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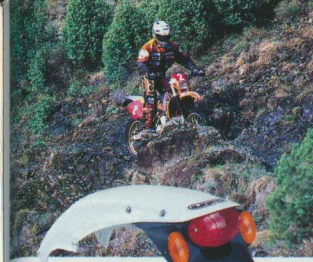
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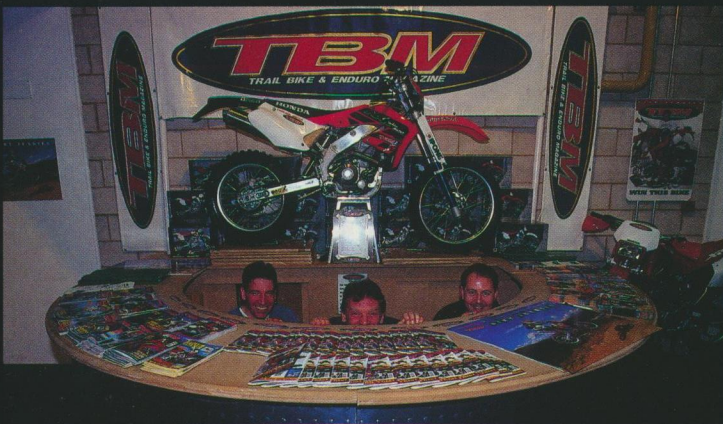
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Welcome to what is undoubtedly a very unusual edition of TBM. It looks a bit different because it is a bit different. Wintertime is the season when traditionally (funds allowing) we try to change our trail bikes. And with this in mind we felt that the time was right to thoroughly update the TBM Trail Bike Guide and include it in this special January 2001 issue. This guide is our best effort to sum up trail and enduro bikes past and present in a few short but succinct words. We've tried to include all the bikes we can think of, but inevitably there isn't space to list out every single model variation (particularly when it comes to competition bikes). For that reason we've grouped together certain models and treated them collectively, and that has allowed us the space to thoroughly update the guide with all the information we've amassed over the past five and a half years of testing. We hope you find the guide useful not just when considering buying secondhand, but also as a way of cross-referencing the bikes we test each month.

The other thing you'll find in this special 'Collectors Issue'!! of TBM are four of the best Trail Tales we've ever published. We wanted to find a way of beginning the new year with something amusing; and trawling back through the TBM archives we came across a number of superb tall stories from the world of off-roading. Each of these Trail Tales comes from an issue which is now out of print (there are no back issues available) but we felt they were too good to resist giving them a second airing. We dusted down the original cartoons (which were drawn in black & white), sent them back to the illustrator and asked him to colour them in for us. Then we reprinted all four of them in glorious technicolour. We reckon they're sooooo good that even if you've been a TBM reader from issue one, you'll appreciate giving them a second reading.

If you're reading this in the middle of January and wondering why your issue of TBM didn't arrive at the beginning of the month, then you'll doubtless already realise that that we had a thoroughly outrageous Christmas and New Year after all. Normal service will be resumed next month (we hope), with TBM reverting back to its traditional slot at the beginning of each month, as well as its current format of news, reviews, multi-tests and tall tales from the weird world of off-road riding.

Before I leave you to read the rest of the mag however, let me tell you that this year we've got an even more action-packed agenda planned. Apart from testing all the latest machinery, we'll also be mixing it up with a number of multi-bike shootouts, a sprinkling of secondhand machinery, a new series on getting started for beginners, more trail tips and technical articles on how to improve your riding skills, long-term testing a mixture of two and four-stroke machinery (both new and secondhand, big and small trailies), we'll be sampling some supermotos, starting work on a new project bike (project KLX300R is alive and kicking) and we'll be entering a trail bike in the world's toughest enduro - the Gilles Lalay Classic. Don't miss a single issue... **Si Melber**

Edited & produced by:
Si Melber

Contributors:
Paul Blezard, Dave Cornish,
Chris Evans, Clive Garnham,
Debs Melber, Ted Melber,
Si Pavey, John Rushworth

Designed by:
Andy Riley

Editorial Address:
TBM
PO Box 9845
London W13 9WP

Tel/Fax
(10am-6pm Mon-Fri):
0208 840 4760

Advertising Manager:
Keith Jones
01225 426600

Distributed by
Seymour:
0207 396 8000

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Doing the Rounds

Paul Blez spends a sunny December day out with the lads from 'Brizzel'

Usually, this 'Doing the Rounds' started on a Friday night at Keynsham Rugby club. It was nearly 10.30pm by the time I breezed into the Bristol TRF's annual Christmas party but to my huge relief there was still something left to eat. As I tucked in to quiche and vols au vent, bizarrely bewigged trail riders shook their booties and strutted their funky stuff on the dance floor with an attractive assortment of wives and girlfriends. It was clear that these lads were not the archetypal flat cap and pipe brigade of modern (and usually false) TRF legend.

At least my late arrival ensured a sensible level of alcohol consumption so the early start next morning wasn't too much of a shock to the system. My host and guide for the day was Pete Hopes, chairman of Bristol TRF and we met up

with Tim Frost and Steve 'can't wheelie' Cousins at the local café before riding right across Bristol on tarmac. The first trail was a RUPP a stone's throw from the M5's Gordano services where the rest of the group were already waiting.

The sun was miraculously beating down which was just as well because most of the lanes were soaking wet and some looked more like rivers than trails. The first was a case in point. Imagine a classic sunken lane with steep sides in a tunnel of trees, but with 18 inches of running water stretching from bank to bank and continuing up hill for about three quarters of a mile.

We rode south west to the edge of Nailsea before heading south towards Bristol airport then east for lunch in Winford before continuing anti-clockwise back to Keynsham. Amazingly we were never more than about ten miles from the centre of Bristol yet never met a single walker all day.

Most of the trails we rode in the morning were in the new unitary district of North Somerset which used to be the south west corner of the now-disbanded Avon County Council. Most of these lanes were clearly marked as RUPPS but the words 'Road Used as Public Path' were not spelt out in full and to confuse non-clued up users further, the words 'Footpath' were added as well, making it less than obvious that they have vehicular rights. To get to one beautiful long and rocky descent through woods we had to go past an impressive sign saying 'Bridal Rights only'. Somehow you just know that an incorrectly spelt sign (bridal instead of bridle) is unlikely to have the full authority of the law!

There were great views from the hills across the Bristol Channel to the new Severn Bridge and a double dose of fording to be done at Gable Farm. We had some fun and games on the slippery climb at Brockley Comb where Pete got stuck on his DRZ and baulked all the riders immediately behind. Bob got a clean pass on his faithful steed 'Doris the DR350', only to spin and crash to the ground at the crest of the hill.

I managed to crash shortly afterwards on what was probably the easiest lane we did all day, but the lads seemed to appreciate my unwitting effort to put them at their ease. 'You can't imagine how much better we feel now you've done that' said Tim Frost as I heaved the CRM back up onto its wheels. There were wide open green spaces on Freeman's Common and more tricky climbs providing great views across the Bristol conurbation before we stopped for an early lunch at the Prince of Waterloo in Winford. They had no objection to our muddy boots on the stone flagged floor and there was real ale served from traditional cask barrels behind the bar but it was actually warm and sunny enough to sit outside. Hallelujah!



Pete Hopes, Chairman of Bristol TRF tackles a sunny Cotswold lane...



A tricky rock step on a lane south of Bristol...



Some of the 'Brizzel' lads...

At lunch we were joined by a couple of other trail riders on a DR250 and a DR-Z who'd spotted our bikes. The OS map was studied and trails discussed while we waited for the food to arrive. After lunch we rode mostly in the adjacent chunk of ex-Avon which is now known as Bath and North East Somerset. The local authority's name may not exactly trip off the tongue but they have got their act together where rights of way are concerned and most of their trails have been upgraded to well-signed Byways.

One of the first lanes we rode had finally made it to byway status only after a hard-fought public inquiry in the teeth of fierce opposition from the neighbouring farmer. The Bristol lads call it 'Mad Axeman's Lane' because he used to stride up and down threatening riders with an axe!

It was certainly the most technically difficult trail we did all day because the defeated and disgruntled farmer has excavated a sort of 'bear trap' about three feet deep across the whole width of the of the trail, just long enough to fit a bike in. You would have to be Dougie Lampkin to ride through it and we had to manhandle the bikes both in and out of it.

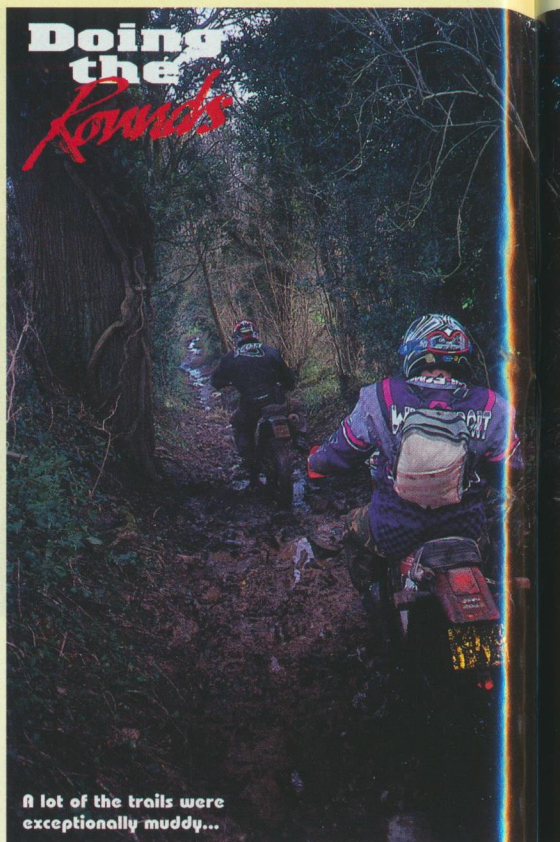
The next lane we rode was actually a section in the Phoenix club's long distance trial which I rode on my trusty XR600 about three years ago and our route coincided with that of the trial several more times before the day was over (although I didn't recognise much of it at the time).

At the bottom of the tricky climb near the village of Butcombe there was a LARA voluntary restraint sign which, it turned out, was several years out of date and had actually been moved from an entirely different lane by local residents wanting to discourage vehicular use! You'd certainly have a job to get any 4WD up it, but we weren't discouraged because Martin Harding happens to be the local LARA rep and knew the score.

One lane that I did remember was the lovely trail known as Ubley Drove with its great views through the trees across Blagdon Lake. From there we did a loop of lanes up on the Downs which were completely different from the ones we'd done earlier - tree lined, mostly flat avenues with the odd 90-degree bend and some very slippery surfaces to keep things interesting. Tim came a cropper on his DR350 and emerged covered in mud from head to toe since his 'mates' took the opportunity to fill him in. We also passed through the old mine workings and remains of a Roman Fort at Charterhouse - the whole region is covered with places of historical and archaeological interest from Roman roads such as the Fosse Way to the ancient Wansdyke earthworks.

I recognised Herriott's Bridge across the man-made Chew Valley Lake and the nearby climb up Burl Edge which is another Phoenix section. Unfortunately I managed to stall Martin's Husky TE410 and it took me ages to restart it. But Martin had even more trouble with the Husky than I had, in what was to prove the last trail of the day.

The byway which runs north from Birchwood House to the village of Woollard is one of the most extraordinary I have ever ridden. It's nicknamed 'Well'ard Woollard' and for good reason. Its winding route coincides with that of a river for about a quarter of a mile for most of which it is three feet deep! Apparently the river used to take an entirely different course, but after the severe flooding of 1968 the local farmer diverted it into the byway, which enabled him to make one nice big field which before had been two smaller ones divided by the stream. It certainly provides



A lot of the trails were exceptionally muddy...

a severe test of any bike's waterproofing, especially in a waterlogged winter like this one.

The stream/byway had a huge tree branch blocking it which the lads removed with much heaving and cursing while I busied myself taking pictures. Pete Hopes then proceeded to ride his DRZ successfully to the end but Martin's Husky conked out about half way through. The team TBM CRM got through without so much as a splutter and created the most amazing 'bow wave' as I blipped the throttle all the way to stop it stalling as the water lapped over the top of the seat in a couple of places.

Several of the boys decided that discretion was the better part of valour and pushed their bikes across the adjacent field while a couple more forded through successfully and one other took on water as Martin's had done.

The subsequent prolonged drying out session lasted until darkness fell so we missed out on the last few lanes around Keynsham. Nevertheless there was further entertainment to be had as Bob and Doris towed the hapless Martin back to Pete's house about three miles away in a series



Steve Cousins fords one of the many river crossings on his XR600R...



Martin Harding, Rights of Way Officer, stops to open a gate on this Byway. His Husky gave up the ghost later in the day...

of heart-stopping shakes and wobbles. Somehow they both managed to stay upright and as we warmed up with mugs of tea in Pete's garage I gleaned a bit more information about my companions for the day...

The Chairman

Pete Hopes has only been in the TRF for three years but has already been chairman of the Bristol group for a year. The softly spoken 37 year old air conditioning engineer has been riding bikes since he acquired a Raleigh Runabout at the age of 14 before moving on to a Honda TL125. In more recent times he had a CRM250 which he traded in for his current DR-Z400E to which he's added proper silencing and a road kit. Pete praised his predecessor Keith Knight who, he said, helped to change the image of Bristol TRF and managed to

'get some fun into it'.

There's usually at least one group out every weekend and they often go further afield into Wales or down to the West Country although as Pete pointed out 'We've actually got three solid days' worth of trail riding just around Bristol without having to back track'. 'We've trail ridden to Salisbury and back in a day, and last summer we went out for 14 hours and 170 miles to Brecon and back'.

The Dedicated Public Inquiry Expert

Martin Harding's life with dirt bikes is divided into two distinct periods. As a young man he used to race in scrambles with the likes of Dave Bickers and the Rickman Brothers: 'I was never any good mind' he adds. He started with a Greeves before moving on to a Bultaco Metisse and finally a Matchless Metisse 'Best bike I ever had'. Then there was a long hiatus while he got side-tracked by rallying and sailing before coming back to bikes and getting into trail riding in his 40s. Now 56, he joined the TRF in 1985 and quickly graduated from humble Honda XLs to a fire-

breathing IT465 Yam. Since then he's had a succession of Husqvarnas ending up with the poky but water-phobic TE410 which drowned at the end of our ride (turned out to be nothing worse than a blown head-gasket).

Although he does a lot of trail riding, Martin must have spent even more time at public inquiries and in painstaking historical research. He has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the lanes in the Bristol area and many others besides. He certainly takes his unpaid job as Bristol group's Rights of Way Officer seriously: 'I've done 46 Public Inquiries and I won the first 38'. As Pete Hopes told me, 'If it weren't for Martin we wouldn't be riding half the lanes that we do'. In recognition of his tireless work the group paid for Harding to have life membership of the TRF a few years back.



This crossing used to be a lot deeper a few years ago...

Road riders have a lot to thank Martin for too because when he was chairman of Avon County Council's Transport Committee he was instrumental in allowing bikes to use Bristol's bus lanes - a precedent which is now promoted as an example to councils all over the UK. He also organises the Bristol club's annual sponsored pushbike ride which raises money for local charities. In between all his unpaid work for the TRF and trail riding, Martin does the odd bit of engineering to keep the wolf from the door.

The Wig-Wearing Truck Driver

I met Bob Chapman for the first time at the Christmas party and he'd had a few drinks and was sporting a wig and fancy dress which made him look like Bristol's answer to Marc Bolan. So I wasn't sure if it was the same bloke when he turned up the following morning in sensible riding gear on his DR350. Bob 42, drives an HGV for Imperial Tobacco for a living, which is a more responsible position than you might imagine since 'A wagon load is worth two million quid'.

Bob's has clearly developed an affection for his faithful old DR350 (known as 'Doris'), and was surprised when I asked him for a spin. In fact Doris was a delight to ride on the road - smooth as silk with excellent handling, although she did get a bit out of shape on the rough stuff. She showed her prowess when it comes to watersports though, by wading through the waist-high hell that was 'Woollard' while others conked out all around.

The Electrician

Paul Andrews, 37, has just spent 18 months rewiring The Steam Railway Museum at Swindon but his job for Bristol TRF is Group Rep. This means he gets to field the enquiries from would-be new members, not to mention all the eejits who phone up and say: 'I don't want to join the TRF, can you just mark up a map for me?' Paul's main trail bike is yet another DR350 which also drowned in the last trail but came back to life after a careful emptying. He also owns a BSA Victor 441 which he claims is 'beautiful to ride' in Long Distance Trials and Pre-65 events. Paul did the Weston Beach Race on an enduro-ised CR250 and owns a Kawasaki ZX9 road bike. He also keeps a Triumph Bonneville in his bedroom and says he has 'a very understanding wife'. Clearly.

The Software-sorting Pilot

At 32, Jason Bamford is one of the younger members of Bristol TRF but he's actually the one with the longest unbroken membership of the Fellowship. He joined as a mere boy of 16 when he buzzed up and down the trails on a Kawasaki AE50. Nowadays he rides a Honda XR400 but also owns a GPZ600 road bike and recently bought a KX125 'crosser on which to do the Weston beach race. He used to have a Cagiva Elefant 'but the wife threw it down the road' and she also rides a Serow (sounds like my kind of woman!). Jason certainly seems to have crammed a lot into his short life. He works as some sort of



The TBM CRM coped well with the numerous water crossings...

software trouble-shooter for IBM and has to fly all over the world for his job but he also has a private pilot's licence and was all set to fly some of the lads up to the Dirt Bike Show until bad weather put the kybosh on the idea.

The Waterboard Man

Dave Holt deserved some sort of medal for dedication to trail riding since he was out all night on an emergency call before coming straight out on the trails with us. (He must have been sick of the sight of water by the end of the day!)

