighter than a Yamaha DT125)!

UK importer John Shirt has ordered five of the new machines which will cost £3,450.

Full test next month

GAS GAS LAUNCH PAMPERA TRAILIE



Dear Trail Bike.

Shock tactics

Salutations TBM

Many thanks for printing my previous letter (even without the phone number) - I managed to say 'bugger me' to your millions of readers - it's maybe as well you didn't print my phone number, there are some funny folk out there!

My bike mods have been held up due to the 200cc engine not arriving, but I am currently installing an '89 CR125 front end to the DT - a special treat following my class win at Chorley MX club enduro last week - so I will be doubly glad to get any advice re the back end mods you mentioned in October's issue.

Are magazine funds up to getting your gang up to the Dales for a weekend? - we would guarantee some great

rides/views/beer/sheep (delete as applicable). My friends and I were toying with joining the TRF but got a couple of old mags etc and they seem pretty sad - what is their problem with using decent tyres that are made for the job, and modern, lightweight, warm clothing and protective gear as opposed to 40lbs of smelly oily black canvas (80lbs when wet).

TS revue was mint - but keep it quiet or there's gonna be some stiff competition out there in the trail bike class! And I am still not convinced by all these big trail bikes - I don't fancy their chances up here on the moors, but would love to see one in action.

Again, keep it up, it's appreciated.

Bob Middleton
North Yorkshire
(01756 752169)

Try contacting Robin at Falcon Shocks in Dorset on (01929 554545) with a view to getting your existing rear shock uprated and recharged. They did a brilliant job on our XT350, or closer to home try Joe Pitt (Cleveland) on (01642 675846). Weekend in the Dales sounds great but can we bring our own sheep?

Head case

Dear Sir

I am about to buy a trail bike to tour parts of Britain, Wales, the Highlands and the Lake District, keeping off the main roads. I thought I would buy a Yamaha DT125 learner legal or even a Suzuki TS125 as they both seem to have a good record. Would this type of Trail Bike be up to the job?

I would also like to know where I can get an American or older style British crash helmet which does not fully cover the ears but just the top half of the head, with chin strap.

Would it be okay to modify the rear parcel rack on the bike to take saddle bags and a ruck-

**Got an opinion?
Then write to:
TrailBike Magazine
P O Box 1555
Salisbury
SP3 4PF**



Suzuki's TS125. Capable of touring the British Isles?



sack for camping equipment? I appreciate your help and advice and look forward to hearing from you.

R P Wright
Southampton

Either of these bikes would be suitable if not particularly economical. The helmet to which you refer may be a Shoei S10E which is now only available in black. Contact the importers Feridax on 01384 638287 or alternatively ask your nearest dealer.

A convert?

Dear Sir

After reading issue 2 of TrailBike Magazine - the

news item about converting old motocrossers to road legal spec - I would like to know if it is possible to do a full article on the subject. Like what is needed and what to do as I wish to do one myself.

By the way Great Mag!
T Doherty
Lincolnshire

We have no plans for this article at present so in the meantime give Pro Racing a ring on 01327 301322 and ask them about it.

Getting started

Dear TB

As a newcomer to trail bikes I have found it all very interesting and your magazine makes it even

more so. However, as a novice I still have a lot to learn and I think the following suggestions may help myself and other beginners.

- i) an index of Trail clubs around the country
- ii) a monthly novice section explaining the basics - rights of way, protective equipment etc.
- iii) a maintenance column including emergency repairs on the trail.

Finally, please keep the A5 format, it is much handier for reading in the bath.

I Hinchliffe
West Yorkshire

Thanks for your suggestions - watch out for 'The Beginners Guide to Trail

Riding' starting early next year.

The good book

Dear Scribes

I've just read (and re-read) issue three of TBM and what a revelation. The style, price, size, layout, sheer enthusiasm..... Need I say more? The only problem, for which I humbly

apologise, is the fact that I missed issues one and two (tut, tut). Any chance of back copies?

I am currently a non-biker but after taking my test soon I hope to change all that. If I fail then my recently acquired, low mileage DT175 is going to be a rather embarrassing looking door stop.

Finally can you recommend any books to

guide a complete novice rider onto those splendid sounding green lanes and trails?

Andy Maddams
Cambridgeshire

PS Please keep the mag in small format, it fits in a pocket so much easier and is also a bit more alternative.

Back issues are available at £2.00 each from our usual address (PO Box 1555, Salisbury, SP3 4PF).

Good luck with the test, the DT is a good choice for a first bike.

*The best book we know of is called 'Exploring Green Roads and Lanes of Great Britain' by Ian Thompson, published by Haynes/Foulis.
ISBN 0-85429-691-3*

Braveheart

Dear TrailBike

Congratulations on your excellent magazine, which I found informative, refreshing and which has filled a gap in the national motorcycle press. Secondly, and this may be of interest in terms of articles etc, I am planning to take part in the Tunisie 2000 rally next May. I will be using my BMW R100G/S which I am currently preparing, (discarding as much weight as possible).

Being a normal family guy, 29 years old, two children, mortgage, etc, (like many of your readers, I suspect), I thought it may be of interest. I will be doing the rally on a tight budget and will be up against teams like Yamaha Motor France and the best off road riders the world can offer. However, using the element of surprise, a stiff upper lip and lashings of marmalade sandwiches, I plan to snatch victory from under their gallic-noses.

Boyd Emmerich
Cheshire

That's the spirit Boyd, there's nothing like taking part in a hopeless cause to show Johnny foreigner what we Brits are made of. Remember Dunkirk? And yes, we want your story - don't forget to take some pictures though.



Boyd Emmerich, a man with a mission plans to do the Tunisie Rally next year on a BMW R100G/S. What a trooper



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H U S K Y T O T H E H A F R E N

TIME FOR TE⁽³⁵⁰⁾

The inaugural Hafren Rally took place in Wales recently. The fun event designed for trail bikes and four stroke enduro machines, was sponsored by Husqvarna. TrailBike Magazine's Dave 'Crasher' Cornish was offered a Husky to ride on the event. How could he refuse?

Oops... Crasher Cornish bins it again on one of the special tests

Si Melber

As I pulled
up to the
start line,
the official
informed
me that a
couple of
riders had
nearly been
blown off
their bikes

I'm flat out in top gear on a downhill section of forestry road. I'm well tucked in, left hand holding the fork tube. The Suzuki DR350 I've been chasing for over three miles is finally within my sights. As I pull out to overtake, a shower of stones rattles against me and the bike, but I keep my concentration and sweep by. Boy, this thing is fast.

When Husqvarna importer Mike Carter rang to ask if we'd be interested in racing one of his Huskys at the inaugural Hafren Dirt Bike Rally in Mid Wales he didn't have to wait long for a reply, (well, it's a dirty job, but someone's got to do it).

Our first sight of bike number 86 was on the morning of the rally, 20 minutes before the start. With scrutineering to complete, and no chance of getting the feel of the bike, pre-rally preparation was limited to learning the art of persuading the high compression motor to fire up: fuel on, flick the carb-mounted choke lever up, pull in the stubby decompression lever on the handlebar and slowly turn over the engine with the left foot kickstarter. Then, without touching the throttle, release the decompressor and give it a firm kick. If you've got it right the Husky *should* fire up straight away with a pleasant burble emitted from the twin stainless exhausts. More often, it doesn't.

Having Pushed the bike through scrutining I had my first chance to look over the Husky to see what I was letting myself in for.

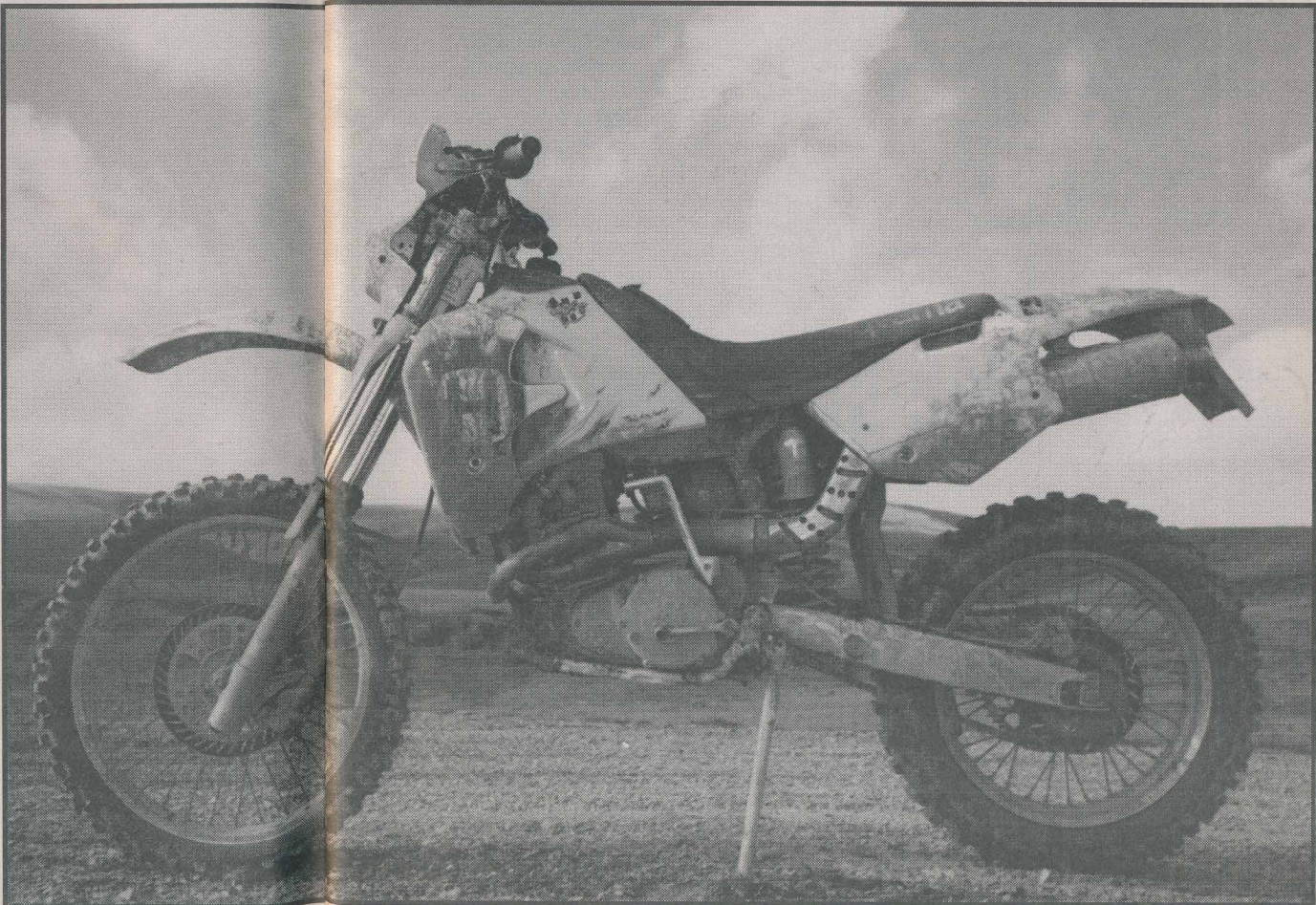
First impressions confirmed the TE350 as a serious bit of kit. New for '95 is a return to conventional 45mm Marzocchi forks, adjustable for compression and rebound damping. While at the rear, a Showa unit adjustable for pre-load, compression and rebound gives more than a foot of suspension travel. The firm seat is a QD item with a single Dsuz fastener holding it in place allowing more or less instant access to the air filter and shock. Power is supplied by Husky's traditional single cylinder, lightweight, punchy, watercooled (with twin rads), four stroke motor displac-

ing 349cc from a bore and stroke of 84x63mm.

As I pulled up to the start line the official informed me that a couple of riders had nearly been blown off their bikes on the exposed hilltop and to watch out for sudden, violent gusts of wind. I acknowledged this alarming fact with a sudden violent gust of wind of my own then it was 5...4...3...2...1... GO.