His official job title is 'Trunk Mains Inspector' and he's only been riding for three of his 34 years. He was the first in the club to own a CRM but like several others had a few problems with it - ironically his suffered failure of both the water pump seal and balancer shaft. He now owns a WR400 with a CRD pipe and looked very tidy on it for such a relative newcomer.

The Locksmith

Tim Frost is another Bristol TRF club member who's suffered from CRM problems. Tim got through two CRMs although one of them was comprehensively drowned in a visit to the notori-

ous Strata Florida in mid Wales. He now rides a trusty H-reg DR350 which came from a member of the neighbouring Wiltshire TRF. 'So I knew it hadn't had a hard life 'cos they only ride when the sun's out'. His locksmithing skills were required on one occasion when someone turned up for a weekend away, having left the keys to their bike at home - he got them out of trouble without damaging the locks.

The Whistling, non-Wheelie-ing Builder

Steve Cousins started trail riding on a ubiquitous XR250 and then moved up rather ambitiously to an XR600 which he found a bit of a handful. Now 39, he's ended up with a compromise XR400 and also has a Kawasaki ZX6 road bike. I was impressed by his comprehensive toolkit he carried which included both a compass and a whistle: 'For the Monk's Trod in the fog'. Steve admitted rather sheepishly that, try as he might, he just can't get the knack of pulling wheelies.

Andy One Ear

I met Andy Mounter at the Christmas party but didn't see him the next day because he was leading another Bristol group in the opposite direction and our paths never crossed. Andy was only one of another eight run leaders which the Bristol group can call upon in addition to Pete and Martin, which certainly helps to spread the responsibility. Andy was clearly a little irresponsible in his youth however since he confessed that he lost his missing ear when he rolled his new car with five people in it. By a miracle his was the worst injury and the other lads call him '18 months' - 'because he's only got an ear and a half' (Geddit? - You have to hear it in a Bristol accent). Andy's one of the few members to have stuck with his CRM.

Lessons Learned: Even the easiest trail requires a certain minimum of concentration if you want to avoid embarrassing yourself. And when Bristolians say 'look' they don't usually mean it. It's just an interjection they put at the end of most sentences instead of 'y'know'; as in, 'It's got six gears, look.'

Thanks: Many thanks to Pete and Julie Hopes for hospitality above the call of duty, and to all the Bristol TRF for a great day out.

The Bristol TRF meet on the fourth Monday of the month at Keynsham Rugby club, Bristol Road, Keynsham. Group Rep Paul Andrews: 01179 659255.

Trail Tales

Paul Blezard recounts a spooky ghost story...



Illustration: John Keogh

The worst thing about MCC long distance trials, as any veteran will tell you, is the ride home after a night and a day in the saddle. In 1983 I'd entered my first Land's End Trial completely alone and had neither friend nor spouse to meet me at the end. All I had was the address of an obscure farmhouse in Devon, (of which more later).

The start of my trial was so disastrous that I nearly had to abort the mission before I even got to the first time check. At my first petrol stop I'd managed to slice open the index finger of my right hand while fiddling with the handlebar wuff with a knife (don't ask me what I was trying to do, I can't even remember). Fortunately the petrol station attendant produced a first aid kit and bandaged up the copiously bleeding digit, although my glove no longer fitted over it.

Things went much better after this rather inauspicious beginning and while I was in no danger of winning an award, I got up all the sections one way or another and apart from the need to take one of my customary road-side kips at 5am, had a most enjoyable ride on my trusty Honda XR500. I felt tired but satisfied by the time the trial ended at Cornwall's westernmost cape on the Easter Saturday afternoon. However, on that weekend in 1983 the weather took a severe turn for the worse. The barometer didn't so much fall as plummet, as an icy blast swept in from Siberia.

Typically, I had been faffing around not paying much attention to the clock but as the temperature continued to drop and nightfall approached, the idea of riding all the way back to London became increasingly unattractive. The adrenaline charge from doing the event had long since worn off and my wounded finger was now beginning to throb like a big bass drum.

My only hope of salvation lay in finding the obscure farmhouse mentioned at the beginning of this tale, where some mates of mine from university were having a weekend away with their girlfriends. Being a gregarious sort of chap I had thought it would be fun to pay them a surprise visit on the way back to London so had managed to obtain their whereabouts from the mother of one of their girlfriends, who had wisely ensured that she knew

where her darling daughter was staying, just in case.... But she didn't have the phone number. In fact, thinking about it, I don't think there even was a phone! It's important for this story to understand that none of the friends in question,

or their girlfriends, had the faintest idea that I even knew where they were staying, let alone that I might drop in on them.

The place in question was an old farm worker's building with an address that was something like 'Countryman's Cottage, Futtock's Farm, near Wurzeleton, North Devon'. Anyway, by the time the first snow started falling it had long since become clear to me that far from being an optional stop on the way home, it was essential to find my way to Futtock's Farm if I was going to avoid freezing to death that night.

On the last few miles to Wurzeleton the snow was falling in earnest. My headlight, which was useless even in favourable conditions, now did no more than light up the snowflakes as they filled the sky like tracer bullets on a WWII bomber raid. There was a distinct paucity of cars to follow too, and I suddenly seemed to be the only vehicle on the road. The snow was settling firmly on the ground and my cruising speed on the winding, unlit, ill-painted back roads of Devon was soon reduced to that of a biddy on a bicycle.

By the time I stopped at the first pub in Wurzeleton it was about half past ten at night and the true obscurity of the farm I was seeking became clear when I discovered that none of the locals ensconced inside had even heard of the place. They suggested that I try the other pub in the village. When I enquired at Pub number two, with my glasses freshly steamed up, the mention of Futtock's Farm seemed to raise a glimmer of recognition in the eye of a gentleman at the bar. He called another local over: 'Ere Bill' he said with an accent so thick you could've cut it with a knife, 'You'm know where Futtock's Farm be wouldn't you?'

'Oo-arr', said Bill, (or words to that effect) as he peered with a distant look over the top of his pint of scrumpy: 'Futtock's Farm, that's a tricky one - that be a hard place to find, that be', but he went on to give me detailed directions (naturally I didn't have a map).

I've always prided myself on my navigation and sense of direction and with the added incentive of terminal hypothermia if I got lost, I carefully committed his directions to memory.

By now it was nearly 11pm on this Easter Saturday, I'd been up for more than 40 hours and my destination was still several miles away. I felt like Captain Oates from Scott's ill-fated 1912 expedition to the Antarctic as I bid the locals goodbye and strode out into the blizzard. I felt like saying 'I may be quite some time', but restrained myself.

Fortunately, the local yokel's directions seemed to correspond well with reality and after many twists and turns down hedge-lined lanes with the snow-flakes being reflected back at me, I finally

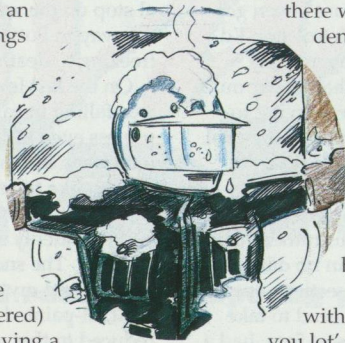
Trail Tales

came upon an untarmaced lane. I prayed that I'd followed the instructions correctly and that this was

indeed the turn off for Futtock's Farm. I then seemed to ride for miles down the dirt track but finally, after what seemed like an age, the silhouette of some buildings hove into view.

I parked up and identified what had to be the guest cottage, around to the side and behind the main farmhouse. As I walked up to the stout wooden door I wondered what sort of reception I would get from my mates and their companions.....

Meanwhile, inside the old stone cottage, (as I subsequently discovered) my university chums had been having a jolly evening together and were as snug as bugs in rugs in front of the open fire. They'd enjoyed a good meal washed down with plenty of alcohol and had been amusing themselves by telling each other spooky ghost stories with post-prandial booze-fuelled bonhomie. By a strange coinci-



dence, just prior to my arrival, one of them had been telling the tale of a local deep sea diver who had disappeared in mysterious circumstances whilst on a top secret mission, and who was rumoured to haunt the local area.

They had not heard the gentle put-putting of the XR coming up the lane, it was getting on for midnight on a freezing cold Easter Saturday night, they were deep in the heart of Devon and

there was a blizzard outside... When suddenly... *there was a knock at the door.*

When the door opened (straight into the main room) I saw six terrified faces all looking as if they'd seen a ghost. The ghost of a deep sea diver in fact. I suppose it wasn't surprising really - after all, here was a man covered in snow wearing bulky gear, a balaclava and a full-face helmet.

When I finally took off my helmet with a cheery 'God am I glad to see you lot' a mixture of relief and disbelief filled their faces. My friend Iain said, 'Blez! I can't believe it! How on earth did you find us? I don't even know where we are!'

I need hardly add that I slept very soundly that night in the creaking old cottage, though I don't think many of my friends slept a wink...

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Out of Africa

Beauty, claims Alex Marr, is in the eye of the beholder

Before I despatched this piece to TBM's dedicated team of tireless sub-editors, I asked my girlfriend to read it over and tell me what she thought of it.

'Some people might not like this' she said diplomatically, 'it's not exactly PC is it?'

Well maybe not but then there's nothing like a bit of political incorrectness to get a cheap laugh and get certain readers all steamed up (as you may well have discovered after seeing last month's cover). And if it narks off a few loony feminists on the way then, well... so much the better.

So here goes. I was in the pub the other day and overheard a bloke telling his mate about how he'd become 'intimate' with a young lady the previous weekend. He explained how she hadn't lived up to his normal standards and that regrettably she was a bit of a 'boiler' with a face like a 'bag full of spanners'. However towards the end of his story he described, in

some detail I should add, how she 'went like a train' - which given the parlous state of the UK's rail industry right now, seems like a bit of a contradiction in terms.

However it got me thinking about how nearly all these laddish expressions describing the fairer sex, use comparisons with machinery of one sort or another. Moreover all the phrases are of a less-than-complimentary nature. So being the nice chap that I am I tried to think of some machinery-inspired figures of speech in common use that are rather more flattering. Given that there are some pretty beautiful bits of hardware out there these days, I thought there would be at least a few phrases comparing women to bikes and cars. But I was saddened to discover that apart from the usual 'she had more curves than a Ferrari', I couldn't think of a single one.

And so, thanks to the irrational thought processes that only alcohol can induce, I found myself trying to work out if I had to compare a beautiful woman to a dirt bike, which one (dirt bike that is) would it be? Which bike to my mind is the most elegant, the most alluring - the one that turns heads through looks alone. First I decided to cross all two-strokes off my list simply on the grounds that the huge fat exhaust pipe bulging out of the front of the engine just doesn't look that attractive to me (a bit like Blez's permanent spare tyre around his middle). So I turned my attention to four-strokes and ran through the hot thumpers on the market today.

Honda XR650 - too lumpy, XR400 - okay but a bit boring, KTM's EXC400 - orange doesn't do it for me, same goes for CCM and grey. Kawasaki's bright green KLX makes me queasy, Husky's yellow and blue looks quite neat, Husabergs appear nice and slim but look like they've just landed from outer space, whereas Suzuki's DR-Z400 is simply a plain-Jane. Yamaha's new slimline WR400s are nearly there, but for me the winner by a metric mile is the VOR. These machines are as close to sex on two wheels as you can get.

Physically they are the biking equivalent of an Olympic athlete - slim yet powerful, not an ounce of fat on a hard lean body. Style-wise they just ooze sex appeal - the colour, the lines, the perfect proportions, all conspire to create a machine so close to aesthetic perfection that the designers should win the Turner Prize for modern art. If a VOR was a woman it would be Naomi Campbell. No question.

Now before I get carried away I should point out that I've never actually seen a VOR in the flesh never mind ridden one, but that's my

point, they inspire lust. This is the bike James Bond would ride on secret missions, a bike so cool it could snap knicker elastic at 50m.

To check my theory I thought of ringing the General Manager of the Four-Stroke Department in the European Section of the TBM Testing Division (jammy Clive Garnham) who late last year flew out to Italy to test the 2001 VORs. I wanted to ask him whether he'd had hordes of Italian floozies banging on the door of his five-star hotel room after seeing him ride the black beauties. Then I remembered Clive's eccentric trait of using female-hygiene products as automatic brow-moppers. I imagined him removing his helmet to reveal a sweat-drenched sanitary towel stuck to his forehead and realised this would have nullified any sex appeal that the VOR had temporarily imbued him with. I tried calling him anyway but the TBM automated voice mail informed me he was too busy filling in his accountant to speak to me.

This month's token reference to Africa to give the column a tenuous connection to its title is this: In preparing my XR400 for its Africa trip I actually paid quite a lot of attention to how it looked. This might sound surprising but what I really wanted was for it to look ugly. The theory was that the blander and less interesting the bike appeared, the less desirable to thieves it would become and the less like a rich westerner I would look. So I removed all the stickers and decals, got the seat recovered dark grey and assaulted the aluminium fuel tank with a can of dark blue Hammerite. With an unsightly luggage frame, panniers and Jerry cans bulging out at the sides, the bike had become distinctly unenviable - just the ticket.

The problem is, now that the trip is over, I've still got the same bike and I don't need or want it to look ugly any longer. But there are holes all over the plastics, rusty steel lugs welded onto the frame where the luggage rack used to be, a seat which doesn't fit the standard tank and deep scratches over every surface. It is old, plain and boring and distinctly unsexy. Maybe that's why I get these uncontrollable pangs of desire for seductive Italian bikes. But, like women, beauty comes at a price. I mean you can't pull Naomi Campbell by taking her to McDonalds can you? And now with my biking budget barely running to an annual oil change, the VOR is somewhat out my league. Mustn't grumble: at the end of the day the XR may be as 'rough as a butcher's hook' but at least it still goes well - luckily for me, not like a train...

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TALKING *Dirty*

Chris Evans uses his column as a thinly disguised classified ad...

You may remember that last month I was having a bit of a sulk after missing out on a once-in-a-lifetime chance to ride a 500 GP road-racer around Philip Island in Australia. Just days after writing that column however, my dummy slid back in with a resounding plop upon receiving a call from BMW's new Dakar signing, Cyril Depres, asking me if I wanted to have a go on a Honda CR250 built for him to ride in last year's cancelled Gilles Lalay Classic enduro.

Of course, as is often the case, there was a slight ulterior motive behind his generous offer - he wanted to sell it. And as the bike was registered in the UK (you can't register 'crossers in France due to their strict type approval laws), I was an obvious candidate.

Listening to his smooth sales patter I was almost tempted to buy the thing blind. As he

pointed out, in its GLC spec - low and torquey - it would make a very nice trail bike, but one with a bit more cachet than your average Serow. And like petrolheads everywhere I'm a sucker for all that cachet stuff. Low and torquey is all very well, but what really got the battered Sport-Adventure cheque book twitching was the rest of the spec sheet - black anodised Excel rims, One Industry graphics and matching 'table tennis bat' seat cover, Ohlins shock, re-worked front fork internals, Tag braceless bars, Devol rad protectors, 270cc barrel etc, etc.

Easily seduced as I am by such glittering baubles, I've been disappointed enough times to know that the only way to find out if you can really live with such a bike day in day out, is to take it for a very long ride. Which is exactly the reasoning I used to prise it out of Cyril's grasp for a three-day trip around the Morvan.

Wheeling it out of the van, the CR passed 'test number one' with flying colours - its appearance being immediately greeted with a gratifying number of 'oohs' and 'aahs' from the assembled and well primed audience. No doubt about it, nothing can top a well-turned out 'works' bike in the cred stakes.

'Test number two' - starting the little b*gger - saw considerably lower marks flash up on the old score board. Admittedly it hadn't run for a while, and that combined with a lack of stand and a lot of compression, meant that the 'oohs' and 'aahs' had transformed into a few discreet sniggers before someone else finally managed to crack it into life for me.

'Up-the-road-initial-impressions-test-number-three' resulted in wildly different sub-category scores. As you would expect from a bike designed to carry its rider over some of the most challenging terrain in the known enduro world, the mid-range was wide and meaty - while on the pipe it went into 'I cannee hold onto it much longer Cap'n - warp factor ten'. On the down side it was a little too vibey for my liking - a trait not helped by the standard MX gearbox and the low overall gearing.

As soon as I hit the trail however the cheque book got all twitchy again. I've wobbled around on a lot of bikes in my time and my favourites have always been the ones that have flattered me the most - and in this respect the GLC-CR went straight in at number one. Quite simply I have never ridden a bike that felt so stable. And a soggy November in the Morvan is a pretty tough test of such things.

So sure-footed did the bike feel that after a while I simply stopped worrying about ruts altogether, while the instant top end hit/low gearing combo meant that the front could be hoisted over any obstacle with incredible ease.

From those first tracks, right up until the middle of the third day, I'd pretty much decided to buy the wee beasty. Until, that is, I briefly swapped with the owner of a very clean '97 Gas Gas 250. It was then that I was sharply reminded that manufacturers actually do know what they are up to, and what we think we want and what we really want aren't necessarily the same things.

One of my favourite model ranges ever since Gas Gas so kindly laid one on for me to ride in the Welsh a couple of years ago; the Gasser made me realise that, incredible though it was, Monsieur Depres' CR wasn't built for the likes of little old me. Beautifully put together and perfectly set up, it is undoubtedly a GLC finisher. But in the wrong hands (ie mine) it is a glimpse into another, altogether more demanding world, where riders aren't fatigued or stressed by explosive top ends and hard edged characteristics that merely intimidate lesser mortals. Though the Gas Gas is far less exotic, it is made very much with the likes of me (and most of you I suspect) in mind. It was like coming home and slobbering out on your old sofa after staying in a super posh hotel that was way out of your league - such a relief.

All of which means that Cyril's CR is still very much for sale (details at the back of this mag), as is my own '99 KTM 200EGS (the one with the comfy seat, plush suspension and auto-lube - best offer secures!).

If the decision not to buy the CR was in the end fairly easy, the decision to get rid of the EGS is proving a touch more difficult. It is the second KTM 200 I've owned, and in many ways it's still my perfect bike. Small, light and easy to live with, it has proved a faithful and hugely reliable friend that I fully intend to honour with a last 'Staff Bikes' feature. The problem is that I've been riding one for the last three years and now I realise that I want and need a change.

Numerous people have warned me about replacing the dependable Katosh with a rather more (how shall I put it, erm... characterful) Gasser, but I've made up my mind. Spanish engineering here I come.

At the very least, it should give me plenty to write about in my column next year...



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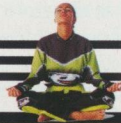
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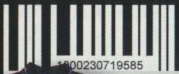
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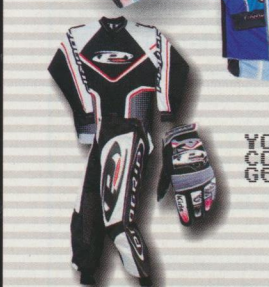
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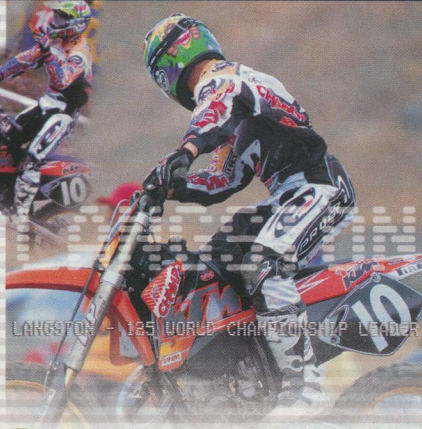
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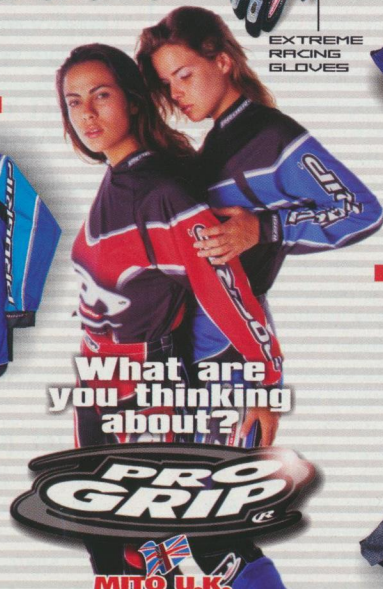
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2000 TRAIL BIKE *Rally Round-Up*



The new millennium saw more UK-based trail bike rallies than ever before. No less than five events took place including two in England for the first time ever. Paul Blez looks back over an action-packed year of domestic rallying...

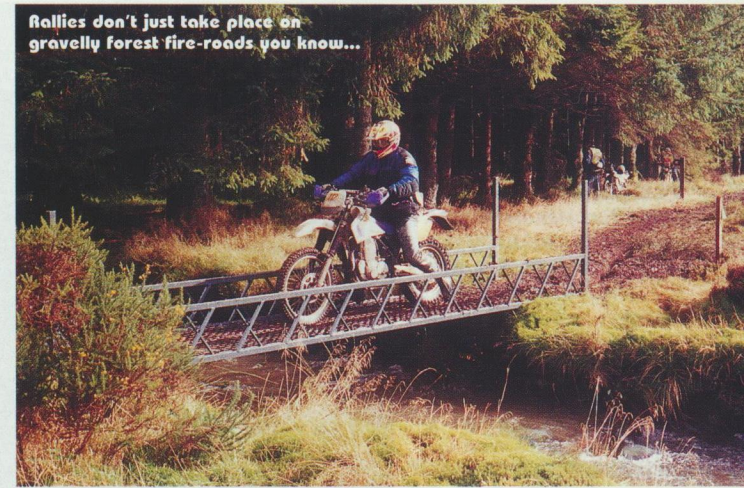
Cycle-Logical Cambrian Capers

The rally season kicked off, as always, with the Cycle-Logical-sponsored Cambrian Rally on Easter Day, although it nearly didn't happen after Forest Enterprise initially tried to cancel the seventh edition of the event. In the race report in TBM 58 I praised the new rider seeding system but lamented the fact that while the route itself was long, there were very few special stage miles, with only three stages - timed once each. Steve Griffiths won the trail bike class on a CRM250 and Harry Lampkin won the sports class on one of the new KTM400s. TBM's John Rushworth impressed everyone with his 14th overall on his 2CV-transported TLR250 and Gill Myers showed once again that you don't need to be a he-man on the latest kit to do well - with 15th on her ancient XT350. We also proved that you can ride 250 miles to the event, do it and ride home again on the same bike when we tested the BMW F650GS in TBM 59. The full Cambrian report has already been published, but suffice to say that the ever popular Cambrian Rally lived up to expectations as the premier rally event in the year's calendar.

Inaugural Ipone Ryedale

On July 9 the Yorkshire Enduro Club held the first ever English trailbike rally around the Broxa, Wykeham and Langdale forests to the west of Scarborough. The club had done their homework properly and their well-organised event received praise from newcomers and rally veterans alike, as well as attracting sponsorship from Oil company Ipone. It featured a lot more genuinely off-road (as opposed to merely tarmac-free) going than most rallies but was still eminently rideable by all classes of bikes and rider. Purple Helmet rider Andy Giggle beat half the trail bike entry to win the new step-thru/scooter class on his modified Honda 90 and fastest finisher was Andy Winterbourne on a Yamaha TT600R. He should have won best overall rather than best sports bike but neglected to tell the organisers of his change of class. This meant Brian Eland was credited with

Rallies don't just take place on gravelly forest fire-roads you know...



A competitor fires his Husky off the line on Stage Two of the Hafren Rally

best trailbike on the well-used ex-demo KTM620 Adventure, but Steve Hague and Phil Gunn were fractionally faster on a WR400 and DRZ400E respectively. The main rally report was published in TBM 60 but a blow by blow account of our own Ryedale on a special XTZ690 appeared in TBM 62.

Diverting Dyfi

I wasn't able to make the Dyfi Rally in September but our spies have provided mainly favourable reports of this second running of the event which was based at Aberangell, near Machynllth amidst the beautiful north Wales countryside. Organised by the Mid Wales Trail Riders Association (MWTRA) and modelled on the nearby Hafren rally, the Dyfi (pronounced 'Dove-y', boyo) ran over two days, with two laps on the Saturday afternoon and three on Sunday, except for the ladies who, after consultation with the organisers, voted to do only two laps on the Sunday.

Andy Winterbourne was again fastest rider overall, only this time he remembered to enter his TT600R in the trail bike class. Brian Eland was second having swapped his KTM Adventure for a 640EGS-E and Steve Hague won the sportsbike class on his WR400, although he wasn't as quick as Andy or Brian. The event was also unusual in having a couple of quad competitors and a sidecar. And not just any old quad either - Paul Rowlands was faster than all the solos except

Winterbourne and Eland on the Sunday as befits his status as current British quad champion at the ripe old age of 38.

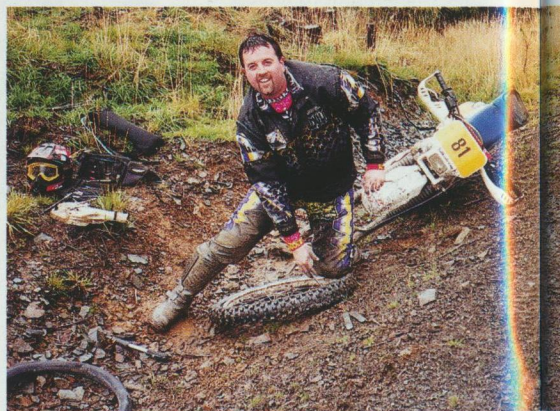
A novice lady rider writes...

Marie-Elza Henderson took part on a Serow kindly supplied by Bogbusters. It was her second trailbike rally and she recalls: 'I was really struck by the helpful and friendly attitude of both the organisers and the other riders at the Dyfi. What could have been a very intimidating experience was made much easier by the good-natured interest in my progress. On the Saturday there was one sighting lap and one timed lap with these stages considerably shortened to cut out some sections which were extremely wet and considered too risky.

I've done a bit of trail riding in the past plus the BMW off-road school and the CCM ride-out which are all valuable experience, but there's a real buzz to riding against the clock. It makes you try just that little bit harder to take the corner correctly, or push on through a section where your nerves are starting to show, and then the sheer elation of realising that it's actually true that things tend to get a little easier as you speed up. You get to practise all the techniques that you've heard or read about, and practice, as they say, makes perfect. My challenge of the event was to get down one particularly steep muddy and rock-filled narrow slope without slithering down in an undignified heap. I think I managed it once out of four attempts, but it felt magnificent when I finally got it right!

Many thanks to all the riders who stopped to help when I fell off - I started to tire seriously towards the end of the second lap and might not have made it without their muscle and tools. However, I came to realise that if you just ride around with the expectation that you will have help picking up the bike this leads to not thinking through your strategy properly on particularly tricky sections, and can cause you to lose confidence in your own competence and ability.

The point was made to me that although slower riders might feel a lot of pressure to get out of the way of quicker riders coming through, it's best to



stick to your line and move over only when safe to do so - anybody who's any good should be able to go round you.

The course was essentially composed of long fast stretches of fire-road covered in loose shale, interspersed with some steep and muddy uphill and downhill stretches through the forest and along narrow rocky paths. There was also a fabulous stretch up, up and over the top of the hills by way of a winding path, which came to a narrow trail with a steep drop-off to the right-hand side. When the sun came out for a late afternoon visit on Sunday, shining brightly onto the generous greenery all around, I couldn't imagine a better way to enjoy the stupendous Welsh countryside.'



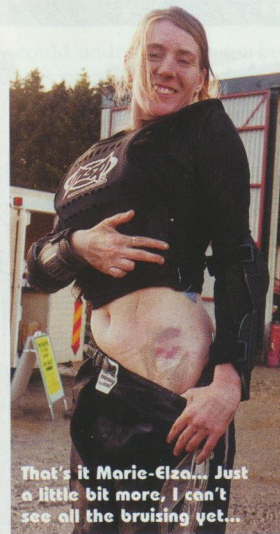
There were more than 30 CCMs entered in the Hafren Rally this year

The Dyfi was rider Pat Shaw's first event and he thought it was 'absolutely terrific'. He said afterwards: 'My advice to anyone thinking about doing an event is just to do it. I spent two years thinking about doing it - what a waste of time. You can set your own pace, everyone is friendly and the spice of competition just adds to the off road experience. Even though I indulge in no formal exercise I also found it not as physically tiring as I had anticipated'.

Heavens open at the CCM Hafren

The ladies' class was won by Sally Harmer from Sarah Hollingham who was knocked off twice by quad riders, while Katie Hatfield who pronounced herself 'chuffed to bits' to come third in only her third rally.

There were two relatively big accidents at the event, involving a side-car outfit on the Saturday with the rider coming a cropper on a particularly tricky left-hand bend.



That's it Marie-Elza... Just a little bit more, I can't see all the bruising yet...

This very same bend also claimed Bob 'Whizzo' Wyszomierski on the Sunday who fell off twice in consecutive days in front of a dumbstruck Dave Maddock, whom he'd just managed to overtake on both occasions!

Dave reckoned the course marking could have been better both for danger spots and for direction, since he was one of several riders who took wrong turnings, the second time managing to drown his XT500 in a water crossing - he'd lost more than an hour by the time he got back on the right track! He also pointed out that the riders who only rode on Sunday did their first timed lap 'unsighted' which is far from ideal from a safety point of view.

After a disappointing turnout for last year's one day event in late summer, the Hafren Rally (pronounced Hav'n by the way) returned to its traditional early October date with a two day format and the organisers were rewarded with a full house of over 200 riders to justify their efforts. Unfortunately the later date also placed the Hafren in the middle of the UK's new monsoon season and it rained for most of the weekend.

However the Hafren Dirt Bike Club provided some of the best stages ever laid out in a trail bike rally by adding several extra miles to their traditional 'long' stage making it a humongous nine miler on the Saturday and about a mile shorter when run in the opposite direction on the Sunday. Instead of starting or finishing at the old MX practice area, this was now several miles into the stage! As was the case in '98, there were two laps on the Saturday, of which one was timed, followed by three laps in the opposite direction on the Sunday, of which two were timed.

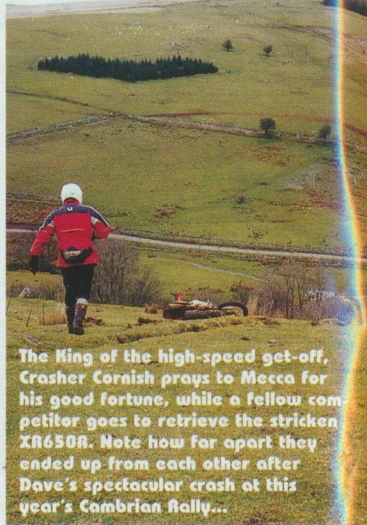
Event sponsors CCM turned up mob-handed with their excellent Rideout support truck providing shelter and clothing as well as bikes and maintenance, but there was actually a much smaller proportion of lugging journalists and far more paying punters among the 32 CCM bikes entered this year.

Sadly for CCM the winner was not amongst them, as that man Andy Winterbourne blasted his TT600R to victory once more to give him a hat trick of fastest times in the Ryedale, Dyfi and Hafren. Andy was fulsome in his praise of both the Welsh events: 'The special tests in the Hafren were awesome while the Dyfi had some of the best sections between tests I've ever had the pleasure of riding.'

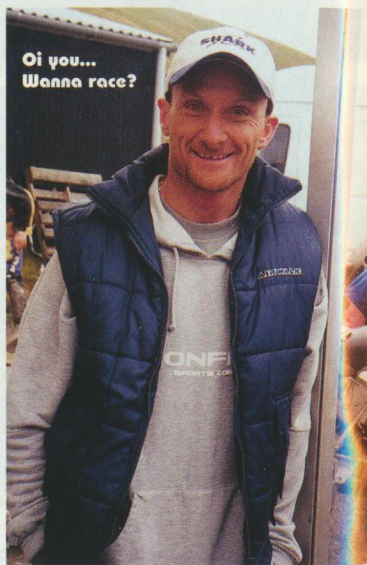
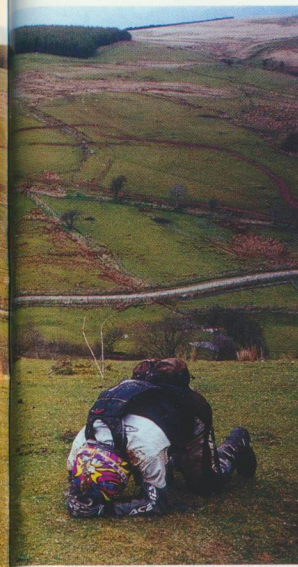
2000 TRAIL BIKE *Rally Round-Up*



The notorious hill in this year's Cambrian Rally caused a lot of trouble for some competitors. Wisely, the organisers decided to re-route the course for the second lap



The King of the high-speed get-off, Crasher Cornish prays to Mecca for his good fortune, while a fellow competitor goes to retrieve the stricken XR650R. Note how far apart they ended up from each other after Dave's spectacular crash at this year's Cambrian Rally...



Oi you... Wanna race?

Andy once again got the better of Brian Eland who took runner up spot in the Trail bike class on his KTM640. This was little short of a miracle when you consider that Brian managed to highside at the top of the hill overlooking the motocross track on the first timed stage and the ambulance was already on its way towards him by the time he stopped bouncing down the hill.

could undoubtedly have been a fatal accident was narrowly avoided. Glenn, who works for Taylor's of Chippenham, was the fastest man on one of the new DRZ400Es but he was beaten by a brace of WR400s. Craig Reece took top sports bike from that man Steve Hague who was also fastest 'Over 40'.

Fastest official CCM finisher was company director Austin Clews, leading from the front as you might expect from a former motocross champion, albeit one who does most of his training in the pub these days. Austin got his finger out on the Sunday after he was eclipsed on Saturday's timed stage by a promising young rider from CCM's home town of Blackburn; a certain Carl Fogarty Esquire. Carl was just out for a bit of fun and doing his best to keep a low profile, bearing in mind he was still contracted to Ducati. Talking to him at the end of Saturday's racing he almost convinced me that he'd done little more than go for a quiet ramble on the CCM while nursing his injured shoulder. Turned out he'd 'rambled' his way to sixth fastest overall!

Carl persuaded the organisers to leave his name out of the final results but he must have finished in the top ten and you can bet your life that if he was fully fit he could have been right up there with the fastest! Surrey TRF member Allan Angold had the cheek to overtake Foggy on one of the liaison sections only to be re-passed a few seconds later by the Blackburn Bomber, and then had the pleasure of helping the four times World Superbike champion pull his bike out of the shrubbery after he overcooked it at the next corner! Foggy's presence apparently caused quite a

Shaken but undeterred, the Geordie giant jumped back on the bent CCM and continued flat out through the stage until even he was a little unnerved to be faced by a rogue rider coming towards him as he hurtled through the trees in top gear. This heart-stopping incident was witnessed by Glenn Foxwell, who had caught Brian up in the wake of his earlier ground-shaking tumble. Somehow they all missed each other and what

stir in a Llanidloes club on the Saturday evening, but down the road at the British Legion Club there was entertainment of the pub-quiz sort as Messrs Eland and Winterbourne joined forces with a bunch of well-read 'RIDES listers' to win the Hafren Rally Quiz. Yours Truly was in the runners up with Over-50 winner Julian Bishop and a bunch of his mates from Gloucestershire.