I blasted off, past the refuelling area up a bank, through a gate and up towards the first special test. Time to open up the Husky and see what it could do. Surging forwards, the motor responds instantly, revving so quickly through the gears my left foot's struggling to keep pace. I quickly arrive at the first special stage which takes place on a mini supercross track. Blasting up the

TE350 looks and sounds like a serious off road tool. Left foot kickstart is still awkward to use



Then to
my horror
I looked
forward
again to
find the
track dis-
appearing
around a
90 degree
left-hander

table-top jump the Husky gets airborne, then it's onto a fast uphill track, catching riders on lesser machinery. Making rapid progress on the Husky is so easy it gives you an unfair advantage. Next hazard, a steep drop into a soft bog turning into a nasty quagmire - gassing it in third for all it was worth I seem to float over the trouble, avoiding two unfortunates in the process who have landed face down in the mud, then its a sharp right turn onto the fire roads and gun the Husky for all it's worth for another six miles to the stage end.

I passed through the end of the section and hung around for Si (the editor) who was struggling around on (*surely, skilfully manhandling* - Ed), a hefty Kawasaki KLR650. He caught up and we both headed off towards the next checkpoint. Chasing him en route to our next stop I was surprised how he managed to pull away so quickly out of the corners. If there's a downside to the Husky's speed, its that it lacks a little bottom end when powering out of slow turns. Keeping it revving seemed the only way to stay in contact with the more powerful KLR, though of course the Husky never threatened to get out of shape like the KLR did. Just to prove the point, following Si into a downhill left hander the Kawasaki collected a large rock which sent the back end rearing up three feet in the air before stepping out sideways a similar amount. How I laughed as he struggled to control 168kg of wallowing KLR while I simply flicked the Husky to avoid the obstacle and the wildly fishtailing editor.

I figured it was safer (if a little less entertaining) to be out in front and used the superb Brembo anchors to out-brake the wallowing Kwacker. It's amazing how good they feel - especially the front - with plenty of feedback and loads of retardation. It's a cinch to leave your braking to the last possible minute before giving the lever a firm squeeze and edging past the rider in front. Back on the gas and this time I left the Kawasaki in my wake affording myself a glance over my shoulder to give Si a look of consummate ease. Then to my horror I look forward again to find the track disappearing around a 90 degree left-hander.

Running straight on I bounce through the forest, hit a large tree stump and promptly disappear over the handlebars, coming to rest with the bike lying on top of me. Si can barely contain his laughter this time. At least the Husky's light enough to be picked up easily. With honours even I blasted ahead again tackling a really nasty downhill section through the forest and across an evil grassy slope, coming to a halt at the bottom in front of a large crowd. I stood feet up balancing the bike looking for all the world like Dougie Lampkin's older brother, but what I hadn't realised was that I had stopped over a shallow ditch, one wheel on one side one wheel the other. Imagine my horror when attempting to put a foot down I couldn't reach terra firma.

Peter Wileman

AIRTIME: Husky handles the jumps like a serious dirt bike should



Price £4,699

Engine Liquid cooled four valve single

Weight 116kg

Plus points
suspension, revvy motor, weight, front brakes, stability at speed

Minus points
Kickstart lever, rear brake

The bike started second kick, (something that my own Husky TE510 would never have done), and determined to save face, I gunned away from the next check, slipping the grabby clutch in second gear and almost taking the marshall's stopwatch with me. The 350cc motor whilst not exactly gutless at low revs responds best to heaps of throttle abuse - try this on a 610 and it will almost tear your head off.

As the track dried the pace became hotter, but where the trees had shaded the course it was still very slick. No problem for the Husky though, which allows you to find grip whatever the surface. Setting off from the final 'Stage Ends' marker riding in the company of Si and another rider on a DR350 I decide to give them both a demonstration of superior performance - both me, and the Husky, (Dream on - Ed). Blatting away I showered them with a hail of loose stones and tore off down the fire road at breathtaking speed.

With only 116kg to manoeuvre, the Husky can be flicked around easily, and changing direction on fast fire roads is simply a matter of breaking traction and steering on the throttle, the whole process made easy by the finely balanced chassis and the motor's willingness to pick up revs. Ride the 350 in this manner and progress can be frighteningly fast. Fitted with taller gearing the Husky can nudge almost 100mph on the faster downhill tracks where last year, rally driver Colin McRae was clocked at 110mph on the RAC.

As it turned out, my speed was a little too breathtaking... misjudging a sharp righthander I ran wide off the piste and straight into the forest still in fourth gear. Just as I thought I'd

got away with it, the front wheel hit a tree stump sending the bike crashing over a series of felled logs. In a matter of seconds my chances of fathering any more offspring were greatly diminished in an eye-watering series of contacts between a rapidly rising seat and my rather unprotected dangly bits. When I came to a blessed halt, the bike had stalled and the only sound I could hear was of laughter.

Make no mistake then the TE350 is a serious competition machine capable of getting you into (and equally) out of trouble. It's not that it forces you into errors it's just that its ground covering capabilities are so competent you find yourself travelling everywhere that bit quicker.

If you compare it to something like a Suzuki DR350, it is more specialised, quicker, and better suspended, but it's also harder to start and more costly to buy. It'll do most things a DR can do including trickling along byways (at a pinch) as well as competing in enduros. And remember the Husky range comes equipped with enough goodies to make them street legal. A powerful Quartz Halogen dipping headlamp, DOT approved stop/tail lamp, horn, speedo and chainguard as well as optional indicators all help when applying for a log book. And there are other nice touches too, including a QD clutch cover (fitted with an oil level window), a mellow but fruity exhaust note, and quality Excel wheel rims.

Since being absorbed into the Cagiva group, the Husqvarna range has evolved into a lighter, better built, more competitive and (relatively) cheaper range of dirt bikes. And future improvements look certain to continue that trend. With counter-balanced, electric start machines on the horizon the few remaining hazards of Husky ownership are sure to diminish - broadening the marque's appeal to all manner of new riders.

In spite of several get-offs, the Husky and I still managed 9th in the open class, (6th in the 350s) - and best placed hack to boot. Which is more than I could say for a rather more experienced (read elderly) fellow gentlemen of the press. The hack who shall remain nameless appears to be suffering from an advanced case of Alzheimers disease, as he not only entered the trail bike class on an enduro machine fitted with knobby tyres, but also neglected to mention that his bike measured a full 65cc more than the capacity limit. This isn't the first time this hack appears to have suffered from a temporary lapse of selective amnesia - but don't worry Frank, your secret's safe with us.

Despite my crashes when I got back in the paddock I realised I wasn't the only unfortunate that day. Handing in my time card I noticed what appeared to be an evil smelling swamp creature wearing an MX helmet with a bent peak. On closer inspection it turned out to be nothing less than Husky importer Mike Carter who had, it turned out suffered similar consequences at the hands of his TE350. Evidently Mike had enacted a flying head plant at over 30mph into a bog before being run over by several following riders - one of which it turned out was on a Husqvarna!

Can't think who it could have been Mike?

THANKS

To Mike Carter and Husky Sport for the loan of the TE350. If you want to buy it, it's for sale for £3,900 on 01344 56860

Marzocchi forks and Brembo brakes add up to a high quality front end with plenty of feel



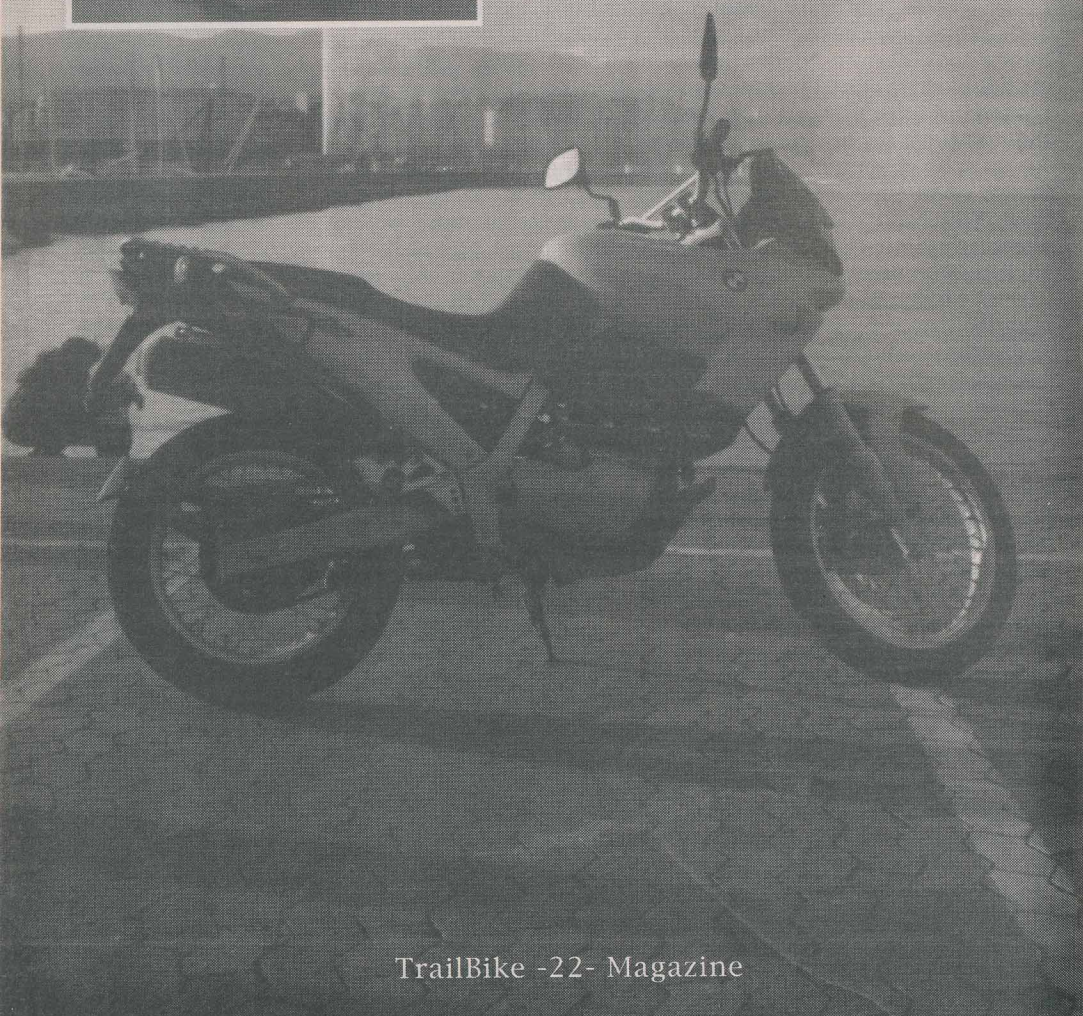
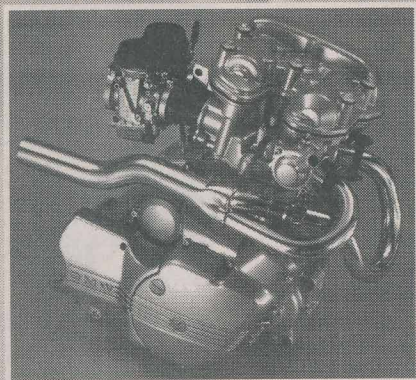
The Hafren Dirt Bike Rally was organised for riders of trail bikes and four stroke enduro machines. It was an enormous success for the organisers (The Hafren Dirt Bike Club) and for Bob Perring (who dreamed up the idea), John Edmonson, Geraint Jones and all the others who helped stage the event.

If you weren't there you should kick yourself for missing out on a great day's riding, and make a note to book early for next year. No excuses. Just do it.

LIKE CLOCKWORK

To Geneva and back
on a BMW F650.

Simon Brighton spent
a week having fun
with a Funduro



It's Sunday lunchtime and getting busy in the local cafe at Crocy. I'm sat at a small table outside, with a steaming hot Cappuccino staring at the biggest Jambon sandwich I've ever seen, listening to the banter of the locals. I'm deep in rural France, part way between Salisbury and Geneva with a BMW F650 for company, and the sun is beginning to break through the patchwork quilt of low clouds.