That was as close as I came to winning anything that weekend after road racer and keen dirt fiend Ian Cobby of SuperBike Mag stole my 'best journo' crown riding a pair of old and new CCMs which I shared with him over the two days. I actually beat Ian on most of the short stages, but he somehow managed to beat me by over a minute on the first long stage even though I made no mistakes and thought I was going well. Could I have been credited with a minute too much time, I ask myself?

Call this the sad speculations of a fat old fool if you like (*if you insist - ed*), but there was evidence of other timekeeping errors when Russel Tyner's first long stage on Sunday was recorded as a minute too fast as he himself pointed out, and that wasn't the only dodgy time in the results sheet.

At the end of the day the results don't matter though because I thoroughly enjoyed my ride as did everyone else I spoke to, apart from poor Katie Hatfield who broke her collarbone.

If there was an award for eccentricity, that would have gone to the two middle aged guys who turned up without an entry 'just to have a look' on a pair of old Armstrongs and slept overnight in their car in the paddock. They were busy cooking up a barbie when I met them on the Saturday evening and had enough food and beer in their trailer to feed an army - or a hungry Blez!

The Hafren remains a 'must do' event on the trailbike rally calendar but it would be reassuring to know that you're not going to meet anyone coming the other way in a stage - marshals just managed to prevent a logging truck from driving the wrong way onto the course! Perhaps the sponsors could persuade their new shareholder Mrs Michaela Fogarty to ride a CCM in the event next year. Now that would brighten up the paddock!

Bike Place Reivers Raid

The Reivers' Raid was the fifth and final event in this biggest ever trail bike rally season. Originally scheduled for mid-September just a week after the Dyfi, it had to be postponed because of the fuel strike. That meant that it no longer clashed with the Rally of Discovery and I was able to take part, although the change worked the other way for Brian Eland who was unable to compete on his home territory.

Organised by the North East Enduro Club, the

rally took place in the wild border country of the Kielder forest in Northumbria, an area which was once the territory of roving bands of brigands known as reivers, hence the name.

The later running of the Reivers' certainly made things tougher for the organisers because ground that was already saturated got an extra dose of rain the night before the event and the paddock had to be moved at the last moment to a clearing with no facilities. In the event they were relieved that only 54 competitors turned up because the paddock would have become seriously boggy and congested with many more.

As it was, the rally proved pretty eventful for organisers and participants alike. The ambulance only turned up at the very last minute while the burger wagon failed to show at all - which was disastrous as far as I was concerned as there was nowhere for me to buy my breakfast (or mid-morning snack, elevenses, tea-break, dinner, mid-afternoon scooby-snack, tea-time, evening meal - ed). Yet the inclement weather turned out to be the least of the challenges as riders set off like lambs to the slaughter on a first lap which turned into something of a magical mystery tour or a journey to hell and back, depending on your skill level and whether or not you managed to follow the route.

The NEEC introduced some novelties not seen before in a UK rally. The first was a pair of Dakar-style passage controls in which you had to punch your time card to prove that you'd taken the designated deviations off the beaten track through rivers and old quarries. This was fine in principle but fell a bit short of the ideal in practice.

The course marking also left a bit to be desired and I missed one PC completely and rode straight past one turn-off into the woods on the first lap. But the biggest problem was the toughness of the original route. As organisers of some of the toughest enduros in the calendar, the NEEC simply didn't modify their conception of what constitutes a difficult course to bring it in line with the prevailing weather and the machinery and tyres used in rallies. The two timed stages on each 31 mile lap were absolutely fine, consisting mostly of gravel-surfaced fire roads with just enough in the way of twists, turns and natural obstacles to provide some challenge. It was the liaison sections which caused the problems. The first lap was as tough as many enduros I've done and I was damn glad to be riding the team TBM CRM250 rather than the XTZ690 desert sled I rode in the Ryedale.

Even so I got stuck fast in a soggy ditch that had to be crossed to get into one off road sections and I had my heart in my mouth going down one trials-like section through a quarry. But the worst section by far was a half-mile 'Via Dolorosa' which zig-zagged through a felled section of

forest full of tree stumps, wet roots and super-soft peaty ground. I had to stop and physically heave the back end of the CRM over the slippery roots about four times and those few hundred yards took me about 20 minutes to complete. I was passed by one very skilful enduro rider on an XR400, but most of the field struggled more than I did. It was the trail-bike rally equivalent of the Battle of the Somme and the organisers wisely diverted the route from the second lap onwards.

The rest of the lap was no picnic either. An ancient route over the fells provided fantastic views and challenging riding which saw me take a dive over the handlebars for the first time all year. There was also a final 'sting in the tail' up a muddy stream which saw more than one bike drowned out of the event. Ironically, the organisers had rashly promised us 'none of the 'stoppers' of a traditional enduro' which was exactly what they managed to achieve.

However they quickly saw the error of their ways and modified the course so that the second, third and fourth laps provided just the right mix of easy fire road and challenging off-roadery. Sadly it was too late for the likes of Mike Hughes who retired with his KTM640 Adventure - the bike he'd ridden all the way home from China and successfully completed the Ryedale Rally on. Mike was one of ten riders who retired after the sighting lap without recording a single stage time!

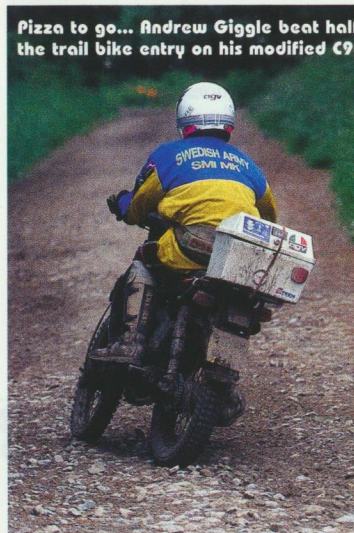
With the course sorted out, it was the weather's turn to try us almost beyond endurance. We were subjected to a veritable fusillade of hailstones which lasted about half an hour and in common with most riders I was reduced to riding with my left hand over my mouth and nose, despite wearing a full face helmet. Riders continued to drop like flies and only 29 of the 54 starters finished all four laps!

Winner of the trailbike class was Mike Wadkins on a CRM250 from fastest Over-40 Trevor Petrie on another CRM. Sports class winner Robert Swinbank set a blistering pace on an XR400 and was a full minute and a half faster than Wadkins and a minute quicker than second placed Doug Walker on an XR600. Michael Roberts did well to

Sunshine graced the Ryedale Rally paddock...



Pizza to go... Andrew Giggie beat half the trail bike entry on his modified C90



Short but sweet hill climb up on the Yorkshire Moors was the third stage in the Ryedale Rally...



win the up to 700 trailbike class on a Husky TE610E and John Brown beat all bar six of the field on the only 125, an Aprilia RX.

I was happy simply to survive in one piece after crashing more times in this one event than in all the off-road riding I've done anywhere else all year combined! Happily I stayed shiny side up in all the timed stages, so for the record I was sixth in the trail bike class just eight seconds behind fast Phil Cottiga on another CRM. By the end of the day I felt a bit like some WWII veteran who'd landed at Normandy and survived all the way to the final victory in Berlin. My personal award for perseverance goes to Mick Duston who overcame a near-terminal drowning with his CCM on the second lap to soldier right on to the finish.

You may find it hard to believe, but I actually really enjoyed the Reivers Raid (well, apart from the 'Somme' section and the hail). The special stages were an absolute blast and the scenery was spectacular. I've no doubt that the North East Enduro Club have learnt some valuable lessons and now have the knowledge and experience to put on a cracking event in 2001.

Most importantly organisers Colin Holbrow, Ian Bell and Jeff Sadler have promised me that they will set out next year's course with a Honda Transalp. Can't wait to see that...

Videos of three trailbike rallies (Cambrian, Dyfi and Hafren) are available from Frank Morgan on 01597 822642.

Trail Tales

Sex, drugs and rocky-roads, Rick Kemp reveals all...

Hereford has two main claims to fame; Firstly it's home to the SAS, and secondly, its principle industry is cider production. Occasionally these two elements combine to produce a deadly cocktail - the drunken psycho-killer. A slightly less well known fact about Hereford is that it is the narcotics capital of the area. I'm not suggesting that there is any direct link, but let's just say that the international currency of espionage and subversion is no longer the gold sovereign. All these facts were revealed to me one cold, damp, very dark night over the weekend of an Isca Enduro some years ago.

Before becoming a talented enduro rider (*ha ha - ed*) I was an even more talented spectator and almost nothing matched the thrill of heading off down the M4 on a Friday afternoon in the pick-up with a bike on the back for a weekend of serious spectating and trail riding.

Signing on as a travelling marshal was sometimes possible but could be too much like hard work at times and besides, a chap wouldn't like to let the organising club down by behaving badly, would he?

Because 'serious spectating' involved riding bits of the course between checks without being spotted (which meant that they had to be accessible by road or track); riding trails which linked parts of the course; and of course exceeding the speed limit on the road - in general, behaving like a total hooligan. This task was usually made easier by the generosity of the motorcycle importers who, at the time when off-road sales were much greater than they are now, were only too keen to lend trail bikes or indeed pukka enduro tackle to the 'gentlemen of the Press'.

On this particular occasion I was sporting one of the few Suzuki PE175s then in captivity. Its

handling exceeded anything else Japanese and blew a lot of the Euro tackle into the weeds too, and best of all, it had a dinky multi-spanner strapped to the fork stanchion!

One of the routes taken in at the time was the Devil's Staircase which consisted of a ribbon of steep drop-and-turn single lane tarmac. To this day I don't think I've ever had so much 'air time' on the road, and the sensation of setting the bike up in the air for the next turn was absolutely magic.

You would usually meet other enthusiastic spectators and at least be on nodding terms with some of them. The event organisers tended to put in a fairly lax time check in the vicinity of a good pub round about halfway through the day - kind of an unofficial lunch break - and this would be the big meeting place. I was halfway through my pint, sausage, chips and beans when *she* walked in.

Even covered in Barbour from head to toe you could tell she was special: the way she looked you straight in the face with a slight arrogance. I was hooked, fantasies began to run wild - a little cottage in the hills, perhaps I could start up a business reconditioning sheep troughs or whatever people did around here, and together we could ride the green lanes of love, I knew she was local by the dragon patch on her jacket.

Still lost in my reverie, I caught a voice: 'Is this seat free?' I turned, and it was her.

'What this one?' I replied in a dither. She rolled her eyes and sat down anyway, putting her pint on the table.

'You're not from round here are you?' she said. I couldn't believe it, she was chatting *me* up. I was beginning to feel light headed and I

hadn't even sunk my first pint. So when she offered to show me some trails that afternoon I damn nearly had to pinch myself. She explained that she was going to see a mate over Hereford way and we could do most of the trip off-road. Sounded like a good idea to me.

Outside the pub, she was well impressed with the PE then she showed me her bike which she informed me proudly was home built. This turned out to be an old Maico 250 MX chassis, with a Honda CB200 motor bolted in and the weirdest exhaust and bashplate arrangement you'd ever seen. She seemed very proud of this machine, so I enthused over the novel design and the quality of craftsmanship involved, thinking that flattery might be the fastest route to heaven. Somehow I didn't think she was at all convinced.

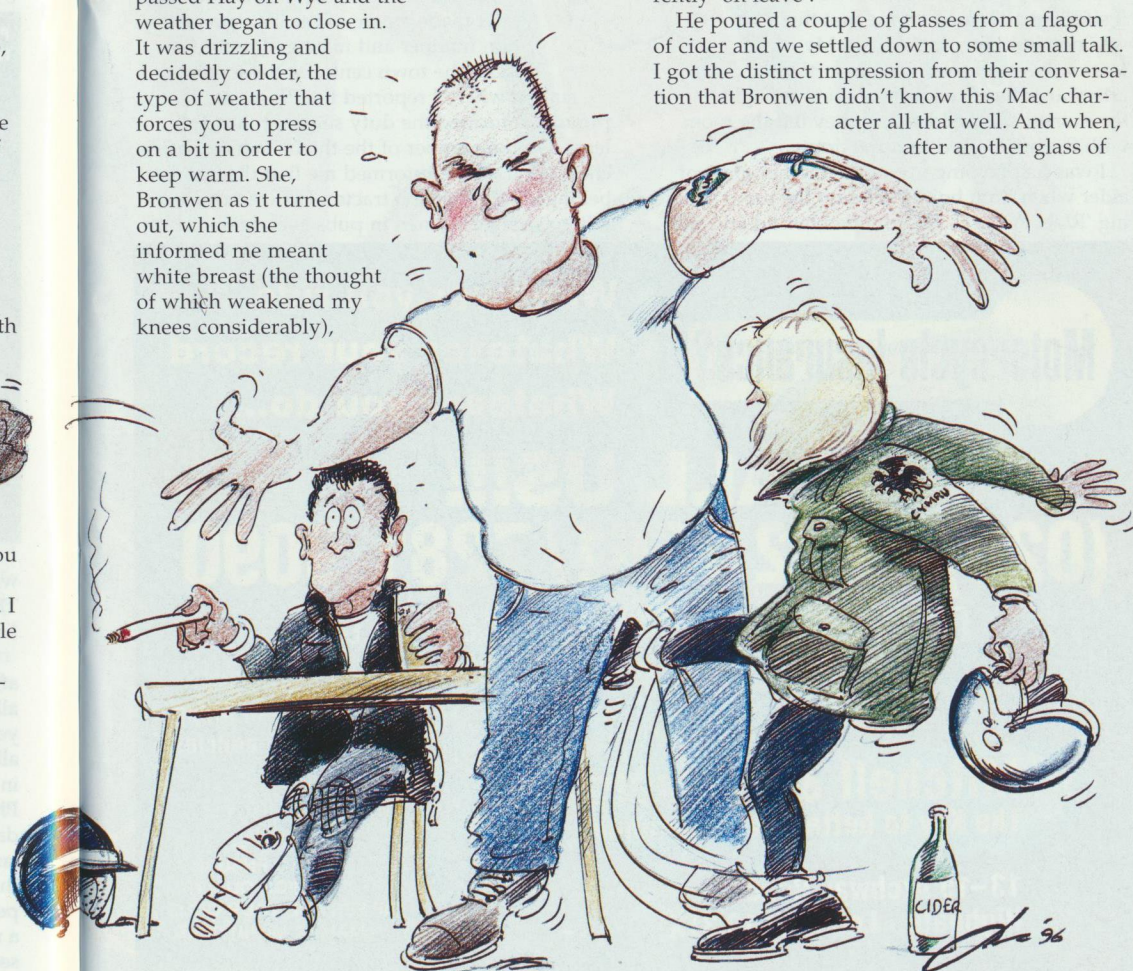
After about an hour of travelling east we'd passed Hay on Wye and the weather began to close in.

It was drizzling and decidedly colder, the type of weather that forces you to press on a bit in order to keep warm. She, Bronwen as it turned out, which she informed me meant white breast (the thought of which weakened my knees considerably),

was no slouch, and when she suggested we swap bikes I had to admit that I was somewhat curious to investigate her hybrid. It turned out to be something of a pleasant surprise, the engine was well back in the chassis leaving the front end nice and light, and the soft power delivery of the four-stroke twin gave the rear tyre a considerable amount of grip. It had the feel of a bike which despite its quirky concept was very well sorted.

We kept off-road till it got too dark to be safe at which point we dived through a farm yard and made our way onto the main road. It was fully dark by the time we reached a cottage on the outskirts of Hereford. Bronwen's mate turned out to be built like a Cheftan tank with cropped hair and a dagger tattooed on his forearm. It wasn't difficult to guess at his day job, particularly as he informed me that he was currently 'on leave'.

He poured a couple of glasses from a flagon of cider and we settled down to some small talk. I got the distinct impression from their conversation that Bronwen didn't know this 'Mac' character all that well. And when, after another glass of



Trail Tales

cider he proceeded to 'put one together' from a lump of dope about the size of a house brick, I began to feel distinctly uneasy. When it came round to me, I declined on the grounds of unfamiliar surroundings and having some miles yet to cover that night.

This seemed to antagonise our host who assured me that this was the best stuff to be found this side of Beirut. So to oblige, I took a couple of puffs and passed it on. However, it suddenly dawned on me that this was not entirely a social visit. My fears were confirmed when shortly afterwards he asked Bron if she'd brought the money, she nodded and they left the room with the brick-sized lump of dope.

I was just helping myself to another glass of cider when Bron burst back into the room shouting 'RUN FOR IT!' She grabbed her lid and was

out of the door in a flash, I heard the PE fire up as Mac entered the room clutching his groin.

In my slightly altered state I assumed that he'd tried it on and received a knee in the nuts for his trouble, as she obviously only had me in mind for any amorous activity that evening. Not a bit of it, it transpired that she hadn't parted with any dosh and had done a runner with the dope, not to mention the PE test bike!

I was in the bowel-loosening situation of trying to explain to a psychotic trained killer that I had nothing to do with the situation and had only met the damned girl a few hours previously (love had by now, flown out of the window). After pleading my case for some time, parting with all the cash I had on me and pointing out that at least he still had hold of a very sort after Honcho motorcycle I was allowed to leave (with my life).

I made a note of the bike's registration number and managed to hitch a lift into the town centre and the police station where I reported the PE stolen. I proudly informed the duty sergeant that I at least had the number of the thief's vehicle. After checking it out he informed me that the number belonged to a Fordson tractor. I vowed never to talk to strange women in pubs ever again...



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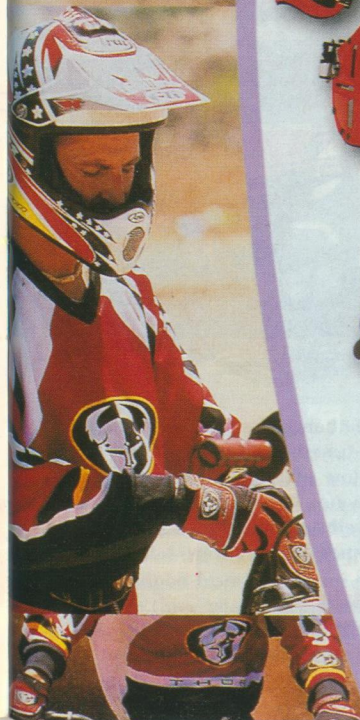
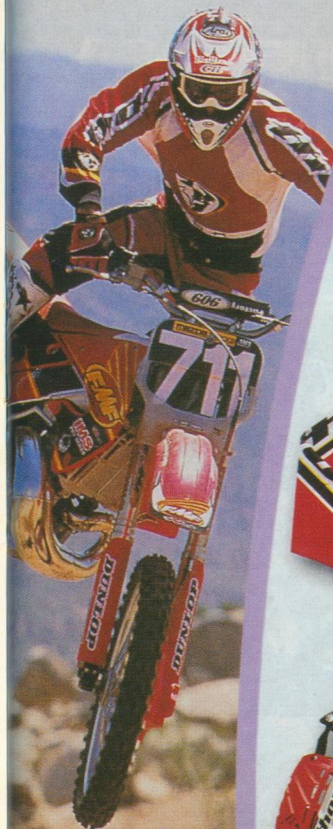
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THREE STAGERS

ON

TRAIL



Yamaha XT225 Serow v Beta Alp 200 v Gas Gas Pampera 250

Words: The TBM Trialsters; Pics: Si M

Ever since Beta launched their Suzuki-engined Alp model last summer we've been itching to get it together with those other Long Distance Trials favourites: the Yamaha XT225 Serow and Gas Gas Pampera 250. And the opportunity finally arose just before Christmas at an event down in the West Country. If you're into Long Distance Trials you'll know that these three bikes are perfect for this sort of event. But if you only ever trail ride

and don't compete, then we're talking about lightweight, softly-tuned trailies with plenty of ground clearance, low seat heights and the ability to turn on a sixpence. Advantages which apply equally as well on a tricky trail as they do on a Long Distance Trial section.

Take Three Bikes...

So what have we got then? Three quite distinct motorcycles which nevertheless fit quite neatly

What bike would you chose for a Long Distance Trial? The TBM team assess the three main contenders...

into one specific category which for want of a better word, we'll term 'Trialsters'. Needless to say all are designed to be as compact as possible with a decent steering lock and smooth power delivery in order to make 'feet up' riding easy.

None of the bikes on test were brand new: they ranged from just under a year old for the Beta, to three years old for the Gasser and eight years old for the Serow, so there's little point in comparing prices of these particular ones.

Nevertheless both the Serow and Pampera can be found for very reasonable money on the secondhand market, while the new Beta is not particularly costly by the standards of most modern off-roaders. All three test bikes were fitted with rear trials tyres for the event we'd entered.

First out of the blocks was the Gas Gas Pampera, the most 'single-minded' of all the bikes on test. Its trials-derived 250cc two-stroke six-speed kick-start motor requires a diet of pre-

Versatile Beta Alp is new to the Long Distance Trial scene, but will doubtless appeal to owners looking for a lightweight but reliable trailie...

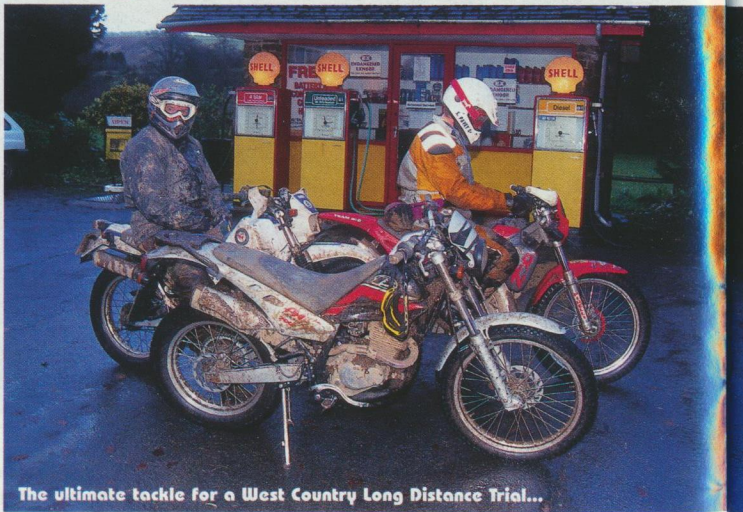


THREE STAGERS ON TRIAL

mixed fuel and offers the sort of low and mid-range grunt for which trials bikes are rightly renowned. This engine is slotted into a trail bike chassis fitted with a set of trials forks and a low front mudguard. It's not the prettiest of designs, matter of fact it looks a little awkward from some angles, but it is very slim and extremely effective.

As it's designed to be registered and ridden on the street, the Pampera comes with the standard Gasser dials and switchgear - not exactly high quality, but it's all there. Our test bike which was a well used '97 machine had had the indicators removed and the exhaust re-chromed, but otherwise was more or less standard. Oh and the Gasser comes fitted with the world's worst sidestand. Not only is it on the right hand side, but it barely manages to keep the bike from toppling over.

At the other end of the spectrum we have the Yamaha XT225 Serow - a bike beloved of short-



The ultimate tackle for a West Country Long Distance Trial...

legged trail riders everywhere. This grey import trailie is well respected amongst green laners for its go-anywhere ability, user-friendly nature and its electric boot. Powered by a low-tech but remarkably punchy, air-cooled, sohc, four-stroke six-speed motor, the Yamaha possesses one of the lowest seat heights of all trail bikes, and



The nimble Serow wasn't quite as good in the sections as the other two bikes, but it made up for it in other key areas...

offers simple but rugged charm. Being Japanese its switchgear and dials are durable and water-proof (though still fairly basic), and it has a comfy saddle, good ergos, and a decent range. It also has a decent sidestand, excellent lights and by far the best build quality of all three. Our well used test bike was eight years old yet apart

from a stiff clutch, felt exactly the same as newer Serows we've ridden. It also felt by far the heaviest bike on test - a tag rarely applied to the little XT.

Somewhere in between these two sits the newcomer - the Beta Alp. Its combination of Japanese powerplant with European styling and build quality needs little in the way of further explanation having been detailed back in TBM 58. Remarkably compact, the Beta felt comfortably the smallest of all three bikes - though it didn't feel as light as the two-stroke powered Pampera. As you would expect of a new bike, the Beta looked and felt much more modern in terms of design, and this was reflected not only its styling but also in the appearance and layout of its instruments and switchgear. These items look and feel well-made, though only time will tell whether they can match the durability of the Yamaha's. With the smallest capacity engine of all three, the Alp's 200cc sohc air-cooled five-speed Suzuki motor not surprisingly felt the least powerful and its five-speed gearbox would certainly benefit from an extra ratio. Nevertheless the Alp offers other features, notably, pleasing lines, super-slim ergos and a fairly comfortable riding position. It too has a right-side prop-stand, though it is better thought out than the Gasser's.

Design & Build Quality:
= Yamaha & Beta, 3 Gas Gas

Hitting the road...

Inevitably all these bikes will doubtless spend a certain amount of their life cruising the tarmac as we did when we set

off from Minehead Rugby Club for the short stretch of road to the first of the day's trails. In this setting there is only one clear winner - the Yamaha - which has by far the best road manners of all three bikes. Its well spaced (internal) gear ratios offers the best road speed and allow it to make the most of the motor's incredible

There was a lot of water about that day...

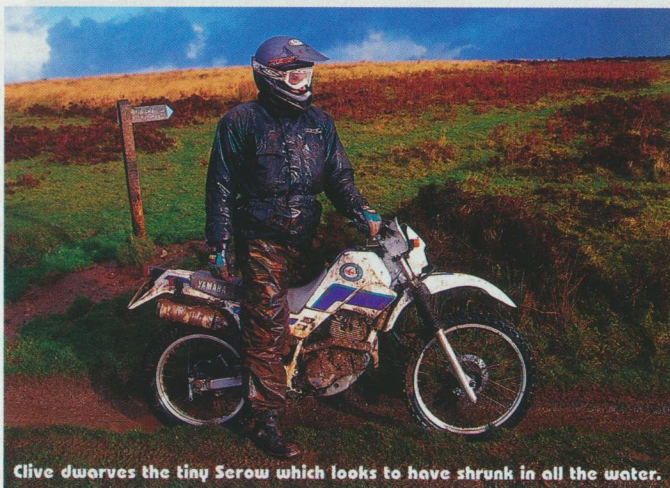
THREE STAGERS ON TRIAL

tractability. Moreover it has a comfy saddle, the most room to stretch out on, and well thought-out steering geometry, not to mention the best balanced brakes.

Not far behind comes the Beta Alp. We'd elected to run it on slightly shorter gearing which obviously didn't help the bike's top speed, but with the least power available and only a five speed gearbox to play with, the Beta owner can find that the pace of road riding is very casual indeed. In fact this is no bad thing however, because when it comes to braking from any sort of speed, the Beta's trials-derived brake calipers are severely overworked.

Nevertheless it sports a comfortable seat and well-thought out (if compact) riding position, and as a package the Beta seemed as happy on the road as off it.

Last place in this category is definitely claimed by the Gas Gas Pampera. Although it probably has the most power and in this MkII



Clive dwerves the tiny Serow which looks to have shrunk in all the water.

form, offers a reasonable spread of gear ratios (the earlier MkI had a trials-type box with four low and two high ratios), its weird double-decker saddle was by far the most uncomfortable and least accommodating of all three perches - while the tall bars and quick steering made the front end feel slightly twitchy on the road. With a redesigned seat foam and a lower set of bars,

the Pampera would doubtless approach the Beta for tarmac enjoyment, but in standard guise it finishes in last place.

Tarmac: 1 Yamaha, 2 Beta, 3 Gas Gas

Onto the Dirt...

And here the situations are reversed. Off road the Gasser suddenly comes into its own, especially once you stand up on the rear-set pegs and move your weight forwards. Now the high bars and awkward riding position of the Pampera work well. And the Gasser's lusty quarter-litre motor with its mile-wide mid-range enables it to clamber over obstacles at least one gear higher than either of the other two bikes. Moreover the Pampera appears to place far less weight over its front wheel (a typical trait of a two-stroke) which allows it to pick its way over trail litter and means it's far less susceptible to tramlining when in a rut. Of course the extra power helps, and with plenty of torque available, the Pampera's front end can be easily hoisted out of trouble. On the trail the Pampera copes well with the lumpy bits - its strange combination of softish forks and firm shock working remarkably well together.

At the opposite end of the spectrum however, the Serow feels positively clumsy at slow speed stuff (relatively speaking) - especially once the trail gets seriously muddy. The footpegs are the narrowest of all three and the tank the broadest in the beam. What's more the wide-ratio gearbox, limits the choice of available ratios.

In its favour however is a motor that defies all attempts at stalling and offers stupendous urge right of the bottom. In fact the Serow could be made to hoist its front end just by cracking open the throttle, which allows the bike to climb its way up and over all sorts of obstacles given a willing enough rider. Also in its favour is reasonable (but not excellent) ground clearance and a great steering lock which certainly helps manoeuvrability.

By comparison with bikes like the DR350 etc the Serow is positively agile, but believe it or not in this exalted company, it feels just a bit too cumbersome! On a more positive note, the Serow's off-roadability improves with a bit of speed. The stable geometry and reasonably-damped suspension, endow the little XT with a decent ride quality and it handles the bumps pretty well. In fact the same sort of bumps can tie the Pampera in knots as the pace increases.

Once again it's the Beta which claims the middle ground. Its virtue is its diminutive size, sensible broad footpegs and excellent geometry which make it feel like a cross between the sta-

Second Opinion: Si Pavey

Serow

The little Yam just didn't do it for me. It may be a great beginner's bike, but I felt it was heavy and not quite as low as I remember. I reckon an XR250 would probably be as good a bet for most people, though obviously the Serow's electric start is an advantage. There were a lot of riders on Serows at the Minehead event so they're certainly popular for Long Distance Trials, but if it was my money I'd take one of the other two.

Alp

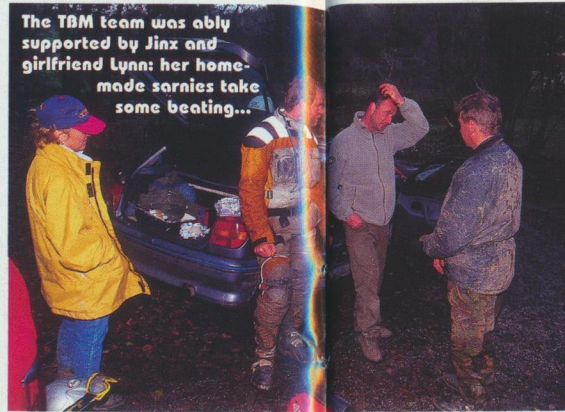
The Beta should have won this shootout if the criteria for the test were for fun, entry-level bikes. The concept of the Alp is fantastic - it feels very small, has a low seat height, is light weight, comes with electric start, has all the necessary road going equipment, it's quiet and easy to ride. Sadly it was let down by a poor set of brakes (*they've since changed the pad compound - ed*), and some doubts over the quality of bodywork and other fittings (rack etc). I hope this judgement is unfair and time proves me wrong because I think the concept of this kind of bike can help to bring more people into trail riding with its user friendly style. Beta: do us a favour, give it a set of more powerful brakes and you'd have a winner.

Pampera

The Pampera is a strange bike that's hard to categorise. It isn't a beginner's bike - though it's a lot of fun and quite easy to ride. It has a lovely motor and chassis, although it too has some quality problems. The brakes could be better (the front is weak, the rear too strong) and the bodywork ought to be made of better quality plastic. We've heard of so many seizing in the past (they're prone to overheating), that we were all a little careful on the road as it seemed to be detonating at times! However I like the concept and the Pampera is a fun and competent bike with a little more bite than the Beta. It's my overall winner out of these three.

Thanks to Notts Trail Bikes for the loan of the Serow. They usually have a range of Serows in stock so if you want one, call them on 01623 428777. Also big thanks to Richard Dave for trusting us with his Pampera...

THREE STAGERS ON TRAIL



The TBM team was ably supported by Jinx and girlfriend Lynn: her home-made sornies take some beating...

Obviously taller bars would not only allow the rider to stretch out more (and avoid that feeling of bending down touching your toes), but would also let you move further around on the bike.

At least it has well damped suspension and like the Pampera will tackle virtually anything you care to throw it at. As the speed increases it begins to feel better than the flighty Pampera (especially when seated), but not quite as good as the super-stable Serow.

Slow trails: 1 Gas Gas, 2 Beta, 3 Yamaha

Fast Trails: 1 Yamaha, 2= Beta & Gas Gas

Trials and Tribulations...

Due to a mix-up with our entry (ie they wouldn't let

ble Serow and the gazelle-like Gasser. With a lustier engine you could imagine the Beta Alp giving the Pampera a serious run for its money. But the Suzook's humble powerplant struggles to urge the bike up really steep hills in second gear, where the torquier Pampera will comfortably lug up in third.

Two things stand in the way of the Beta being even better off-road. Firstly the pegs are too far forward (we commented on this in our original test), and secondly a dreadful set of low bars.

us in!!) we didn't actually get to compete in the event we'd travelled 200 miles to take part in. Nevertheless the organisers allowed us to ride the course as travelling marshals so we rode each of the sections in turn and marked ourselves, comparing our scores at the top of each section.

From the beginning it was clear that the Gasser was going to be the secret weapon for the best (lowest) score on the day. All that trials torque from the low-revving stroker was going

to be hard to beat - and so it proved. When the section got tricky the Pampera rider would simply pick his line and then float over the obstacles. When you needed a little squirt of power to lift the front clear of a rut or hole then the Pampera would oblige. In fact the only time it wasn't a match for the other two was in seriously slippery mud. Here the Gasser's extra power meant that it broke traction just a little

too easily - no matter which gear it was in, even with the trials tyre running at just 4psi.

In these situations the less powerful Beta came into its own. With its short wheelbase and compact dimensions it was possible to transfer your weight right to the back where the bike could be made to hook up. The Alp was also good in the occasional rocky sections, where you could exploit its excellent manoeuvrability and find grip virtually anywhere. All it lacked was a bit of extra torque to give you the option of carrying a higher gear where necessary.

The Serow on the other hand had all the torque you needed and certainly found excellent grip, it's just that it proved to be that little bit harder to negotiate out of trouble. On the easy sections the Serow would storm up without hesitation - in many cases at least as fluently as the Pampera thanks to its wonderfully gutsy motor and well-controlled suspension. But where there were deep ruts then the Serow's weightier front end proved a bit of a disadvantage. In fairness if you could see the problem approaching you could lift the front clear using just the throttle (the Beta on the other hand always required a serious tug on the bars), but it was never quite as easy as on the Gasser.

Long Distance Trials Sections: 1 Gas Gas, 2 Beta, 3 Yamaha

On the Trail

Of course Long Distance Trials are all about keeping your feet on the pegs - but once you get back onto the trail a whole different set of criteria kick in. Elements such as range, comfort, speed, stability, versatility and ease-of use count for a lot more than good feet-up potential. Those of you looking for more than just a LDT bike will doubtless favour the Serow: with a useful range of 100 miles (compared to the

Pampera's 60-70 and the Beta's 85-odd), the Serow can match all-day comfort and a reasonable cruising speed with everyday versatility - plus it could turn its hand to things like trail bike rallies and the like.

I should point out however that this was an issue on which we didn't all agree. For my part I reckon that living with the electric-start Serow with its decent lights, proper side-stand, self-cancelling indicators etc would be the sensible option. It may not have quite the agility of the Pampera nor the style or manoeuvrability of the Beta, but as an all rounder on which to get your dirty fun at the weekend it gets my vote.