Jambon (ham) sandwiches are very popular with people like me who have learnt French from old episodes of 'Rapido'. It's because they're one of the few things you can ask for without getting a question back in return. Ask for cheese, sausage or jam and you'll be there all day trying to say what kind you want. But fortunately there is only one ham sandwich.

It was the ideal opportunity. As I'd planned to take a trip to Geneva for a week to catch up on some old friends, why not go on BMW's F650 and give it a decent workout on a continental jaunt. My friend Pete had also decided his XJ600 needed more exercise than it was getting running around west London, so dug out his passport and came along for the ride.

Planning was simple, take a map of France, locate Cherbourg at the top left and Geneva at the bottom right and draw a line between them. Follow that route avoiding motorways and sticking as much as possible to the twisty B-roads (or D-roads) of rural France. Our starting point was TrailBike Magazine's extensive HQ near Salisbury. Everything loaded and off we went in

Simon Brighton



the rain to Southampton, to get the 10pm crossing.

For those of you who don't remember, the Funduro was introduced in

1993, based on the Austrian designed Rotax motor that powers Aprilia's Pegaso, though it's essentially the same engine the crankcases are different as is the cylinder head which sports four valves in place of the Pegaso's five.

The bike is more roadified than the Pegaso. The fairing covers more of the engine, and details such as a rubber peg on the gear shift give it a less austere feel. The F650 came with the regulation BMW clunky gear box, (of which more later), and flip-up side stand. Unlike earlier BeeEmm stands this was strong enough, but rather awkward to use, the left foot has to push it forward while dragging the whole bike backwards to get it to stay in place. It has the feeling of a disaster waiting to happen. On a plus note though the centre stand is very easy to use and the bike obligingly rolls back into place, with a minimum of effort.

Our one came with panniers, made awkwardly wide by having to accommodate the chunky stainless exhaust which exits on the left hand side, these were more of a weekend size and I was glad to have brought a large tank bag along. The pannier frame makes it easy to strap whatever luggage you need onto the back, and sleeping bag, tent and roll mat were no problem to attach.

Having a tank bag on the bike means it's impossible to see the indicator indicators (if you know what I

LIKE CLOCK WORK

BMW F650

mean). These are too far down on the bottom right of the instrument panel, so it's very easy to forget to turn them off. They share this position with the other warning lights for neutral, oil and high beam. At least the F650 has the more normal push to cancel indicators operated by the left thumb. The main instruments, speedo, tacho and temperature gauge are well designed, clearly visible and easy to read whatever the weather. In the centre of the dash, a button-sized badge reminds you what make of bike you have chosen to ride.

Once on board the ferry and having sorted out the cabin there's nothing else to do but sit, have a drink and watch the cabaret. This gets going a little while into the journey. On this trip it was 'famous songs from the London stage' sung by girls in Bikinis and boys in army gear. You don't get that with the Channel Tunnel! Anyway after one "Jesus Christ Superstar" too many it was time for bed.

Next morning it's the same grey weather in Cherbourg that we left in Salisbury the day before, I was optimistic however as I'd checked the forecast on Teletext before we'd left the UK and it looked promising.

From Cherbourg we took the N13 which runs south down the length of the Cotentin peninsula toward Caen. This area of France is famous for its dairy farms and most of the nation's butter is produced here as well as the famous Camembert cheese. They also have a liking for cider and Calvados, a particularly tasty apple Brandy.

Although the scenery wasn't that exiting I didn't mind because I had other distractions on my mind as Pete told me he was about to run out of petrol. This was no idle boast, as immediately smoke started to pour from his exhaust and the bike began to lurch

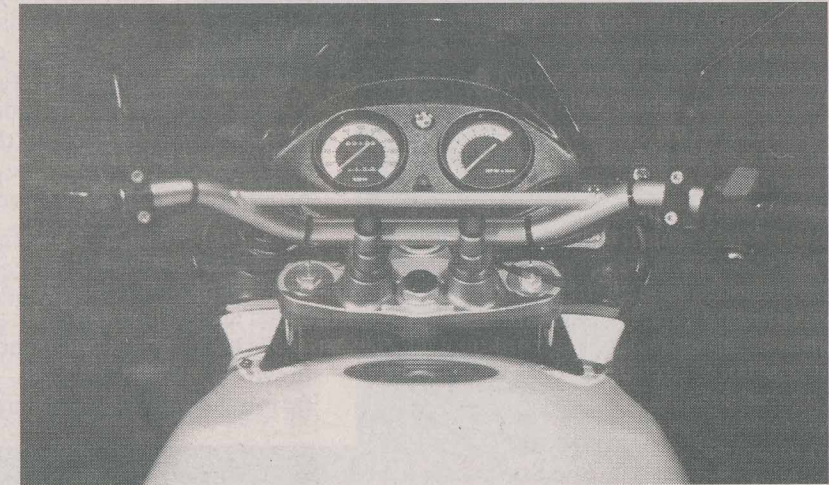


down the road.

Eight O'clock on a Sunday morning, all garages closed, it's raining and we're miles from anywhere. I briefly think about killing him, hiding the bike and carrying on, but lucky for him he manages to coax the XJ to Bayeaux, finally running out of juice opposite an open Cafe. I find an garage in the next street, so Pete's life is saved.

This area contains many museums and memorials to the Normandy landings

LEFT: BMW makes a splash wherever it goes.
BELOW: Dashboard is a model of clarity, but warning lamps are obscured when using a tankbag



which took place fifty years ago. Bayeux and Caen were the scene of some of the early fighting, as the allies made their way inland from the beach-heads that had been established to the north.

Fifty years on all is quiet - as is the F650, and once the revs have built up, the clunky gearbox disappears and the engine becomes very smooth. It is sometimes difficult to tell what gear the bike is in, and occasionally I find that I haven't put the bike into top gear when I should have done so ages ago. Not very economical, but it's still comfortably outperforming the XJ on mpg.

A compass is a useful tool (no, really), one of those cheap things from garages or Halfords that have suckers on the bottom. They're useful in the country, but are even better in big towns and cites when you're lost and all you want to do is get out. We get lost in the large town of Caen. So watch the compass, head south and before you can say Murorowa Atoll, it's green fields, better scenery and the weather is improving.

Going by the gauge the bike runs at a low temperature on the open road as the pointer barely makes it off the

French driving hazards.

1. *Mud.* Napoleon said mud should be regarded as the fifth element when fighting battles. Fairly common on the backroads, horrible greasy, wet stuff that gets flattened on the road by farm machinery. Concentrates the mind when cornering.

2. *Dogs.* Leap out and bark at you when going slowly, or just wander around the road being erratic.

3. *Farm animals.* As above, but come in all shapes, sizes and weights.

4. *Farm machinery.* French farm implements often look medieval. Great big things attached to old tractors that move slowly down the lanes, more suited to laying siege to a town than digging up turnips. Equipped with all sorts of spikes and prongs to catch out the unwary.

5. *Gendarmes.* If most of the cars coming in the opposite

LIKE CLOCKWORK

BMW F650

minimum, in town it's a different story and heat builds up fairly quickly bringing the fan into action.

Now we're onto the D-roads and the bike loves it. In a car you're anonymous everywhere, but on a bike you have a choice, and driving through the village of Crocy, listening to the dull thump of the big single echoing off pretty houses on either side of the narrow street, I know where I'd rather be. Time for a sandwich.

Through Trun to Gace on the D13, then the D932 to Moulins la March. The road gets more wooded until we're in the Forêt Du Perch (Forest of the Fish?!). The weather has been getting better, so the drop in temperature is noticeable in the damp air of the forest.

Out into the sun and heading towards Chartres, in the distance the Cathedral rises above the now flat landscape. Fill up with petrol on the ring road, and notice that the XJ

is using around a third more fuel than the BeeEmm. In fact at the fairly low speeds we're doing the Funduro is proving to be very economical. During the trip I reckon its range to be around 200 miles from full to switching on reserve, using just over 13 litres of fuel - that's nearly 70mpg!

On to Angerville and from there down to Pithivies. This area is real farming country, a flat landscape dom-

inated by giant grain silos, and big barns. Reminds me of the American mid-west (not that I've ever been there). Most of the local men appear to be out in the fields with guns looking for things to shoot. Every field has its group and it's a wonder there's anything left alive. Just before Pithivies an old steam train rounds a bend and runs alongside the road for the few miles into town. People on the balcony of the last coach wave as we go by.

We decide to camp for the night in Montargis, this costs just ff15 each, so with all the money we've saved we head off to find a bar. Unfortunately the locals around here don't appear to drink on a Sunday night and although it's only half past seven in the evening most of the bars are starting to close. We experience about seven versions of last orders and find ourselves back at the campsite by 9.30.

We're invited into Dave and Maries mobile home for a drink and a chat about BMWs. They are both from Lancashire and retired. Dave has owned a succession of BeeEmms over the years and regales us with stories about falling off them. Dave has fallen off every type of BMW I can remember and a few I haven't heard of - it's amazing he managed to make it to retirement age.

By the next day the scenery is really starting to improve, we're taking the D950 toward Avallon. The road winds its way through small villages with narrow streets. The fact that we're heading towards the mountains is

apparent as the temperature starts to fall whenever we gain a little altitude. Through Avallon onto the N6 toward Chalon sur Saone, the road is arrow straight and appears Roman in the way it cuts its way through the countryside.

Onto the D978 to Lons le Saunier, and from here we can see the Jura mountains up ahead. From Lons we're headed toward the Col de la Faucille, a 4340ft pass over the Juras. Now the

direction flash you, it may not mean that something's fallen off your bike, often it's to let you know that just ahead there are a group of gendarmes pulling over the traffic. They wear blue and travel around in blue vans with a blue light on top, there is usually around six and they can pop up in the most remote places.

Petrol is more expensive in France than England (as is everything else). One litre of sans plomb (unleaded), costs 5.8 francs that's about 76p, at 7.5 francs to the pound exchange rate.

Ferries. Overnight crossing going, daytime coming back from Southampton to Cherbourg was ideal for this trip. Booked through Ferry Plus (0181 680 4400) on Stena Sealink. Two passengers + two bikes return, with a cabin on the way out, is £44 each.

LIKE CLOCKWORK

BMW F650

road starts to wind in earnest during the ascent and with so many gear changes the clunky gearbox becomes heavy on the left foot. It's a great feeling though leaning through the corners with huge drops to left and right, letting the BeeEmm's healthy torque power the bike onwards and upwards from one curve to the next. This is big single country and Pete is making slow progress on the heavy XJ.

The temperature starts to drop as we approach the Col, ears pop and the air starts to get clearer. The Col is well known from the Tour de France, it's here where the 'King of the Mountains' is decided. The road still bears much of the graffiti put down by fans in support of their individual heroes. The thought of cycling through this pass is difficult to comprehend. Besides I'm having too much fun on the Funduro.

The N5 takes us past the ski station at the very top and the descent begins into Geneva. From this height views are spectacular, the city is spread out miles below. Fed up with changing gear I put the bike into neutral and don't have to put it into gear for eight miles, when we arrive in Gex.

We're headed for Avully, a small village on the outskirts of Geneva. To get there we take the D984 from Gex, and as this is the busiest road of the

whole journey we're glad when we finally get off it and take one of the small lanes through the French/Swiss border. The border control consists of nothing more than a deserted wooden hut.

We've finally arrived and though it felt like a long trip, for this sort of travel the F650 has been the best bike I could wish for. It's comfortable, the riding position feels very natural and accommodating and the range and economy are exceptional. At higher speeds the bike feels very smooth with just a hint of big single vibration at the top end. Now to get it muddy.

It's raining and Monday morning finds me tentatively negotiating a track that leads from the back of the house. Lanes and tracks cross the countryside around here in all directions. With the back wheel sliding around I can hear mud flying off and hitting the surrounding trees. The F650 though makes light work of the ruts and pot-holes and the suspension easily copes with the uneven surface though the Michelin tyres could be better for this sort of going.