The others however felt differently: Both Si P and Clive reckoned the Beta could match the Serow for versatility (it too had decent lights and electric start etc), and figured they could live without the Serow's obvious speed advantage in order to benefit from the Alp's nimble handling. In truth I reckon this depends upon what sort of riding you do most, but no-one favoured the thirstier Gasser for the winner of this category.

Versatility: 1= Yamaha & Beta, 3 Gas Gas

And Finally...

And so we come to the overall winner. Can there be just one victor with such unusual machinery and such a diverse range of abilities? The answer is undoubtedly no - each one could take the top award depending upon your requirements and riding style.

The Pampera takes the title for the best Long Distance Trials machine. It's built for the job, has the best spread of power and the most suitable chassis. It's fun to ride, easy to get on with and capable of winning these sorts of events.

The Serow on the other hand would be the obvious choice for someone who requires more versatility from their machine. It makes a pretty good LDT bike, an excellent trail bike, a handy commuter and a good all rounder. We've seen them raced and rallied, and its low seat and easy-start makes it a good beginner's trailie.

And finally we come to the Alp. The newest and most stylish of all three. It's arguably the best compromise between the narrow-focus Pampera and the broad-appeal Serow.

It's low, relatively light, easy to handle and capable of tackling LDJs competitively. But it's also easy to start, simple to ride (both on and off road) and would doubtless make an excellent first bike for an inexperienced rider wanting to get into off-roading. If you're looking for an easy to use trailie - this has to be it.

The final choice however, is down to you...

Trail Tales

Paul Blezard reveals how one year the 'Rally of Discovery' really lived up to its name...

My first mistake was by far the biggest: to use my own bike instead of blagging someone else's for the second running of the Rally of Discovery which took place as usual in Ireland. Things started to go wrong before I'd even got out of Blighty: pulled by the Wiltshire Old Bill on the westbound M4 for having too small a number plate on my XR600, they soon spotted my out of date tax disc. Oops. At least I made the ferry from Pembroke on time, but within half an hour of docking at dusk in Rosslare, my lights packed up. Fortunately there were other rallyists to tag along behind.

Sunday 17th September 1995: the first full day of the rally, and I was up to incident number three within two hours of leaving the start in Waterford. Thrashing down the bumpy road from Dungarvan to Clonmel, I swept into a downhill right hander and found my rear brake pedal strangely squidgy.... A roadside inspection soon revealed why; a complete absence of brake pads. Gone, 'juss-like-that' as Tommy Cooper used to say. I wasted half an hour riding up and down the road looking for them, but to no avail. Oh well, not to worry, I still had my front brake and the excellent XR engine braking. No problemo.

Day two was a long one: We had to ride right across Eire from Kilfinane to Connemara via County Clare. At the lunch stop in Ballyvaughan I found my horn dangling by its wires and re-attached it in the nick of time. In Galway I wasted about an hour going round all the motorcycle shops searching for a set of XR600 rear pads but I might as well have been looking for a pack of condoms endorsed by the Pope! Still, I did find some excellent underpants in the Irish equivalent of Marks & Sparks - In my haste to leave London

I'd somehow forgotten to pack any.

Half an hour later, after a 90mph thrape up the N84, I turned onto a back-road to the next checkpoint at a place called Cloonboo, and fortunately (as it turned out) I got stuck behind a truck which needed all of the road, so was reduced to a 25mph bumble when my front brake lever came right back to the bar. Pump it, nothing. Nichts, nada, niente. Mama Mia! I gently rolled to a halt using my feet as anchors and inspected my front brake. No brake pads. I couldn't believe it. To paraphrase the words of Oscar Wilde, to lose one set of brake pads was unfortunate, but to lose two seemed rather careless. Yet there it was, or rather, they weren't. After a long search up and down the road, I miraculously found one of

the missing front pads, but of the other pad and the vital retaining pin, there was no sign.

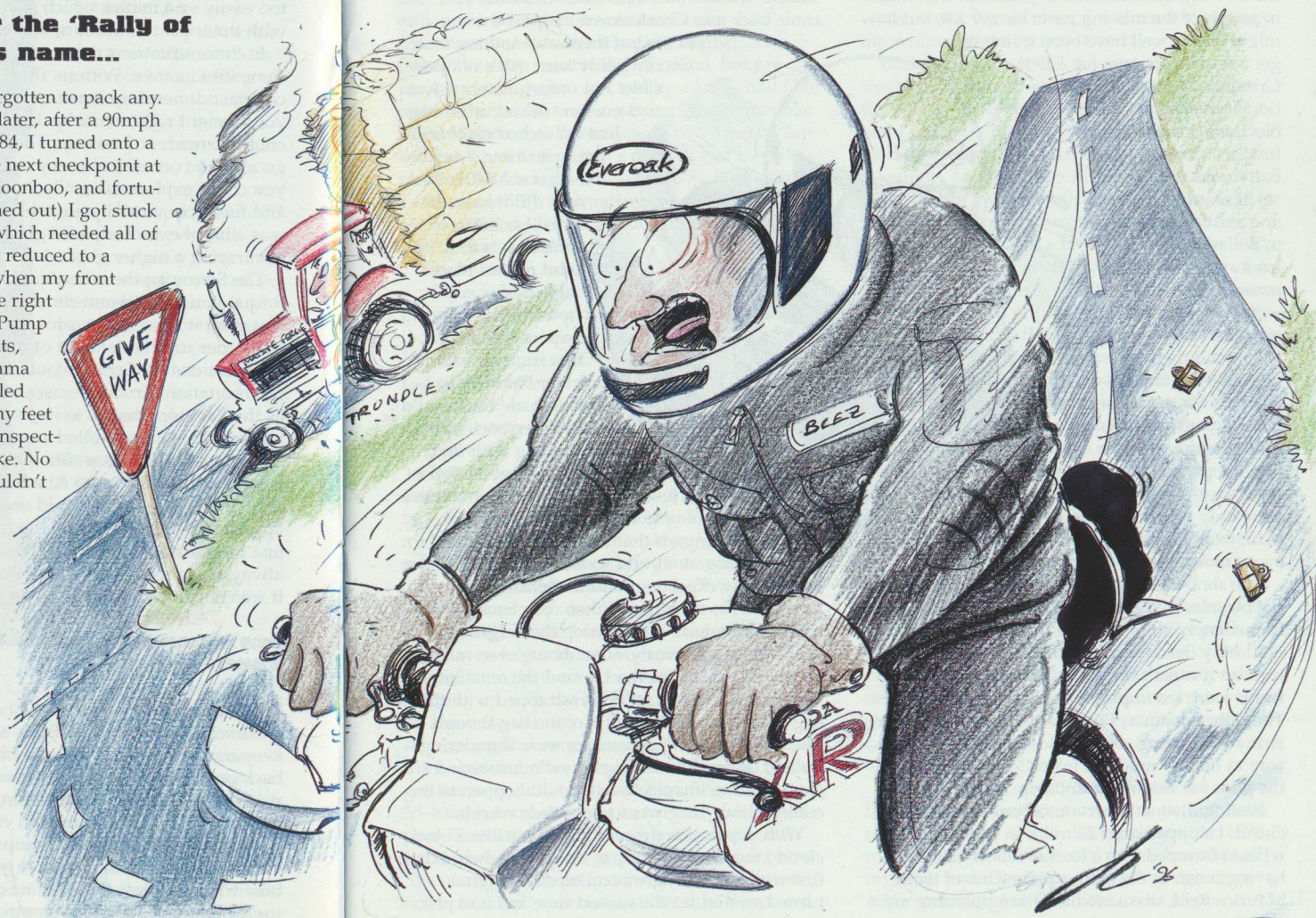
This no-brakes situation was a trifle worrying since I still had four check-points to find and 100 cross-country miles to ride to the overnight stop in Delphi. Hmmm.

I considered the alternatives: carry on regardless or wait for hours to be recovered by the back-up truck. Well, I mused, there isn't really much traffic on most Irish roads, and the engine braking on the XR is pretty good. By the time I'd done a couple more check-points I'd pretty much got the hang of riding without brakes. The gears and engine braking worked fine for general slowing down purposes, it was just coming to a complete stop which posed a bit of a problem - I just had to

scrub off the last 15mph or so with my boots!

With three check-points down and one to go, the sun disappeared over the horizon and guess what? Yup, you got it; the lights packed up. Great. No brakes and no lights on twisty Irish back-roads that didn't even have so much as a white line down the middle, never mind cat's eyes. This was turning into a bit of a challenge. I just made it to the last out-of-the way check-point at the end of a track in the Partry mountains as dusk turned to darkness.

My biggest 'moment' of the day came soon afterwards as I sailed helplessly across a 'Give Way' sign hidden at the bottom of a steep hill. Fortunately there wasn't a car in sight although I came across several in the next few miles and



Trail Tales

decided to investigate my lighting problem before one of them drove into me. Like manna from Heaven, I found a Meeting Hall in the middle of nowhere with a splendid Halogen light illuminating its doorway and with its help soon found the source of my problems - a disconnected wire in the back of the headlight.

As luck would have it, the following day was the rest day, so I had time to phone all over Eire in search of the missing parts for my XR, but I might just as well have been trying to get a thrust grommet for a 1936 Grindley-Peerless. In desperation I widened my search to Northern Ireland and finally found a shop in Ballymena with a set of rear pads and another one in Belfast with the fronts and that vital retaining pin. But with no overnight service even between Ulster and the Irish Republic (let alone from the UK), and the post between the two notoriously unreliable, getting the parts was not going to be easy - especially as we were only staying one night in each place from now on and we left first thing every morning.

The shop in Ballymena posted the rear pads on the promise of a cheque (Thanks!) which I sent immediately and I paid for the front pads from Belfast by Barclaycard. If the rear pads didn't turn up it wasn't the end of the world but the fronts were too important to leave to chance. The rally organiser, Phil Gunn kindly lent me his Army Armstrong and I decided to ride all the way to Belfast and back from Connemara to get the pads - a 350 mile round trip.

Feeling distinctly nervous about the long ride ahead, I stopped after 20 miles in Westport, where I bumped into a load of fellow rallyists having lunch in the main square. One of them, Maurice Reid, dissuaded me from pursuing my

masochistic plan to ride to Belfast and back while he contrived an alternative solution with the aid of his mobile phone. He phoned a mate of his in Newry called Seamus and persuaded him to drive the 40 miles to Belfast to pick up my brake bits and put them on a transport lorry which was going to the Republic very early the next morning. We then arranged a rendezvous at a garage in a place called Ballaghadereen which was only about 30 miles east of the rally route the next day.

Everything went according to plan; and while everyone else was heading for the lunch stop on Achill Island, I shot off to Ballaghadereen on the Armstrong like a bat out of hell, averaging 60mph on the bumpy Irish roads. I picked up my parts at the garage, put them in my bag, turned around, and headed back west like a man possessed. Ten minutes later disaster struck. As I came back into Charlestown I felt for the bag behind me but there was nothing there.

Oh my giddy aunt that's not possible! But unfortunately it was.

Somehow the accursed bag had unhitched itself from the Armstrong's rack and gone AWOL. Not only did it have the priceless XR front brake pads in it, but also my irreplaceable filofax and worst of all, the expensive camera that back-up van driver Pat Whelan had lent me because I'd left my own back in Blighty, along with my underpants. Sweet mother of

Jesus, what in God's name was I going to tell him?! At first I convinced myself that I must have forgotten to

attach the bag at all, and rode straight back to the garage fully expecting to find it sitting on the forecourt. No such luck. I then rode back the ten miles to Charlestown scanning the verges at a snail's pace and finally, after about seven miles, on the far side of the road, found the remains of the bottle of oil that had been strapped with the bag to the rack. Still no sign of the bag though. Meanwhile 40 ton juggernauts were thundering up and down the road every few minutes and I shuddered to imagine what would happen to the contents if my bag went under their wheels.

With depression descending on me like a black cloud I continued slowly to the point where I'd first realised the bag was missing. No sign. I turned around for the second time and was just

about to set off back for a further search when two middle-aged ladies pulled up in a Metro and said, 'You wouldn't have lost a bag by any chance would you?' And there it was.

Somewhat battered after its high speed excursion down the road, everything was surprisingly still intact: the brakes, the filofax and even the camera, which against all the odds, was still working - well sort of. Glory hallelujah! I wanted to kiss 'em Mrs Toney and Mrs Moran as they told me that they'd found the bag sitting right in the middle of the road. If they hadn't stopped to pick it up it would undoubtedly have been squashed flat by a truck. They'd gone to the Guarda (police) in Charlestown but (fortunately for me) there was no one there, so they'd been planning to hand the bag in at Castlebar when they'd spotted me searching. They were undoubtedly a pair of angels sent from heaven.

Shaken and stirred, rather like my bag, I rejoined the rally route to Achill Island, but my troubles weren't over yet, not by a long chalk! For a start, the Armstrong was using oil and fuel like a 500 motocrosser. It swallowed two litres of 'liquid gold' just to top up its oil tank and then it ran out of juice late in the afternoon. Fortunately I was rescued by an amazing character from Mallow called Liam Lombard riding of all things a 1972 Honda CB250.

About half an hour later, having reached the final check-point of the day in the gathering gloom, I was tearing down a bumpy track back to the main road when I damn nearly fell off as the front tyre compression-punctured on a pothole and the Armstrong tried to go straight on at the next corner. And guess what? Just to make things more interesting, both beams in the headlight packed up.

Great! I limped back to the garage where I'd recently filled up and bought a little torch which I taped to the top of the headlight. The tyre wouldn't hold any air, they didn't have any Fix-a-Flat and I certainly wasn't carrying the tools to carry out a repair (hey, you know me!). Oh well, not to worry, it was only about 15 miles to our night stop in Ballina, and I knew that Liam would be along soon to guide me through the gloom.

Sure enough, there he was, like the tortoise catching up with the hare, and he readily agreed to 'show me the way to go home'. The old Armstrong was surprisingly rideable with a flat front tyre, and after a few miles I'd pretty much got the hang of it. Liam was bumbling along at 35-40mph and I soon got bored with the leisurely pace. Presuming that he was going slowly only for my benefit, I came up alongside and shouted 'It's okay, you can go faster now'. He appeared not to hear and continued at the snail-like speed,

so a couple of minutes later I tried again, and this time I received the startled reply, 'I don't want to go any faster! So when we reached the street lights of Ballina, I overtook him (puncture and all) and pressed on without him!

After a hearty meal I started to fit the new pads to the stricken XR600, but horror of horrors, they were the right shape but miles too thick to fit in the caliper. My bacon was saved by the fact that I'd found one of the original pads, and by fitting one old pad and one new one, there was just enough room to squeeze them both in. The retaining pin was also much too long, but fortunately it still cleared the spokes by about a millimetre. So I had front brakes once more. Hooray!

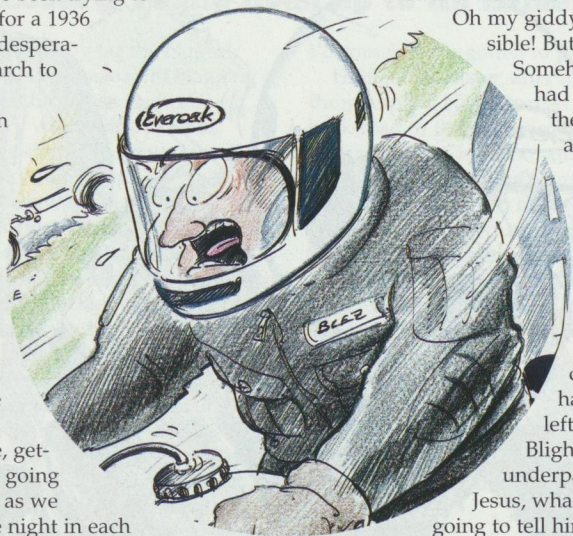
The rear pads had also turned up, but unfortunately couldn't be fitted because the recess in the caliper on which they sit had been completely worn away... Never mind, I was used to managing without them by now anyway.

Back on my trusty XR the next morning, my troubles continued. I took two wrong turns on the way to the first check-point and no sooner had I got there than my throttle cable broke. Then it started to rain! Necessity being the mother of invention, I cobbled together a rather effective bodge using my mole grips and gaffer tape. It was hard to blip the throttle and brake at the same time and it was a bit hairy in the rain, but I was soon going for it again like a good 'un. I made the lunch check with two minutes to spare, after running out of petrol and having to be rescued by a friendly farmer who gave me two pints of pre-mix from his old lawnmower!

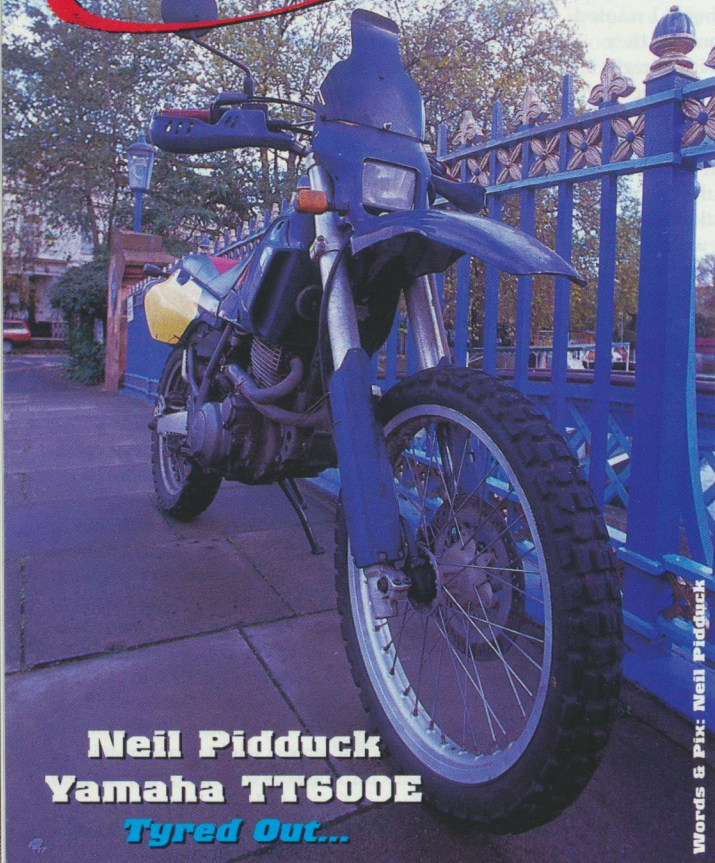
The last day of the rally was another long one; from Castleblayney on the Ulster border to Youghal in County Cork, via Dublin. In Dublin's traffic jams I encountered a slight problem with my boded-up throttle fix - the end of the mole-grips stuck out so far that I kept clipping cars with it. Oops.

Later on, within sight of the Rock of Cashel, my throttle fix gave up the ghost. It required a thorough re-design, but after about half an hour of ingenious bodgery, I was back on the road as the sun dipped over the horizon. In the pitch dark I sniffed out the final check-point of the rally, an obscure cottage in an enchanting valley near Tallow and after an invigorating ride behind a speeding Guarda car and a certifiable nutter called Pete Willey on an XT350, finally made it to the finish in Youghal.

Against all the odds I'd completed the rally of Discovery, and (unlike most of the participants) made it to every single check-point on the 1500 mile route; I didn't win any prizes, but after all my trials and tribulations it was enough of an achievement just to finish the event alive...



STAFF BIKES



**Neil Pidduck
Yamaha TT600E
Tyred Out...**

Words & Pix: Neil Pidduck

TBM smudger Neil Pidduck bought himself a secondhand TT600E to get to photo-shoots. Here's what he thinks about it...

For many years I was the proud owner of a 1989 Yamaha XT600ZE Ténéré. I bought it new and the two of us went all over the place together, clocking up over 100,000 miles through dispatching and travelling to over 40 different countries. The Ténéré was brilliant, suffered immense amounts of abuse, and mechanically at least, gave virtually no problems. It did however go through two frames,

three swinging-arms, two front-ends and two back wheels, although most of these problems were due to heavy abuse over rough terrain with loads of luggage strapped to its back.

Some years later I was wandering around the Bologna bike show and it was here that I first spotted the new generation TT600 on the Yamaha Belgarda stand. Not officially destined for the UK, the bike came in both electric and kickstart versions and looked the business. I've always had a particular fondness for the electric boot, as the only thing I regularly kick is my tyres, and with better suspension and a lighter overall weight the TT-E looked like it could just be the ultimate XT.

Earlier this year I was on the look-out for a big trailie when I came across a 1994 Belgarda Yam TT600E with just 7000km on the clock, for sale in the classifieds. It was up for £1950 and nearby in Surrey, so I was soon heading down the A3 past Guildford.

The bike was scruffier than a traveller's dog (and a naff blue colour to boot), thanks to a lack of basic maintenance and a dearth of cleaning, but the engine sounded sweet enough. It had tax and MoT but was going to need tyres at some point soon. The front was a Pirelli MT21 and at the rear a trials tyre was fitted. A part-worn rear MT21 along with some brake pads and a rear sprocket were thrown in and a deal was struck at £1800.

Initially when I got the bike home I rode it around with the rear trials tyre still fitted deciding at some point I'd whack on the

MT21. However the decision was made for me a day later when I got a rear puncture and the trials tyre had to come off anyway. I fitted the MT21 and spent the afternoon cleaning all around the rear of the bike whilst the wheel was out. The amount of ingrained dirt I found in every nook and cranny meant I soon had the bike stripped for a serious bit of scrubbing. With the MT21 fitted and the bike looking far shinier, though still far from beautiful, I headed off for a bit of a hack. But the ride was cut short when the newly fitted rear tyre blew-out on a fast sweeper - scary!

So after getting the bike back home it was down to the tyre shop for some new rubber. I was after a set of affordable trail tyres for the road, so opted for a pair of Bridgestone Trailwings (TW-301 3.00-21 front &

TW-302 4.60-18 rear) for £110 (with tubes), which seemed to fit the bill. The rear was in stock but I couldn't get hold of the front 'til after the weekend so with just the new rear tyre fitted I had to head up to Norfolk to meet with Si and Clive and do some photos at an enduro. The journey up was good fun as I stayed off major highways and the highlight of the trip was riding round the outside of a geezer on a FireBlade trying to get his knee down on a roundabout. On the way back the third tyre problem appeared when I got a puncture on the front MT21 so whacked in a couple of cans of instant fix to get me home. The tyre wouldn't pop onto the bead though, so it was a bit of a hairy journey on the way home.

Once I had the matching front fitted I was expecting some handling improvements, but although better, the TT was still running wide out of corners. Before a run down to Somerset I had a fiddle with the Paioli suspension front and rear. I wound up the pre-load on the shock which not only had the effect of steepening the head angle, making the bike turn in quicker, but also helped prevent the rear squatting too much under hard acceleration, making it easier to hold a tight line on the way out of bends. I also softened up the damping on the forks, which helped a lot with front-end grip on the way into corners. The difference in handling was dramatic and I had some great fun on the way to Somerset. It was now possible to get on the gas nice 'n' early with the bike still well cranked over - the rear tyre would squirm but gave tremendous feedback.

However subsequent abuse has shredded the rear hoop quite badly in less than 1000 miles and when they get really hot the centre knobs just turn to putty and eventually disappear. So once again it was back to my tyre problems - I really needed to try and find some decent tyres to match the TT's obvious ability on the roads.

Conveniently enough, just a couple of months ago Avon Tyres launched a brand new set of hoops specifically marketed for big trailies. The new 'Distanzias' come from the company which brought us the fabulous Avon Gripster, so when they offered us a set for testing on our TT we jumped at the chance. At the time of going to press these were about to be fitted - we'll report back on their performance in the next instalment and let you know whether they've finally managed to nail the TT's slightly wayward handling.

In the meantime I'm going to have another look at the suspension and see if I can't make a few improvements which should help the handling. A new set of head bearings and fork seals are on the cards before



£1800 secured Neil P a well used but otherwise tidy trailbike...



Preventing tyres from disintegrating has been a real problem on the TT600...

the next MoT anyway, so all this work should be carried out within the next few weeks.

Apart from the necessary maintenance (oil and filters etc) I can't really claim to have done a great deal to the TT since I bought it back in the summer, though I've just fitted a new OE clutch cable (£33 - ouch!), and have thoroughly lubed up the throttle cables - instantly improving the feel of the bike. Recently I've modified an aftermarket screen meant for a Dominator and mounted it in quite an upright position. I've trimmed it down at the edges (maybe a bit too much) and it's supported by a small bracket as well as being screwed to the

headlight shroud at the bottom. It works well up to about 60mph and still does a fair job above that too, especially considering the cow-horn Rentals that are fitted. To be honest I don't think I've ever come across a wider set of bars and these will have to be changed because in London traffic the overall slimness of the TT is totally wasted, and fighting my way through the jams to TBM towers can be a right pain.

Once I've got everything working properly I'll maybe spend a few quid on a rack (from www.off-the-road.de) which will make carrying all my camera kit to dirty remote locations to meet the TBM crew far easier. A larger capacity Acerbis tank is also on the cards - the standard 11 litre tiddler was a nightmare during the fuel crisis and is becoming a general pain anyway, as you have to be on the look-out for gas after just 80 odd miles.

So with fresh rubber, a new 'ticket' and a few timely mods and maintenance chores out of the way I'm looking forward to a winter of content. Fingers crossed anyway...



WIN



all this...
(well, everything
except Natasha)



in the great
TBM
Give-away



It's the ultimate give-away: TBM has got together with Honda UK and a whole host of our advertisers to offer one lucky winner the prize of a lifetime. There's no tie-breakers to think up, no difficult questions to answer, and definitely no awkward catches. All you have to do is start collecting tokens. And one lucky prize winner will be riding away with this little lot...

The prize is simply awesome. Whether you're into trail riding or race enduros, we're confident you won't find a prize quite like it. We've made a list of all the things we reckon you'll need to enjoy your riding next year and then gathered them all together in one giant giveaway. That includes a brand new bike, bolt-on goodies, a full set of race gear, helmet and boots, consumables such as oil, tyres and chain and sprockets etc, together with a fantastic dirt biking holiday in France and a year's subscription to your favourite mag - that's TBM by the way!

Okay so what exactly is up for grabs? Well, for a start the winner gets his or her hands on an absolutely brand spanking new 2001-model Honda XR250R. We've chosen the XR250 for a number of reasons: firstly because we know how popular they are among trail riders. And secondly because the XR is exactly the sort of bike which can be raced in the small-bore thumper class in enduros. It qualifies for the new 250cc four-stroke class, and is a proven winner. But if you reckon you need more grunt, there's a 270cc big-bore kit thrown in from **Allens Performance R&D** who'll also rebore your barrel to take the oversize piston. Along with the piston kit comes a set of matching gaskets, a White Bros air filter and an air vent kit.

You're going to need to look after all that engineering, so **Ipone** are supplying the lucky winner with an incredible range of lubricants from their 100% motorcycle oil range. From fully synthetic 'Full Power' four-stroke oil, to carb cleaner, degreas-

er, alloy cleaner, chain lube, brake fluid, spray on protector, foam filter oil and plastics polish, there's an **Ipone** lubricant to suit every occasion and you're going to get the best selection.

Doubtless you'll want to protect your motor externally as well, so **Gadget Racing** are providing the winner with an alloy sumpguard which fits straight onto the 2001 XR250R, as well as a pair of matching alloy frame guards. These bolt easily into place and give your bike all the protection it needs.

We reckon a set of super-strong alloy bars are essential fittings to cope with the rigours of off-roading, so we've lined up a set of **Tomaselli** handlebars from On Time Racing. These lightweight alloy bars replace the standard steel items and come complete with a protective bar pad. What else would we wrap around a fine set of alloy bars but a pair of superb **Acerbis** Rally Brush Guards. These essential items are de rigueur on the trail and are designed to protect more than just your fingers. They provide protection for your bike's levers and master cylinder as well as preserving your vulnerable twistgrip. Fit and forget.

For all the riding you're going to get in, you're going to need more than just your original chain and sprockets, so we've sourced some sexy aftermarket **Talon** Radialite sprockets for you to use. There's two sets up for grabs (two fronts and two alloy rears) which should see you to the end of your first season, especially when matched up with a high quality **Regina** O-ring chain courtesy of CPK.

Brake pads? Of course you're going to get through a few sets of these, so once you've worn out the originals there's three more sets of the brilliant **Carbone Lorraine** pads to fit into the calipers (one front and two rears).

When it comes to tyres we wanted to cover all angles. We figured that our lucky winner will almost certainly take to the trail at some stage, so a set of **Pirelli's** finest MT21s are the obvious first choice. But maybe you fancy trying your hand at an enduro like the Welsh Three day - in which case you're going to need a set of enduro hoops. We've lined up a set of **Metzeler** Six Days to cover this eventuality. Fully FIM approved and road legal, these tyres will offer you the grip you need in a 'proper' enduro like the Welsh. And of course a set of **Pirelli** MX treads (like the MT320) takes care of the times when you want to race hare and hounds or for those competitions where tyres aren't specified, but maximum grip is needed. Either way we reckon we've got you covered.

So now your bike's sorted... what about you? **Kenny** riding gear has only recently been launched in the UK but it's rapidly becoming the riding apparel to be seen in. Our lucky winner gets a complete set of 2001 Kenny enduro gear: that's high quality riding pants, a matching shirt and gloves together with a Kenny enduro jacket (complete with removable sleeves). And as if that wasn't enough, there's a matching **Kenny** helmet to complete the outfit. And if you want, you can opt for the Honda co-ordinated Kenny gear to match your new bike. Are we good to you or what?

Along with your riding gear we reckon you'll need some decent body protection, that's why we've lined you up a set of **Zip** body armour for taking the knocks out of falling off. The Zip Wear armour is fully adjustable, comfortable in use, and being silver, it matches all colour combinations. Elbow guards

are the items of protective gear that most people forget about - fortunately we haven't. **Acerbis** make a superb set of comfortable elbow guards so we've got a set of these to give away. Eye protection is vitally important, and who else would you think of for goggles but **Scott**? A set of Scott 89s compliment any crash helmet.

Finally, boots are a vitally important piece of protective riding kit so we've got **On Time Racing** to provide you with a set of their latest **GAR** boots. GAR boots are made in Italy from the finest full-grain leather. They're comfortable, stylish, lightweight and come complete with smart alloy buckle fasteners. What's more we've chosen a perfect match for your riding gear. And we're going to throw in a set of knee guards as well.

There's one other thing we reckon no smart rider would want to be without - and that's a bum-bag. The **Scott** Six-Days bag is a classic - with a main pocket for large items such as tubes etc, a zip-out tool roll holder and a neoprene cover to keep the rain out. Essential equipment.

We're nearly there, but we haven't quite finished yet, because our lucky winner is going to get the chance to put their new bike and kit through its paces at a **TBM** photo shoot. Yep the winner will be expected to join us at a test location (or for a day out on the trail) and will be asked to give their riding impressions of the bike and kit (and be pictured riding it) for a forthcoming article in TBM.

And we're not quite done because there's still a few fabulous prizes left. On top of the bike, all that kit, all those extras and the chance to ride with the TBM team, our lucky winner is going to choose a French off-roading holiday courtesy of **Sport Adventure**. Whether it's the Morvan, Burgundy, Normandy or Calais raid, the choice of which one of these great off-road trail riding holidays you attend is up to you.

And for when you've finished riding and you're slumped in your favourite armchair in front of a roaring log fire, there's a year's subscription to **TBM** to keep you up to date with all the latest happenings on the dirt bike scene. And we'll even throw in a year's membership of the Trail Rider's Fellowship as well. What a hell of a prize...

What you have to do...

In order to have a chance of winning the prize, all you have to do is collect all three tokens (one from last month, one this month and one next issue). The second token appears at the bottom of this page and the last token will appear next month. Cut them out and keep them in a safe place and next month we'll be publishing a form for you to fill in and send into us together with **ALL THREE TOKENS**. Lost tokens can be replaced by purchasing the relevant back issues from us in the usual way... **Good Luck!**

NB: All prizes will have to be collected by the winner. All completed entries will be entered into a 'pot' and the winner will be drawn from that pot. There is only one winner, the judges decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered into. The judges reserve the right to alter any of the prizes without notice. Names and addresses may be used for marketing purposes by the competition prize suppliers only, unless directed not to do so by yourselves...



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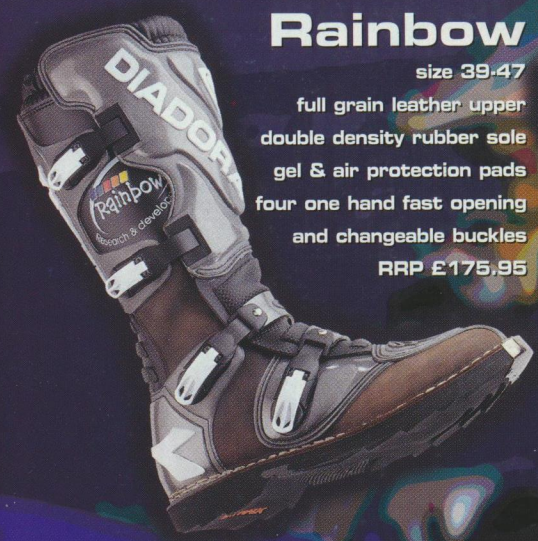
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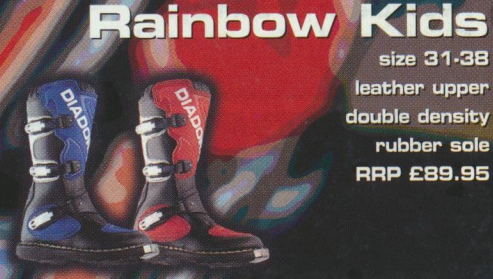
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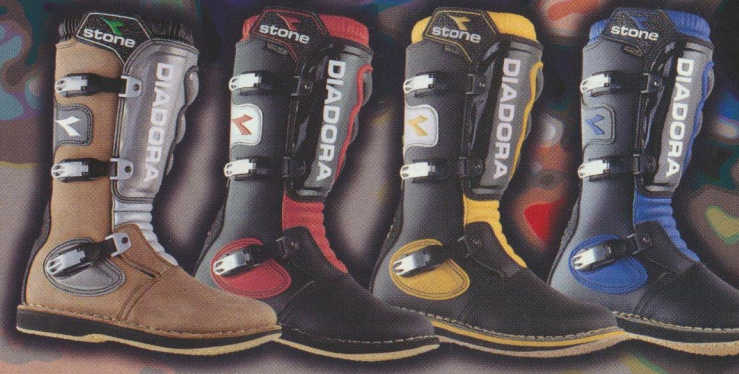
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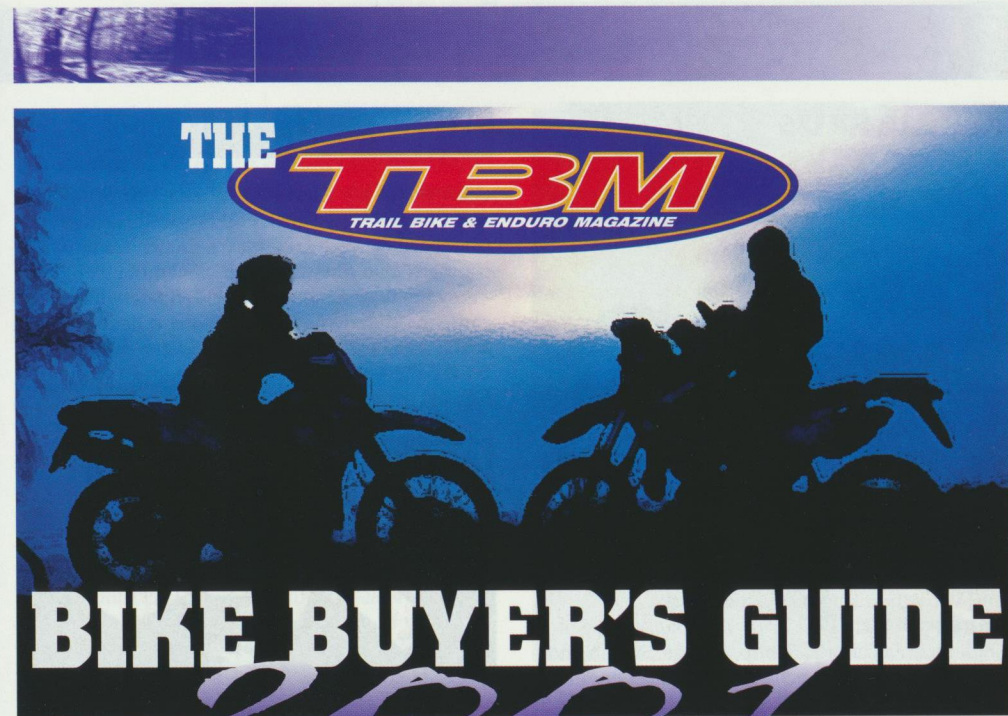
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ALFER VR250



ALFER

Small Spanish manufacturer of enduro bikes relatively new to the British off-road scene. Powered by a versatile Rotax motor that can have the power characteristics altered with a twirl of an Allen key. High quality suspension a full road legal kit and a keen price make the Alfer a sensible option for those who like to be different. Limited supplies and a steady demand keeps used prices healthy.