Once the track becomes firmer, I can get the bike up to a good speed, in fact I'm just putting the bike into top at fifty, when the track ahead changed to something resembling a quarry. In fact it is a quarry and mud, water and steam



engulf the bike as it ploughs through. I am relieved to find myself still upright after this unintentional 'special test'. Though true off-roading is a little limited, there are plenty of rocky trails to explore, and the BeeEmm is the perfect machine for doing it on. Farmyards, deserted roads and even mountain tracks all speed under the BMW's wheels and I'm enjoying myself so much that when the week is over I don't want to leave the chocolate box scenery and crisp mountain air.

But work beckons and when the week is over I pack the BMW up and regretfully head for home. Twenty four hours later I'm back in Blighty, the sun is shining and the BMW's plastered with dead insects. More importantly I haven't changed my mind one bit about the F650.

BMW F650

Price £5059

Weight 189kg

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Plus points

Instant throttle response, range, quality components.

Minus points

Clunky gearbox, side stand

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THE GREAT TRAIL ROBBERY

Our green lanes are disappearing at an alarming rate. Only a fraction of them remain in their original state and new pressures are being brought to bear on the few remaining ones. Dave Tilbury wonders where are they all going?

It's all down to custom, and the law derived from that custom, that we are using vehicles on green lanes today. And it is this legal aspect that many trail riders tend to push to one side, enjoyment being the main goal. The time has come for motorcyclists, along with the carriage driver and 4x4 enthusiasts, to wake up to the fact that our recreational opportunities are being diminished at an alarming rate. By the legal nature of the subject it is, usually, without much humour but is definitely not boring. There are rewards to be won from a little self education on the subject, such as new lanes to ride and greater self confidence when faced with a disgruntled land owner, or, as once happened to me, an officer of the law.

'Gotcha nar sonny' (at forty-five I'm easily flattered).

'Why is that constable?'

'Do you realise it is an offence to use a vehicle on a bridleway?' - (taking book from pocket).

'I'm not on a bridleway'

'Under section 34 of the 1988 Road Traffic Act.....'

'Sorry constable, you're not listening to what I'm saying. You're wrong'

There followed an explosion of barely concealed rage by the young PC and threats of what he would do to me, but I heard no more about it. Many, not confident about their rights, would have meekly apologised and accepted the ticket.

So why have we ended up with so few vehicular rights of



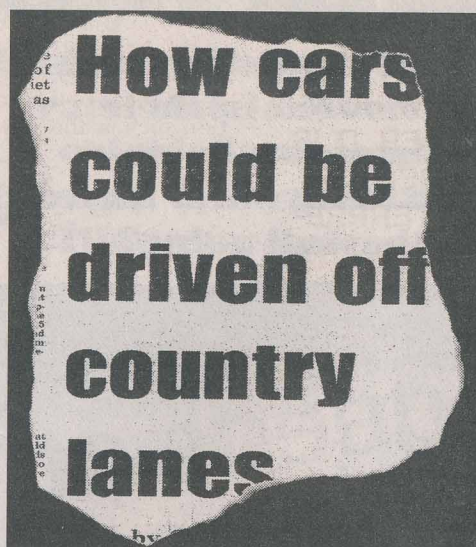
way on the current definitive maps across the country? The answer can be found in recent history. Around the turn of the century the highway network was being improved, widened and surfaced, to accommodate the new, fragile, motorcar. Some routes needed no improvement whilst others were considered superfluous. It is these two categories of lane that escaped the attention of the District Surveyor which are central to our recreation today. They may be sunken between banks or hedges; edged by ditches; wide or narrow, steep or flat, they will invariably have a character that has not come about overnight. There is one Hampshire lane that springs to mind that is deeply sunken and, during dry weather, one can see grooves in the bedrock that can only have been created by years of cartwheels rolling over it.

The rights of way we find shown on our Ordnance Survey maps today came into being under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. This Act came about because the Government of the day recognised that the public's rights of passage through the countryside were rapidly being eroded by greedy and unscrupulous land owners. Many other lanes were already lost to the plough under the 'Dig for Victory' campaign during world war two. The loss of public rights of way was not a new problem. Following the Norman invasion the

indigenous populous petitioned the new King, complaining that their usual routes about the land were being obstructed by new inclosures. The King dealt with the matter by decreeing that, whilst the land was for the benefit of his Barons, the roads were his and that the people had the right to pass and re-pass over them - hence the term 'King's Highway'.

Rather more recently the 1949 Act required each and every county to create a definitive map and statement of public rights of way. This was implemented through consultation with Parish Councils who, with the help of Government guidelines and local users, completed maps showing Footpaths, bridleways and those roads that are now mainly used as public paths (RUPP). We only have to give brief consideration as to who might sit on a Parish Council to realise that not all rights of way made it onto the Definitive Map and of those that did many were recorded at a lower status than was correct. (A note against a bridleway on a 1953 consultation map: 'Until 150 years ago this was the only road to Salisbury') This does not mean that those un-recorded rights do not exist, they do, but are not recognisable to the public at large. The matter of 'slumbering' rights is a complex one which will not be covered here but it is important to realise the extent to which the public's rights of passage have already been eroded, even during the implementation of legislation designed to protect them!

Some Authorities, however, misread the Government guidelines and instead of using the term RUPP on their Definitive Map used the term Carriage Road, to which they added either footpath or bridleway (CRF & CRB). Dorset was one such County. This error was corrected under the map review procedure in 1974 by modifying all CRB's and CRF's to bridleways, in, legend would have it, a most undemocratic procedure. To digress a little, it is interesting to note that a prominent rights of way worker (non vehicular) in that county applied



to upgrade a footpath to a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT), largely on historic evidence but supported by current motorcycle use. The Order for BOAT was made and, at the same time, an application made to the Magistrates Court to stop vehicular rights. To the amazement of all, that application succeeded.

Dorset is rich in green lanes (and locked gates) but has no RUPPs and a grand total of just ten BOATs. Dorset may have believed that to stop up a right of way as fast as record it was an innovative solution to a new problem, or maybe they had heard of Workman's Lane at Warsash, near Southampton. In 1886 the land owner gated a lane that crossed his estate. The local people took the landowner to court and won. To celebrate, a host of locals, on foot or in carts and wagons went in procession along the lane to the accompaniment of the village band, picnicked on the beach and returned the same way. The land owner was so incensed that he appealed to the House of Lords and won.

So, barring a few exceptions like that one, we vehicle users could drive, or ride,

ONCE A BILL BECOMES LAW HOWEVER, IT IS OPEN TO INTERPRETATION BY THE COURTS. THIS IS WHERE OUR PROBLEMS REALLY BEGIN

RUPPs without any problems - or so it seemed.

A piece of legislation such as the 1949 Act would have been drafted by Parliamentary Counsel to the Treasury and debated by both houses, passing through seven Parliamentary stages on its way to becoming law. Once a bill becomes law however, it is open to interpretation by the courts, and this is where our trouble really started. Under

the 1949 Act a RUPP was acknowledged to be of higher status than a bridleway, but not, after some hair splitting, necessarily vehicular. The RUPP was described by one Judge as 'a term of outstanding obscurity'. There have been many judgements on rights of way matters and whilst each one will have resolved a particular issue the precedent set by that decision will invariably complicate the overall picture, or throw up another technical anomaly.

This uncertainty was addressed by the Countryside Act of 1968 which called for all RUPPs to be reclassified as either a footpath, bridleway or Byway Open to All Traffic. A BOAT being conclusive of vehicular rights, with the term RUPP disappearing from the Definitive Map. This Act included a section that would allow the suitability for vehicular use of the lane to be taken into account. A great many lanes across England and Wales fell foul of this 'suitability' section and are now recorded as bridleways. It was subsequently established through the courts that the reclassification process did not extinguish vehicular rights. So, those lanes that were reclassified as bridleways due to the 'suitability'

factor, would now be shown as such on the Definitive Map, and subsequently on the Ordnance Survey map so relied upon by the trail rider, and as a consequence be 'invisible' to most users.

However, the reclassification process now relies on the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981. Gone is the 'suitability for vehicular traffic' section so all is now straightforward - isn't it?. Is there documentary evidence to support vehicular rights (such as old maps)? Has there been 20 consecutive years of vehicular use? Is there evidence of a common law dedication (the land owner aware of vehicular use but has not challenged it)? Mix it all together and if, on the balance of probabilities, the evidence points to a vehicular right of way it is a BOAT and able to be ridden by trail riders. On the face of it a fair piece of legislation. With hindsight it can be seen to have one serious flaw - the term Byway Open to All Traffic. Byway would have been fine, it is the Open to All Traffic bit that has caused the problem.

The reclassification process is simple enough. The Authority investigate the available documentary evidence, such as old maps and Parish records. User groups such as Carriage drivers, motorcyclists and 4x4 enthusiasts are contacted to establish if the lane is currently being used and how far back such use can be established. If there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate a vehicular right then an Order is published stating that the Definitive Map will be modified to show a BOAT. (In the absence of good evidence of vehicular rights the Order will be made for Bridleway as a default position).

As with all Definitive Map procedures if there is an objection to the order then a public inquiry must be held. Following a High Court case brought by the Hampshire Parish of Lasham, any objection can cause that inquiry it doesn't have to be relevant to the reclassification process. I have yet to attend an inquiry

and see, or hear evidence from an object to a byway order that is relevant under the pertaining legislation. It is unfortunate that some inspectors who hear these inquiries do not, in my opinion, fully appreciate the subtleties of the subject. The most frequent area on which I would disagree with a decision is over the standard of evidence required under the Act. The Inspectors should reach their decision 'on the balance of probabilities', however some appear to go for the criminal court standard of 'beyond all reasonable doubt'. The end result is that the Inspector now requires much more positive evidence to confirm a BOAT than four or five years ago and more RUPPs are being reclassified as bridleways as a result, often in defiance of logic.

I have covered the topic of reclassification at length because it should be understood that at each change in the law another opportunity arises for the 'If It's Fun - Ban It' brigade to have a say - and why not? That's democracy at work isn't it? If the vehicular users of green lanes remain silent then only one side of the tale will be told. To illustrate the current situation I would suggest that counties that are rich in BOATs and RUPPs, such as Hampshire and Wiltshire, will only have about 50% of the actual vehicular rights of way recorded.

I have not made much of section 116 of the 1980 Highways Act, under which a vehicular highway can be stopped up as being 'unnecessary'. This is largely because in my experience we are not losing a significant number of lanes in this way. We have lost three lanes in Hampshire under this Act over the last decade and it must be said that, due to the amount of vehicular

use they received, the term unnecessary was not inappropriate. Further, in the light of a case brought by the Ramblers Association against Kent County Council, such applications are now unlikely to succeed if opposed. So what can we do to retain these historic routes and our recreation? From an extensive list I would start with the three easiest:-

Always read any notices posted on a lane and take the appropriate action. It may be notice of a reclassification Order; a Stopping Up Order; temporary closure; planning application. At the very least contact your local Trail Riders Fellowship

MARCH 13, 1995 ***

Couple take council to court

Off-roaders challenged in battle of the byway

By Toby Moore, Transport Correspondent

VILLAGE couple go to the Court next week after a year battle with their neighbours in a case involving the country. Berkshire expects to spend £150,000 repairing the damage they have caused. Currently, off-road

rights of way representative.

Always report an obstruction, natural or deliberate, to the relevant Highway Authority. That obstruction, if left, could be used at a later date to support a

Stopping Up Order or reclassification objection. You might still be able to pass along the lane on your trail bike but other users may not. Accordingly it could be said that the lane is not open to the public at large. An obstruction was defined by Lord Chief Justice Parker thus: '...anything which substantially prevents the public from having free access over the whole of the highway, which is not purely temporary in nature, is an unlawful obstruction.'

Always record your use of green lanes. TRF members will do so as a matter of course (won't they?) but the thousands of other riders may not. This personal record, when presented in person at a public inquiry, is mighty powerful magic. A far more difficult task is tracking down past users of questionable lanes.

I have spoken to a number of old countrymen who can relate tales of 'driving down what they now call a footpath to church each Sunday', or that the 'water was up to the axles on the trap that took us to school in the winter'. Only once have I heard an octogenarian speak up at a Public Inquiry and tell of his first job with a local farmer which involved driving a cart 'to market every week down that lane'. 'That lane' is now a byway.

Whilst we can win the odd battle there are a lot of people who will gain from not having a BOAT across their land. Many have succeeded in reducing the recorded status of green lanes in their area and in doing so are encouraging others to oppose reclassification orders. Users of green lanes must realise that things will change over the coming years and unless we make our voices heard these changes will not be to our benefit.

Be assured ancient carriageways are, in one respect, like Ming Dynasty porcelain - they are no longer in production. The underlying truth may be that it is not so much a great trail robbery, more a case of fraudulent conversion

Both the Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF) and the Land Access & Recreation Association (LARA) do a great deal to protect lanes from being lost forever. If you want to protect your legal rights of way from being diminished in the future you can join either organisation at the following addresses:-

TRF

Membership secretary
38 Thornton Crescent, Old Coulsdon, Surrey,
CR5 1LH
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LARA

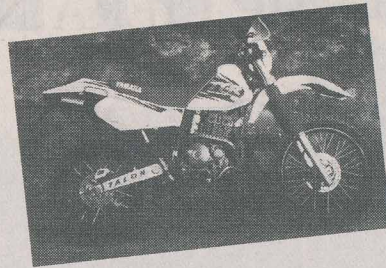
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THE BRACKEN RALLY



Retired desert racer Jon Watson-Miller has been organising the Bracken Rally since 1992. Inspired by Metzeler's Dolomite rally and named after his BMW bike repair business in Bermondsey, it's a sort of Treasure Hunt open to all types of machine and rider. Paul Blezard took his battered XR600 down to wettest Wales to compete in the fourth edition.



'Oh bugger it.....'
Bike hack Mac McDiarmid discovers the joys of the bottomless Welsh bogs

I had a severe sense of *deja vu* as I turned up at the Lion Royal Hotel in Rhayader because I was driving the same old Fiat Ducato van with the same trusty XR600 in it as I had for the inaugural event back in 1992. That first Bracken had 45 participants and was considered a great success by all who took part. The basic formula has not changed: run over two evenings either side of a long day's ride, the event is by invitation only and all participants are personally vetted by Jon Watson-Miller. (That doesn't mean you can't do it if you don't know him, but it does mean you have to be prepared to convince him that you're a decent and responsible sort of chap or chapess).

Once your entry is accepted, the formula works like this: turn up on Friday evening for a meal and briefing in the hotel and mark the check-points on the OS map supplied (Elan Valley - No.147) from the master maps. Get up at the crack of dawn, ride all day doing as many check-points as you can, collapse in a hot bath then stuff yourself with food and drink and have a thoroughly sociable time at the Saturday evening prize-giving. On the Sunday there's the option of some relaxed trail riding if you're not too tired, drunk or hung over.

There are more check-points than anyone can possibly get around in the nine hours allowed (38 this year), and some checks are worth far more than others - they vary in value from 18 to 107 points - so route planning is very important. The points available depend on how difficult a check is to get to and find, and how far away it is from the start and finish in Rhayader. They are graded from 1 to 6 for difficulty - a '1' is reachable by road bike whereas a '6' requires expert enduro skills or some serious 'shank's pony'.

To encourage a wide variety of people and machinery there are classes for pillions, multi-cylinders, women and over-40s; there's even a prize for the best rider over 15 stone! There has been one important

change since 1992 however. The inaugural event was won by John Barber on a Cagiva T4 (look it up in the Guide) thanks to a combination of good riding and map-reading plus some demon driving and support from Richard Avent in the Moto Vecchia pick-up, in a reversal of their Monte Carlo rally roles. This ruthless exploitation of the lack of rules was considered a bit unsportsman-like by Jon Watson-Miller, and support vehicles have been banned from the Bracken ever since.

I travelled down to Rhayader with Simon Fenning, erstwhile co-owner of Moto Vecchia (with Richard Avent) and recently retired owner of Surrey Harley Davidson. He had just imported a brand new Honda XR650L from the States which had its first service on the day we left. We didn't get to Rhayader until about 11.30pm on the Friday evening so missed both the briefing and the chance to meet

We were rudely awakened by Jon at six am in time for a traditional cooked breakfast

Geraint Jones and Paris-Dakar car veteran Fred Gallagher, but there were plenty of familiar faces from previous events.

Quite a few of the 70-odd participants took part in the first Bracken; John Harding was there with the SP370 he uses every year and brought it down in the same Land Rover that carried my clobber in the '89 Aneto Raid. He had teamed up as usual with million-mile despatch rider and Circuit des Pyrenees fan Charlie Fison who'd dragged his trusty twin-shock XR200 out of the shed for the first time since the '94 event.

Like John Harding, engine tuner Bob Farnham did both the Aneto and the first Bracken and was back on the trusty XR600 that he first bought to do the Tunisian rally in '93. His mate Justin Ogilvie of Fast Lane bike shop was similarly mounted, having long since sold the KLX 650 which disastrously fell to bits when he accompa-

nied Bob to the North African desert. (The previous weekend we'd we'd all ridden together in the excellent Hafren trail bike enduro mentioned elsewhere).

In contrast to my usual disorganised shambles, I'd actually got my bike ready before arriving at the Bracken: the rear brake bracket knackered in the Rally of Discovery (full story to follow) had been miraculously repaired courtesy of Techno-weld and the rear enduro tyre fitted for the Hafren was still in good shape. OK, the headlight wasn't actually working but we had to be back at the ranch two hours before dark so I wouldn't be needing that would I?

We were all rudely awoken by Jon at 6am, in time for a traditional cooked breakfast before the early start. You could choose anytime between 7.10am and 8.10 am, but if you started any later, it would be eating into the maximum eight hours allowed without penalty (ie till 4.10pm). For every minute that you returned after eight hours you lost a point up to a maximum of 60points/one hour after which you were excluded or 'hoored out', enduro style.

Simon Fenning and I finally got away at about 9am and headed for check 27 which, when we belatedly looked at the relevant notes supplied, turned out to be on the Rhayader motocross course. There had been a lot of rain in the previous few days and it was still drizzling when we got there so the track was extremely slippery. It took Simon about 30 seconds to discover that the standard XR650L tyres had about as much grip as melting butter - one minute he was gingerly making his way around the hill-side track, next minute he was struggling to get his brand new bike back on its wheels.

Each check was marked by a clipboard with the appropriate racing-sized numbers on it and a couple of coloured pens with which to sign your name on the score sheet you carried with you. Although check 24 was only about half a mile away nailed to another fence post, it took us about twenty minutes to find it - if you don't take a compass bearing from

each check, you can get disoriented and lost in no time - especially in the wet and misty conditions prevailing. By the time we got to the check we'd been caught up by Mitsui's Martin Marshall on Geraint Jones' TTR250 and Mac McDiarmid on his WR250.

Alone again, Simon and I headed north to checks 5 and 18 at Cefn Cenarth. The notes said 'easier to go from 18 to 5 and descend hill climb' so naturally we took the wrong track and had to do it the hard way, which required all my skill to get up on enduro tyres. Simon is a very fast rider on road and track but has limited off-road experience; he was weighting the inside footrest on the slippery hillside with inevitable consequences and soon had steam coming out of his Rukka. I laid my bike down to give him a hand, then forgot that I'd switched the petrol off when I re-started it so stalled half way up the hill - brilliant!

Check 5 was nowhere near where we'd marked it on our maps, but we eventually found both that and number 18 and were treated to a lovely view of the surrounding countryside from the top of Cefn Cenarth. Riding back down was nearly as tricky as riding up and Simon's rear brake got jammed off just as he needed it most, so he took three more tumbles on the way down - and there was worse, much worse, to come.

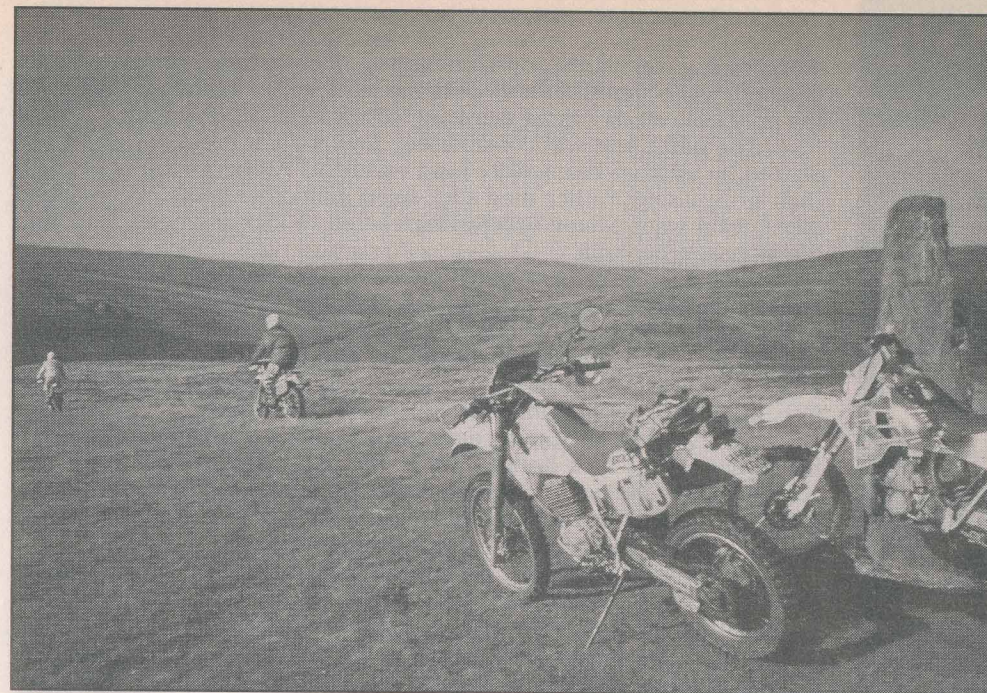
An enduro-cum-moto-cross style special test was a new addition this year up at Cwm Derw farm, which I'd last seen when it was bone dry and rock hard during the Welsh two-day last June. Conditions couldn't have been more of a contrast in early October and some parts of the mile-long course were so steep and slippery that you could barely stand up on them. I had time for a quick recce and very nearly crashed as I slithered down the first hill with the front wheel completely out of control. I then dropped the bike on an easier section and got my OS map covered in mud as it fell out of its transparent case.

There were about twenty riders lined up, moto-cross style, for the 11am start on a whole variety of machines. I had no desire to be at the front for the slippery slope that followed the start straight, but managed to get away close to the leading bunch of lunatics. I made a reasonably controlled descent of the hill and just beat another rider into the 'slot' at the bottom and got the jump on him into the next section where the tapes ran us off the beaten track and into the rough. As I rode along the bottom straight I could already see the nutters ahead blasting up the hill towards the finish - how could they ride that fast on such a slippery surface without falling off?

I went the long way round through the ferns at the bottom of the hill to find some grip and stormed back up to finish in about 7th but scored as if for fifth (46 points) because the winner, Ben Richardson, and runner up Ben Shuckborough (both expert enduro men) were officially travelling marshalls. Nick Ashley was another quick man along with the two Irish lads, Vince and Liam and Luis Filipe, a former Venezuelan enduro champion who flew in from New York just for the weekend!

But the most impressive performance for my money was that of

**Some parts
of the mile
long
motocross
test were so
steep and
slippery
that you
could barely
stand up on
them**



Philip Gunn on his ratty old Armstrong. His Metzeler trail tyres were barely legal for the road, let alone suitable for slippery climbs, yet he miraculously got down the hill without falling off and somehow found enough grip to get back up again.

(With a beer belly worthy of a darts champion, Philip's an unlikely-looking candidate for next year's Dakar, but there's no doubt in my mind that he has both the riding ability and the navigational skills to complete the event (he was using Satellite navigation in the Bracken!)).

Simon came to grief several times around the course but finally made it back to the finish with steam now coming out of his Rukka waterproofs like a pressure-cooker. There were half a dozen check-points scattered around Cwm Derw farm and we worked our way around them in a clockwise direction. Check 36 was at the top of the storming climb I mentioned in 'Wales Tales' and I got up the hard bit with no difficulty only to get stuck in a deceptively boggy bit near the top. Check 37 was nowhere near where we'd marked it and I eventually got there by riding

along the river bed. Check 33 was at the bottom of another steep hill which I well remembered from the '92 event because I'd managed to get another rider's Africa Twin up it on that occasion. This year it was twice as slippery and we only found the clip-board because Simon fell off trying to get up - it was hidden behind a tree.

By this time Simon had dropped his XR650 about a dozen times and was thoroughly knackered, so I volunteered to ride it up the hill. Although it feels just like an XR600 to sit on and ride, the extra weight of the starter motor, battery, indicators etc. is really noticeable when you have to pick the bugger up - but it's all forgiven when you press that button and it just whirrs back into life.

I understood why Simon had been struggling the instant I tried to ride the bike up the hill - the front felt like a road tyre and I promptly lost it and fell off! I got up by making for the bracken again - bumpy but grippy.

On the ride back down Simon dropped my XR and I lost my footing and slipped off his 650 while sitting on it stationary, slipping and sliding in my BMW

'Romper suit' for yards down the grassy slope before I came to a halt, laughing while Simon came close to having a sense of humour failure for the only time all day as he manhandled my dead XR downhill.

The 650's seat was considerably higher than my 600's and I was glad to be wearing heavy-duty (and excellent) Alt-berg road boots with their grippy soles rather than slick-soled motocross boots. We swapped bikes again when Simon was too knackered to kick my beast back into life after another spill.

I got stuck in my first patch of bog on the way back from check 35 but fortunately managed to heave the XR out on my own. Swapping back to the 650 I promptly dropped it twice in less than a minute! I was caught out while turning it around by the fact that the clutch lever bracket had been bent in the earlier prangs so that the clutch did not bite until the lever was miles away from the handlebar.

By this time all Simon could think about was getting a pint down his throat and as luck would have it, the next check on our route was actually inside the bar of a pub in Abbeycwmhir, about four miles away, although to get to it we first had to negotiate our way around a locked gate in a fence at the end of a forest track short cut.

Having taken off his waterproof Rukka because he was getting soaked in sweat, Simon then got soaked by the rain penetrating his flashy but far from waterproof Hein Gericke Tuareg jacket. I wasn't much better off in my BMW 'Andy Pandy' 'city' one-piece, outfit which had proved equally incapable of keeping out the rain. As a joke I asked the proprietor of the Happy Union Inn whether he had any clean, dry T-shirts for sale, whereupon he produced some really nice Rugby shirts - a snip at a tenner apiece! Also in the pub were Nicky Ogilvie and Kelly Wilson, two-up on a TS125. They'd abandoned Nicky's rare grey import CRM250 after it broke the clutch lever. The girls said they'd spent 40 minutes unsuccessfully searching for check 8 so we decided to give that one a miss.

Suitably warmed by the clean shirts and hot soup and tea we returned to the fray at about 2pm, heading east to the four checks sited on or near the 'Tuff Trails' four wheel drive course, which was full of deep water crossings. We found checks 30 and 25 easily but check 3 proved elusive and we pressed on without having found it. Our plan was to blast down to the far side of the OS map, about 40 miles away to checks two, one and eight, which between them carried more points than a dozen others put together.

After all the slow-speed slipping and sliding at Cwm Derw it was great to be blasting down tarmac roads again, albeit wet ones. On a narrow minor road near Crossgates I had one of the closest shaves I've ever had on a trail bike. Squeezing

past a slow tractor at about 50mph with the rain still falling and visibility poor, my rear wheel slipped off the edge of the tarmac down about four inches onto the dirt. I really thought I was going to be spat off, but I rolled the throttle and it somehow managed to climb back up onto the road, although it nearly high-sided me in the process. God knows what the tractor driver thought; Simon's comment was short and to the point: 'That looked like a real brown trouser affair'.

We found check 17 at Llandrindod Wells without difficulty and carried on to Newbridge-on-Wye for petrol. The XR650 was really enjoyable to ride, despite the wet roads and what turned out to be less than 10psi in the tyres. It didn't actually feel any faster than my 600, and being lower geared it ran out of steam at about

I asked the proprietor of the Happy Union Inn whether he had any clean, dry shirts for sale

75-80mph.

Back on my own bike, I really started to go for it on the superb B4358 Newbridge to Beulah road to the point where my rear tyre started to feel squidgy - no wonder; turned out it only had 8psi in it. As Simon said, 'there's no way you could ride like that in those conditions on a road bike, even a CBR600' (let alone one with less than 10psi in the back tyre!)

Suitably pumped up, we thrashed on down the A483, past Llanwrtyd Wells and on to the familiar sight of Llandovery, (home of the Cambrian rally)

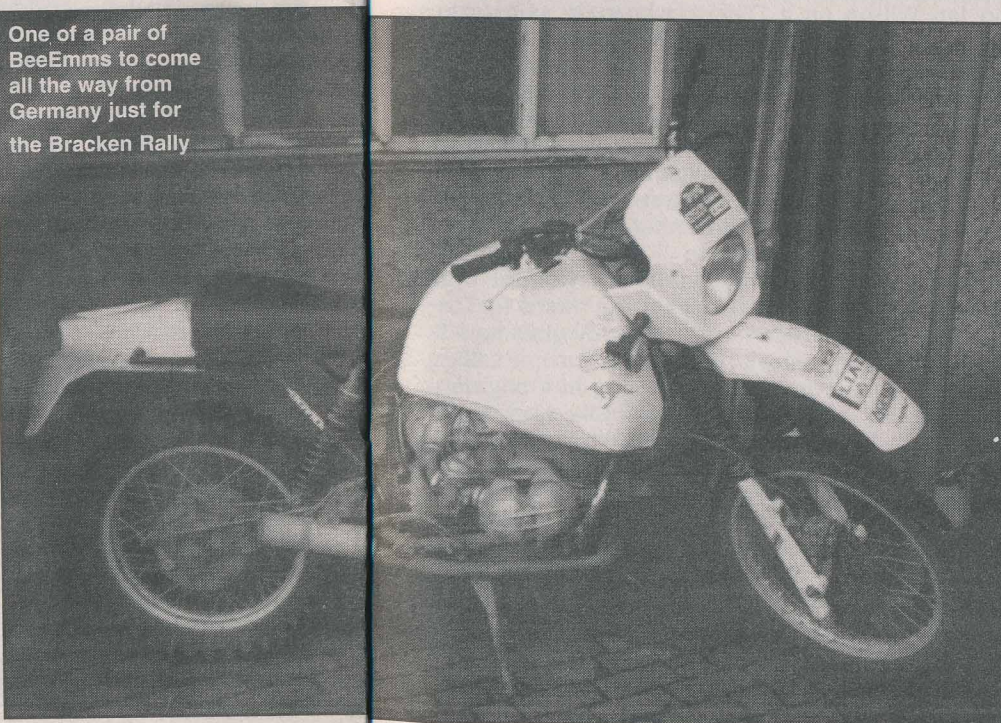
where we headed north to Check two, hidden behind the pub on the far side of Towy Bridge.

By the time we got there we were both soaked to the skin and it was already well after four o'clock. Rhayader was nearly fifty twisting miles away and even if we rode like lunatics we might well still 'hour out'. The enticing sight of a log fire and the prospect of a nice cup of real coffee was just too much to resist, so we effectively ended the competition right then and there.

By the time we left, suitably refreshed and a lot warmer, it was getting dark and my XR headlight was still refusing to cooperate on either beam. Then two miles down the road, I had that sinking feeling as the rear tyre deflated. Oh joy. We didn't have so much as a tube of Finilec between us, let alone a tube and levers, so I decided to just stand on the footrests, keep my weight forward and wobble on.

Above 30mph, the tyre stopped wobbling so much and I found it was possible to cruise at about 40mph, so long as I took it easy on the bends. At Sugar Loaf mountain on the A483, after about 15 miles of this 'Peterhansel practice' we caught

One of a pair of BeeEmms to come all the way from Germany just for the Bracken Rally



up with a convoy of cars that were going so slowly that the XR was down to 'wobble mode', so when the road straightened out I just opened 'er up and cruised passed the lot of 'em at about 60mph! Amazing what a good enduro tyre will stand (as long as it's got a security bolt of course).

We finally found a garage open at Llanwrtyd Wells and tiny bubbles at the top of the exposed valve indicated that might be the source of my troubles; sure enough, with the valve tightened right up and the front dust cap over it the tyre stayed up all the way back to Rhayader where we finally arrived back at the hotel at about half past seven. Fortunately the police car we caught up on the A44 chose not to investigate my lack of headlight....

The Lion Royal Hotel is an extraordinary throwback to another era; it looks as if it has not had a lick of paint or change of decor since about 1939; very few of the rooms have any 'facilities' apart from a washbasin and separate bathrooms are the order of the day. The hot water predictably ran out before my bath was even half full, but there was just enough of it to get my circulation going again.

At the dinner and prize-giving it turned out we weren't the only ones to strike trouble - only 42 out of the 56 participants were official finishers and many of those who failed were good enduro riders who lost their bikes in the deep waters of the Strata Florida and elsewhere. Phil Gunn's long suffering Armstrong blew up and the kick-start on John Harding's SP370 gave up early on and after several hours bump-starting in the mud, he had to call it a day.

The undisputed triple winners were Bob Farnham, Justin Ogilvie (both on XR600s) and Ian Wilson on a DR350, who rode as a team. Considering that they lost at least an hour, what with Bob's XR being drowned in two successive Strata Florida crossings and then Ian's DR running out of petrol, they did amazingly well, scoring 960 out of a possible 2,000 points. Justin was awarded the main prize since he wasn't responsible for any of the team's hold-ups and Bob was given the Over 40s prize, for which he qualified by a bare fortnight.

Hartmut Reiger won the twins class on the same 1100 Schek BMW special that he rode to an overall win in '93. Another German, Daniella Kochinski was best of the five solo ladies on a DT125LC and the Goddards won the pillion class and Big Liam from Ireland won the over 15 stone award. It would be nice to report that I got the award for 'triumph over adversity' or something similar, but in fact my glass and T-shirt was for 'most unpleasant competitor'; punishment for not calling Jon Watson-Miller to let him know we weren't drowning in a bog on a Welsh hillside but were warming up in a pub instead. Bike hack Roger Willis is a previous recipient so I suppose I'm in good company.

Jon admitted that the bad weather had made the event more difficult than intended - one of the checks was actually washed away - but a great time was still had by all, even Simon Fenning!

After the excellent dinner we adjourned to the Cornhill Inn just around the corner where the beer is far superior and proprietor Bob Buck is a keen trail rider and a fount of local knowledge - stay there and he'll be happy to share it with you. We returned to the Lion Royal and carried on 'socialising' until about 3am.

Epilogue

Sunday October 8th (the day after the Bracken) was a fantastic Indian summer's day (and when some of these photos were taken) - the contrast with the previous day's unrelenting rain could not have been greater. I went out trail riding to some of the checks we hadn't reached with Bob Farnham's team, their wives and Mac McDiarmid. The views from Maen-serth where check 19 had been and from above the Elan Valley where checks 6 and 15 had been, were absolutely stunning. Some of the grass was still very slippery though, as I discovered as the XR slipped out from under me!

I also managed to get stuck in a bog on top of Y Gurn which was entirely my own fault, and in another by Nant y Sarn which was entirely McDiarmid's fault. I had to heave the XR out of the bog three times in half an hour and my arms were knackered the next day.

When I got back to the Lion Royal there was a message from Simon that he'd got a puncture on the XR650L. The inner tube which had stood up to some serious thrashing the day before at 8psi had ripped out the valve at a much more sensible 20psi - probably because he didn't have a security bolt and was braking harder in the dry. With the superb weather I even enjoyed thrashing the van back to Cheltenham where I rescued Simon before heading back to London....All in all, an extremely enjoyable weekend. Jon just wishes that someone else would organise a similar event to the Bracken so that he can have a go himself!



Blez dumps his XR in yet another demonstration of enthusiasm overcoming ability!

Many thanks to Jon Watson-Miller, wife Patricia, sponsors Rock Oil and Mitsui and all who helped to make it happen; to Mary and all the staff at the Lion Royal Hotel and to Simon Fenning for letting me have a thrash on his XR650L.

This year the Bracken rally cost £118 to do, which included two nights in the Lion Royal, with bed, breakfast and evening meal with wine; OS map 147 and a Bracken rally race shirt. For information about next year's event call Jon Watson-Miller at Bracken MW on 0171-232-1814.



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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.

T u a r e g

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



TRAILBIKE GUIDE

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 torquey 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,



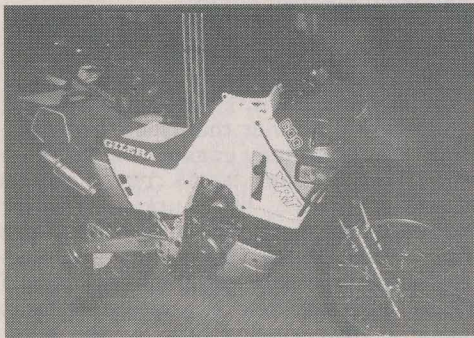
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single. Learner bikes - not officially imported.

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.

Nordwest: 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, heavy-ish 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 monoshock versions are better and more plentiful. Drum bakes let it down though some late Japanese spec models come with discs. Light enough to pick up if need be. *Verdict: Still a great trail bike.*

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

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 second-hand 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

f r a m e .
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,



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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.

HUSQVARNA

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 b a n g e r trail bike w h i c h 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-fairinged homage to the genre. Simple KLR may be a bit basic by today's standards but it works well enough, and is tough and practical to boot. Plenty of bottom end grunt. Relaunched in '95 after a break of two years.

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 trailed, 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

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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 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.*

ROKON

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: Bizzare but wild.*

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

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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, 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 under-powered. 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.



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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. 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



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riding to the masses! Started out as a basic twin shock trail bike back in the late Seventies before adopting cantilever 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 trailbikes 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 tricker 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 powerband. 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

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easy to ride. Brilliant attention to detail such as mini indicators and sensibly placed grab handles marks this out as a 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

light weight trailie/enduro that is Yamaha's version of the Honda XR250. Revvy motor and a reasonable 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 superceded 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.*

TT500: a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. More serious off roader version of the above. Much lighter and with a punchier motor, but still with 6-volt electrics. *Verdict: Rare.*

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.

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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. Updated in 95 with more modern looks. *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.*

TT600 (updated): a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Latest version of the above now available with an electric start. Much more modern styling includes USD forks, still only available as a grey import.

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 trail-able. *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 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

Honda XR500 1981, newly painted orange, 10 months MOT, 9 gallon tank, twin headlamp, Supertrapp, Amal carb, KX forks and wheel and disc brake, Marzocchi air shocks,



Dresden box section swingarm, new camchain and tensioner, new clutch and springs plus many new parts, only £1,200 ono. Tel 01277 810614 or 0836 702871 (Tony).

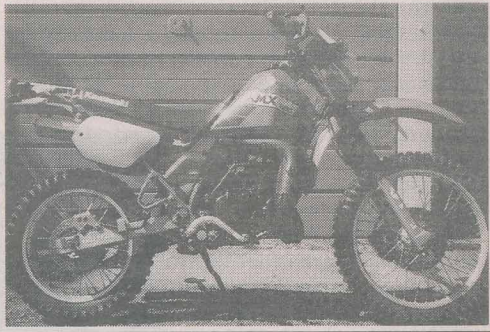
TWO Yamaha TY250 twin shocks for sale, one just had complete overhaul including £250 spent on engine, for sale at £375 ono, the other in good working order at £235 ono. Tel 01756 752169 (Bob).

Honda CR125R 1991 road registered, MOT'd, taxed, etc, for enduro/road use. Excellent condition £1,275 ono. Consider 200/350 four stroke trail/enduro in p/x XL, XR, etc. Tel 01803 665254 (Devon).

KDX125 1990, off road only, motocross tyres, well checked over, goes well. Tel 01578 750334 (Scottish Borders).

Kawasaki KLR250 1990 G-reg, 15,000 miles, fsh, T & T, DEP exhaust, standard, spare new rear tyre, new chain and brake shoes, no off road use. £1,000. Tel 01489 896755 (Southampton area).

Kawasaki KMX200 H-reg, May 91, full MOT, years tax, recent battery, 'O' ring chain, only 4,000 miles, vgc, £1,400 ono. Tel 01642 712713 (North Yorks area).



Suzuki PE250X 1982 very good clean condition, many new parts, including clutch, tyres, r/shocks, piston, black in colour, on/off road bike £700 ono. Tel 01727 827262 (Dean after 6pm).

Yamaha DTR125 1989, YPVS, White Power forks, carbon fibre silencer, new big end, main bearings rebore, suspension bearings, too many new parts to list, excellent condition £850. Tel 01287 634972.

Yamaha XT600 Tenere 1984, rebuilt engine, reliable, spare cosmetics £1,100. Honda XL600LM A bit tired and scruffy but runs well £750. Tel

Classified ads

01225 467269 (days) 0181 6760521 (weekends).

Yamaha WR200 L-reg, service history, assorted spares, fair condition £1,725 ono Tel 01633 852163 (Newport, Gwent).

Suzuki DR750S 89, F-reg, red, 17 K, mls, T&T, vgc, rarely used £1,850 or consider smaller enduro/trail bike as p/x. Tel 01466 793916 (Huntley, Scotland).

Kawasaki 125 Enduro 1989, uprated shox, Renthals, DEP, Acerbis rally guards, very reliable, quick, great entry level bike, many spares, complete with single bike trailer £700 ono. Tel 01428 641446.

Yamaha Tenere 600 1988, new tax and MOT £1,550. Tel 01179 600614 (Bristol).

Suzuki DR600 1986, taxed and tested, 21,000 miles, vgc £1,250 ono. Tel 01768 881372.

Yamaha TDR250 YPVS, E-reg, 14,000 miles, blue and yellow, taxed 3/96, tested 7/96, splendid nick, check out the review £1,500 no offers. Tel 0191 3884754 (Eves).

Honda CL250S Don't believe the guide! It's a super fun bike, Y-reg but very clean and low mileage £995. Tel 01274 541384 Tony after 6pm).

Yamaha XT350 L-reg, full power, excellent condition, under 4000

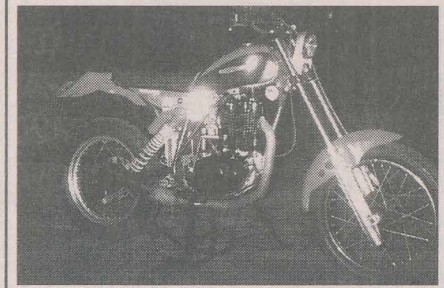
miles, fast and nimble, house purchase forces sale £2,400 ono may take p/x. Tel 01606 737477 (two minutes off J6 M18).

Cagiva WMX500DE original tyres, very little use, best in UK, one owner, registered, taxed, awesome, anti social, very, very exclusive, read issue two for profile, offers.



Tel 01422 357005 (Tim. Yorkshire)

XT500 fitted in Husqvarna frame, twin shock, good condition, very reliable, new tyres, taxed, long MOT, recent chain and sprockets £700. Tel 01684 773257.

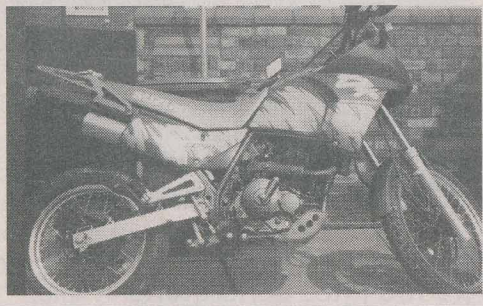


Kawasaki KLR600 Electric start, 12,000 miles, 1989, T&T, vgc, new rear tyre, sprockets, f/r pads, stainless brake hose, recent service

Classified ads

£1,400 may p/x recent Africa twin/Tiger + cash. Tel 01229 584543.

Suzuki DR650 K-reg, 1993, some cosmetic damage but looks good and rides perfect, no faults 10,000 miles, £1,700 ovno, helmets, boots, leather jackets, gloves, as new, negotiable. Tel 01942 745805 (Lancs).



SPARES

Yamaha DTR front end complete 41mm forks, good disc, etc, etc, £150. Also DTR 125cc 1992 engine getting ready for piston but otherwise vgc, £120 ono. Tel 01756 752169 (Bob. North Yorks).

Tyres, new Avon Gripsters AM24 300 x 21, £20. 400 x 18 £30. As new Barum ED9T 90/90 x 21 £20. 120/90 x 17 £25. Used once Dunlop D903 140/80 x 17 £30. Tel 01734 781850 (Wokingham).

DR350 17 litre Acerbis petrol tank with taps etc £60. Army made alu-

minium panniers fit over petrol tank, very strong £75. Centre stand, steel £30. Tel 01206 825408 (Colchester).

Armstrong MT500 spares, rolling chassis with documents, Marzocchi forks, 42mm/230mm drum, seat, tank, panniers, lights, cables, etc. Tel 0402 106490 (Dave. Anytime).

Yamaha IT465 engine plus carb, in working order. Also another engine in bits £85. Side panels £10. IT490 Alloy tank £15 March. Tel 01354 59046.

WANTED

Wanted XT600E or Tenere crashed/blown up or just frame, electrics and plastic. Also C15 chassis for trials project.

Wanted Suzuki TS100 1972-75 (pear shape tank), any condition considered, good price offered. Tel 01481 46571 (Mark, after 6pm).

Wanted XR250 Honda road legal, anything considered, no Q plate, cash waiting. Tel 01283 224755 (Eves) 01283 215866 (Day. Jeff).

Wanted Suzuki SP400 parts for restoration project. Anything considered including a whole bike. Tel 01202 747619.

Wanted for Honda XL250S 1979,

Classified

exhaust system or pipes only, rectifier, inner rear m/guard, plus WHY. Tel 01803 665254 (Torbay, Devon).

Wanted Yamaha DT125R any condition. Tel 01314 680365.

Wanted KLR650A complete engine or bottom end of engine or just crankcases. Tel 01332 382790/205120 (Derby).

Wanted XT600 Tenere, must be in very good condition, will travel to buy the right bike, upto £2,000 cash. Tel 01306 713240 (Eves. John).

Wanted road legal trials or trail bike, 175cc to 350cc, late 1970's - 1980's. Tel 01946 810974.

Wanted 125cc or 175cc trail or off road bike, reasonable condition preferable, upto £150. Tel 01482 641720 (David. after 7pm).

Wanted Yamaha DT125/Suzuki TS125 complete and ready to go, Hampshire area, 1 - 2 years old, good price paid for good condition bike. Tel 01703 436767 (Southampton).

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DEEP

SOUTH II

Posted out to the Falkland Islands and determined not to stop riding Phil Berrecloth completes his tour with a visit to Saunders Island. A remote colony with a population of just seven

During our four month tour of duty in the Falklands we were entitled to a period of rest and recuperation (R&R). This normally takes the form of four days plus a weekend during which you can just kick around, stay with a local family or visit one of the outlying islands renowned for their natural beauty and wildlife. We weren't too keen on bird spotting but Saunders Island held other attractions of the trail riding kind.

The island lies a few miles off the north coast of West Falkland, is approximately ten miles by five, and populated by its owner David and six other members of his family. David it turned out is a keen motorcyclist and suggested if we could get the bikes there we would find the riding exciting and varied.

Fortunately the only Chinook helicopter on the islands was calling into Saunders a few days before our R&R on a routine training flight. They were soon convinced there was room for our bikes, kit, food, beer and fuel and promptly delivered it to the accommodation building. Nice chaps!. We arrived two days later in the Islander taxi aircraft which is when we got our first glimpse of the terrain. The island is rough, tree-less with steep mountains and rolling valleys, not to mention beautiful white beaches where the land meets a vivid turquoise sea.

David offered to show us some of the local beauty spots as an introduction. He informed us rather casually that this was his island and his rules applied, and there weren't any! So with no possibility of tres-

passing, upsetting anybody or bumping into any ramblers he set off on his ageing XL500S with no appreciable exhaust pipe and riding lidless at what seemed like a ridiculously high speed.

The paths and tracks were quite rocky requiring a fair degree of concentration, the KLR happily plodded up any slope while

Ralph, my travelling companion's KDX seemed to fly up them. The scenery was superb but travelling at speed made it difficult to view without becoming part of it.

We managed to keep up with David for the seven or eight miles to the area called the neck. This is a strip of land 4-500 yards wide between two mountains and the sea on either side. Following close behind David and having learnt to listen to his exhaust note to give notice of jumping another of the innumerable streams we suddenly pulled to a halt. It was then I realised that right next to me was a bull elephant seal the size of a Transit van. I'd heard that the wildlife around here was not afraid of humans - I suppose when you're two tons of muscle and blubber with a fishy steam that emanates from both ends there isn't much to be afraid of.

Anyway when he got stropky we moved out with the front wheels lifting. On the return David convinced us to attempt a shortcut over the top of a mountain but Ralph dropped the KDX which broke the clutch lever handlebar clamp. It wasn't his day because a bit

further on a gust of wind blew Ralph's KDX into a huge rock puncturing the radiator. We managed to get going again, bypassing the damaged radiator with the existing pipes and a magic marker pen. The bike seemingly happy enough to run on a single rad for the rest of the trip.

and we quickly reached a point where it was impossible to turn around we descended a steep and extremely narrow cliff path and it was at this point that I realised that it was not heights that worried me - it was widths.... or lack of them.

We spent five days riding around the

Phil abandons his bike to ogle the birds!



On the second day we decided to explore the island without David's assistance. The snow held off so with minimal kit, and a radio we set off towards Penarrow point - a large beach separated from the rest of the island by a range of hills. The eight mile ride was the stuff trail riding is made of; firm smooth turf, dirt tracks, numerous shallow streams and dozens of small hills to climb. Alongside us the clear blue ocean sported penguins and other exotic sea birds.

Riding back along the rocky coast the steep hillside rapidly turned into a cliff

island over tough and varied terrain, and despite the KDX being blown over once more by the Chinook whilst being collected, it still went on to win one leg of the Darwin Senior Motocross meeting in October 1994 (the most southerly race meeting in the world). The KLR managed to clock up over 1500 dirty miles in the four months and is now in regular use on the lanes of South Wales.

As an investment both bikes have been worth the money, as a source of enjoyment and release they were life savers.

TRAIL TALES...

TOM ISITT RECOUNTS A TAIL OF DRUNKENNESS AND DISASTER IN THE HIGH PYRENEES

It was every red-blooded male's dream come true. After a hot and sweaty day off-road riding high in the Pyrenees, an attractive French nurse was easing me out of my clothing as I reclined on my bed. Unfortunately my bed had wheels, and the delightful nurse promptly wheeled me off to the X-ray department where a shattered collarbone, three broken ribs and a partially collapsed lung were diagnosed. Tilt...Game over.

The idea was a good one — explore the off-road potential of a variety of vehicles in the Pyrenees. The planning was immaculate — a Suzuki DR350, a Yamaha XTZ660, a BMW R100GS, and a Nissan Terrano 4x4 support vehicle were rounded up, ferries and hotels were booked, time-off from work arranged. It was the execution that let us down — sheer stupidity and pilot-error were to blame for the sad assortment of broken bones, cuts and bruises, and dented machinery that limped home to Blighty a week later.

Being a city-dweller, for whom the opportunities for riding a trailbike are limited to high curbs, the lure of some serious mountains, good weather and great food was very strong. And being the Editor of what, at the time, was Britain's best motorcycle magazine (*ahem...., of course TrailBike Magazine wasn't in existence then - Ed*), I was in a perfect position to make it happen. Mud, sweat and beers in the Pennines is all well and good, but I longed for dust in my throat, the sun on my back and haute cuisine in my belly. The Pyrenees beckoned.

It was a long and boring ride down, but when we arrived the scenery on the French side, in the Ariège valley, was fantastic. On the first day the sun was shining, the sky was blue and the mountains rose enticingly above us. Time for some trail riding.

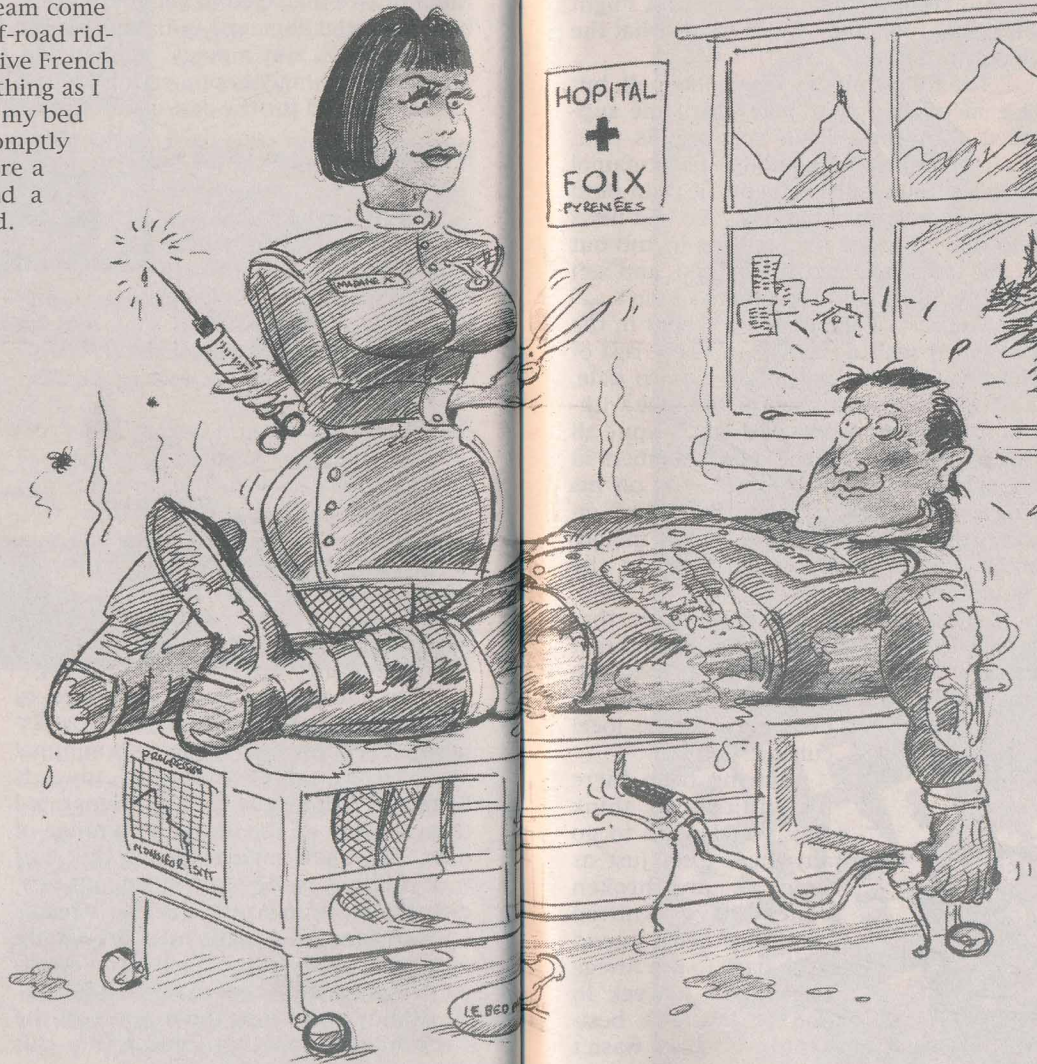


Illustration John Keogh

Having driven through Andorra, a country that would be staggeringly beautiful were it not for the high-rise ski apartments and the endless sprawl of duty-free shops, we arrived at Oss de Civis, a charming little village where the tarmac ran out and the dirt began. The first couple of miles, through impenetrable pine, were murder, having been carved up by heavy 4x4 use in bad weather. The resultant ruts, up to two feet deep, had been baked

by the spring sunshine into mud as hard as concrete. The bikes coped with it relatively easily, being small and agile enough to steer around them, and the climb was worth it, because when we broke out into the open at the top of the valley the views were stunning and the track became a more manageable scree of loose rocks and dirt.

At an altitude of 2300 metres the air was thin and the riding hard work, but this is what we had come for. To get tired, hungry and dirty in some of the most spectacular scenery Europe had to offer. My creaking Anglo-Saxon bones soaked up the bountiful sunshine, and looking across an alpine meadow covered in a blanket of yellow flowers to the mountains beyond, made me realise why we use our bikes to escape the madding crowds below. We spent a delightful afternoon riding on the roof of Europe, savouring the pure air, the solitude, the silence.

As the sun began to sink behind the mountains we decided we should head for

AFTER A HOT AND SWEATY DAY'S RIDING AN ATTRACTIVE FRENCH NURSE WAS EASING ME OUT OF MY CLOTHING

home, contented with the day's riding and looking forward to a large beer and serious carbohydrate intake that evening. Pottering gently through the most rutted part of the track I managed to drop the back wheel of the DR into one of the deep ruts and the front into another. The resultant get-off was exquisitely, excruciatingly, breathtakingly painful. I landed hard on my wallet (*er...., surely left shoulder - Ed*), on the rock-hard track and smacked my head on the ground so hard that for moment

I didn't know where I was.

When my brain had resumed normal service I realised that I had not taken a breath for some while. I struggled for the best part of a minute to drag air into my

lungs, and when I finally managed it I wished I hadn't. Lying in a crumpled heap, with pain searing through my left side, I knew I was badly crocked. The others caught up with me as I lay there groaning, and plied me with intelligent questions such as 'What happened?' and 'Are you alright?'

I assured them that I wasn't lying down because I was tired or because I wanted to examine a particularly interesting type of beetle found only in remote parts of the mountains I had - I informed them - fallen off my motorbike and as a result I was feeling a little poorly, so perhaps they would be so kind as to take me to the nearest 'kin hospital - NOW! As there was no blood worth speaking of, and no bones poking through the skin, the rest of the crew mumbled things under their breaths about big girls blouses and set about kicking the DR350 straight.

I was loaded into the Nissan, the co-driver took over the remains of the DR350, and we bounced slowly down the mountain, my body hurting more with each rut and pothole. During the nightmarish three-hour journey to the hospital in Foix I pondered my luck - without a 4x4 back-up vehicle I could have been up there half the night before help arrived to get me down. In a state of shock, and without proper survival gear, it would have been a very uncomfortable night.

The service at the hospital was exceptional - quick and very efficient. I did feel a bit sorry for the nurse who had to remove my motocross boots and jeans after I'd spent a strenuous day in the saddle - even Graham gagged slightly as they came off.

They X-rayed me and even gave me an ultra-sound scan to see if there was any internal

bleeding. There wasn't, but Graham tells me that I'm expecting twins and that my liver looks in a pretty bad way. Ho ho ho!

Having diagnosed three broken ribs, a shattered collarbone, and a partially collapsed lung, the lovely French nurses sent me off with a prescription for serious painkillers and advice to drink lots of wine. I couldn't help but feel that might be a little foolhardy, but if that's what the doctor ordered...

The following day I hurt like hell, but one member of our party kept me supplied with some little yellow pills that, when combined with enough paracetamol to kill a bull elephant, kept the pain (and reality) temporarily at bay. The bad news was that I needed help getting in and out of the bath, and getting dressed, and as I was the Editor and the others weren't.....

The rest of the week was spent in the passenger seat of the Nissan as the rest of the crew blasted up hill and down dale, having a thoroughly enjoyable time without me barking orders at them. Despite all our injuries (one of the other members in the party managed to lop the top off his finger on the first day, another fell off on a big patch of diesel), we all felt invigorated and uplifted by the week in the mountains.

The Pyrenees seems to have that affect. I can't think of many places that can match them for scenery, off-road riding, the friendliness of the natives and the excellence of the local cuisine.

Having been there it's difficult to think why you'd want to go anywhere else. Just as soon as my broken bones have knitted back together I intend to go back to the Ariège for longer. A week in one of Europe's best-kept secrets just wasn't enough.



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