VR250/260: w/c, 2-str, counter-balanced, adjustable power valve, 6 speed, 107kgs (claimed), seat height 945mm, **Verdict:** Jekyll and Hyde enduro racer.

APRILIA

Italian concern who in their short history have enjoyed much competition success. Their products are generally well made, up to the minute and above all stylish.

RX125/50: 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 (particularly the 125). **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.

Verdict: peaky poser.

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

Tuareg 600/650: a/c, 4-str, sohc, Rotax-powered single, e/s. Paris-Dakar lookalike with a high specification (USD forks etc), and flashy

APRILIA RX125



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) w/c, dohc, 4-str, e/s single, with a claimed 50bhp, 157kgs. Stylish and quick trailie using punchy 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 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. Had a much more softer edge to the styling with the later 'cube' model. Updates for 2001 include fuel injection and a fresh set of plastics. Capable big trailie both on and off the road and good value. **Verdict:** Latin lovely with the legs for the road.

ARMSTRONG M1500



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. **Verdict:** Army surplus...



ATK

a/c 4-str, sohc, Rotax-powered singles. US-made, high quality motocrossers with unique engine-sprocket mounted rear brake on some models. **Verdict:** Exclusivity, at a price.

BARIGO

a/c, 4-str, sohc, Rotax singles. Quirkily-styled, French-built supermoto using Rotax power, rare in the UK. **Verdict:** Remember Agincourt.

BETAMOTOR

Beta's world championship winning trials machines have kept the factory in the public eye. Now thanks to a tie-up with Suzuki, a new 4-stroke trials/trail bike hybrid powered by Japanese

engines has been launched. The new Beta Alp is available in either 125 or 200 form.

50 Enduro: w/c, 2-str enduro bike built for Italian one-make enduro series, available here in roadgoing form. **Verdict:** Spaghetti screamer.

Alp: w/c, 2-str, 250cc, 80kgs. Beta's early version of the Pampera with strange pyramidic petrol tank. **Verdict:** Nice oddball.

Alp: (2000-on) a/c, 4-str, sohc, e/s. 95kgs, seat height 870mm. **Verdict:** Head for the hills.

BMW

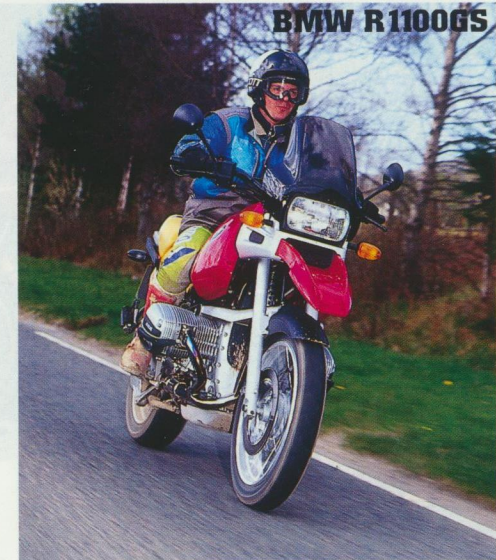
Traditional air-cooled, pushrod boxer flat twins. Some rare collectibles: early pre-G/S ISDT boxers which weigh only 155kgs! Genuine Paris-Dakar machines. **Specialist builders:** Schek and HPN. **UK expert:** Jon Watson-Miller at Bracken motorcycles in South East London (020-7232-1814).

R80G/S: 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 mud-guard and simple instruments. **Verdict:** Rommel wished he'd had these.

R100G/S: (1988-on) a/c, 4-str, twin, e/s. 220Kgs. 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: (1994-99) & **R1150GS:** (1999-on) o-a/c, 4-str, 8-valve, 1086cc, twin, e/s, 5-speed, 80bhp. 209kgs. 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. Hugged out to 1150cc for 99, more power and torque, even funkier styling and a six speed tranny keeps the Bee-Emm on the pace. **Verdict:** The first superbike trailie.

F650 'Funduro': w/c, 4-str, dohc, 652cc, single, e/s, 48bhp (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 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. Road only ST version also available. All models updated for 2000 with fuel injection, twin cat exhaust cans, ABS option, and a new set of clothes. Limited edition Dakar model features 21" front wheel and Richard Saint replica paint job. **Verdict:** Solid, stylish and sensible.

CAGIVA CANYON 600



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

W16X500DE: w/c, 2-str, single. Oh my god! 500ccs of sheer insane two-stroke terror. Built for Stateside desert racing the DE (desert enduro) was imported in small numbers (27) during the late 80s. Huge 18 litre tank and over 300mm of suspension travel combine to make this bike

way too big and brutal for the average rider.

Verdict: 'Nurse, the screens please'

Elefant: mid-eighties. o-a/c, 4-str, desmo, V-twin. Engine originally derived from the Ducati Pantah. Started as 650cc in mid-eighties,

CAGIVA

Italian manufacturer that now owns MV Agusta, 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 125: w/c, 2-str, 124cc single, e/s, 7-speed, 34bhp, 125kgs. Outrageously styled super-moto available in learner legal and unrestricted flavours. Even the full power model is hard work 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. 50cc version also imported in limited numbers. Off-road? Only for super-moto racing, for which it had its own class in France.

Verdict: Teenage kicks.

W8 125: a/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. Re-introduced into the UK a number of years later.

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 kickstarter. Alloy rims and swingarm. **Verdict:** Something different.

W12: a/c 4-str, sohc, 4-valve, 350cc single, e/s, 6-speed, 25bhp. Simple no frills trailbike (as used by the Italian military), a bit like an Italian XT350 but not as tough. Rare in the UK. **Verdict:** Why bother?

CAGIVA ELEFANT 750



grew to 750cc by 1988, though there was a smaller 350cc version available to suit learner laws in other countries. Pick of the bunch: Lucky Explorer 900ie.

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.) o-a/c, 4-str, desmo, V-twin, e/s. 188Kgs. Distinctive looking big trailie with white/red/blue/blue paintwork and angular styling with gold anodised rims (21 inch F, 17 inch R). 750 motor was nice, but suffered from poor carburetion at bottom end thanks to fitment of 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 paint scheme, Ohlins suspension and electronic fuel injection), were higher spec and more powerful than later ones. 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.

Canyon 500/600: (1996-on.) a/c 4-str, 4 valve single, e/s only, 165kgs, seat height 795mm. Stylish faired urban trailie, but a tad under-powered with its Euro licence 34bhp motor. **Verdict:** Italian Gelding.

Gran Canyon 900ie: (1997-2000) o-a/c, 4-str, desmo V-twin, e/s, 62bhp, 213kgs (wet), seat height 825mm. Beautifully styled successor to the Elefant. Much more suited to tarmac than off-roading. Great fun and almost practical for an Italian throughbred. Service history a must. **Verdict:** Sexy Italian TDM.

Navigator 1000: (2000-on) w/c, dohc 4 valve TSCC, 90 degree V-twin, e/s, six speed, 96bhp, 210kgs, seat height 850mm. Successor to the Gran Canyon, even more road biased, but with a much smoother and more powerful Suzuki TL1000 motor. The Navi is right up there with the best of the bunch, but the paint scheme seems a tad muted for a Cagiva. **Verdict:** Italian Stallion.

CANNONDALE

400 Enduro: (2001-on) w/c, 4-str, dohc, 4 valve single, fuel injection, e/s, 110kgs. Innovative design from the American MTB manufacturer, featuring fuel injection, reversed cylinder head and crankcase that can be stripped from the side of the bike. This together with an alloy frame and a linkless rear suspension (Ohlins) should give the Cannondale serious performance albeit at a serious price. **Verdict:** God bless America.



CCM

A/c, 4-str belt-driven sohc, 597/348cc, single, e/s, left-hand kickstarter (Rotax engines), 144kgs (wet), 925mm seat height (optional lower seat). The Blackburn built bangers have finally come of age with a range of tough well made trail/enduro bikes. A trick looking Supermoto and 604RS roadster in the mould of KTM's Duke has helped the British marque become a fairly common sight on the off-road scene.

C26, 350/604 Enduro: a/c, 4-str belt-driven sohc, 597/348cc, single, e/s: (up to '98), The original modern CCM, in enduro trim only (with an optional road legal kit). All of the usual CCM refinements with a choice of 50mm or 45mm Marzocchi front forks. 350 version has smaller 34mm carb. **Verdict:** Better than it ought to be.

604E Sport: (1998-on). A proper trail bike version of CCM's big banger. High spec includes: Paioli forks, WP shock, Talon hubs, Excel rims, Brembo brakes etc. A huge range of factory options available including rallye tanks, tune up kits, and choice of paint finish. **Verdict:** British Beefcake.

DERBI

Spanish manufacturer of small capacity machines with a long history of GP World championships. **Senda 50:** w/c, 2-str, 6 speed, oil injection, 89kgs. Surprisingly capable both on and off the trail. Light weight and okay suspension makes it a cinch to keep on the pipe. Supermoto version also available. **Verdict:** For teenagers everywhere!

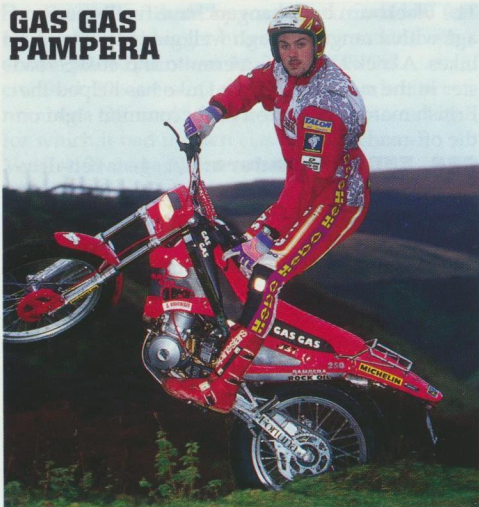
ENFIELD INDIA

Bullet trail: (1953 - on!) a/c, 4-str, ohv, single. Indian made version of the venerable Royal Hen, now with 12v electrics. **Verdict:** Days of the Raj.

GAS GAS

Spanish manufacturer of enduro and trials machines with many recent World championship victories. Quality components, light weight and good value, but some doubts remain over build quality. A new thumper is under development. **Pampera 200/250/320:** (1996-on) w/c, 2-str, 6 speed, pre-mix and kickstart only, 85kgs. Curious combination of pukka trials iron and trailbike. The ultimate go anywhere trailie but a little too specialised for extended road use. MarkII version launched in 98, not so well equipped but better suited to the trail. **Verdict:** Cheeky and

GAS GAS PAMPERA



cheap but chancy as a secondhand buy.

EC80/125/200/250/300 Enduro: (1994-on) w/c, 2-str, hydraulic clutch, seat height 940mm. Brilliantly capable and easy to race enduro machines which most owners love. The Gassers come equipped with all of the necessary road legal gear and with components such as Ohlins, Marzocchi etc offer superb value. Variable build quality requires care when buying used. Pre '96 bikes have TM motors. **Verdict:** The curate's (tortilla omelette) - great in parts. Part of the Piaggio group with legendary road-racing history.



GILERA

50: a/c, 2-str, single. Learner bikes - not officially imported (later w/c 50 trail and supermoto). **RC125/125R:** w/c, 2-str, single, grey import only Dakar replica, RC and more trailable R version, powerful and well suspended but obviously a rare sight in the UK. **RC600:** w/c, 4str, 558cc, single, e/s. Nice-looking P-D styled trailie with unimpeachable Paris-Dakar winning pedigree. Shares engine with Northwest. **Verdict:** Italian eye-candy. **Nordwest:** w/c, 4-str, 558cc, single, e/s, 140kgs, Supermoto version of the RC600 with 17 inch cast alloy wheels, USD forks, and serious brakes. Drop-dead looks, but not as powerful as the Pegaso or F650, and engine can be vibey - but cheaper than a KTM Duke. **Verdict:** Wonderful style. **XRT600:** w/c, 4str, 558cc, single, e/s. Clumsily styled, Paris-Dakar influenced big trailie that uses

the stock Gilera lump in yet another manifestation. Big, heavyish and extremely rare in the UK. **Verdict:** Ugly duckling.

HARLEY DAVIDSON

Not the V-twins, but a mish-mash of European-made stuff with the H-D badge.

H-D 90: a/c, 2-str, 90cc, single. Aermacchi-made 1970s mini-trail fun-bike. Passable off road, but very rare these days.

H-D 350: a/c, 4-str belt-driven sohc, 348cc, single, e/s. 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 downsized from 500 to 350cc. **Verdict:** Army Hog

HM ITALIA

CRE 125/250/500: All models w/c, 2-str, 5 speed CR transmission, kickstart only. HM converts Honda CR motocrossers into enduro ready CREs. Modifications to all bikes include a heavier flywheel with lighting coils, re-sprung suspension, quieter silencers, head and tail lights and centre stands. Versions include steel and alloy framed 125 and 250 and a fire breathing CRE500. Relatively expensive and still relatively rare in the UK. The CRE250 remains the pick of the bunch. **Verdict:** Good but DIY is cheaper

HONDA

XL: a/c, 4-str, trail. **XR:** a/c, 4-str, enduro.

MTX: a & w/c, 2-str, trail. **CRM:** 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 long in the tooth nowadays. As with all small Hondas, frequent oil changes are the key to a long, trouble-free life.

Cub 90: Wacky off-road 'scooter' for wacky 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. **Verdict:** Fun in a small package.

MTX125: w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single, 103kg.



Learner-legal monoshock trail bike with an unfortunate propensity for brewing up in serious off-roadery. 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:** water heater.

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:** Ideal for muckspreading!

TLM200/250: a/c 2-str, 199/243cc single. Like the original 2T Beta Alp, the TLM (and TLRs) were more or less trailbike versions of trials irons dressed up for the road. Not as single purpose as a pukka trials bike, but perfect for real snotty lanes and long distance trails.

TLR200/250: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 199/244cc single. As above but thumper version. Cheap to buy and run, also easy to ride with a low seat height. Rare 250 Jap import version available.



HONDA XR250L



XL100: a/c 4-str sohc, single, 6-speed. Very basic, cheap to run and insure novice friendly trailie. Later versions were much smaller all round with more basic instruments. **Verdict:** Good starter machine if you can find a good one.

XL125: 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, analogous to 250R and 500R. Later, Italian-built monoshock Dakar version with big tank and electric start can be found as grey import. Still available new as e-start only.

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: (1978-88), a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 248cc, single, which sported a four-valve, twin-port head, but 6-volt electrics at first; twin shocks and poor 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 second-hand buy if you can find one. 12-volt RS250 flywheel, generator and engine cover bolt 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.

XL250 Degree: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve single, e/s only, 119kgs, seat height 790mm. Grey import low

seat trailie with smooth high tech liquid cooled motor but off-road capability limited by soft suspension. Ideal bike for the short novice rider who spends more time on the street than on the dirt. **Verdict:** Green laner for the vertically challenged.

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, but loads more stomp and the same poor front brake! Fortunately the 23 inch wheels can be re-laced with 21inch rims which 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. The early 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. 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.



HONDA XL600LM

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 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.

XR75/80: a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Small 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: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 99cc, single, 6-speed, 68kgs, 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 brakes 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 difficult 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 makes it perfect for trail riders and club-man enduro riders alike, and tolerable on the road. All Honda 250s need to be revved hard if you want to get a move on. Baja version available with huge twin headlamps, among other detail changes. Fully street legal Jap import version sports e-start and other road going niceties.

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

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

HONDA XLV750



poke and unfortunately extra weight.

XR500: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. bigger version of XR250, 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, but some can be real pigs to start. Euro versions come with proper speedo and head and tail lights (but no indicators). 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. Official HRC hop-up kit with big bore (630cc) is available but tons of other people make bits for them.

Verdict: Definitive 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 road going niceties. Weight penalty, but 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

**HONDA
NX125**



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. Rare in the UK.

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 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 Motorways. Nevertheless a good touring bike providing you don't want to go too fast. Watch out for rotted wheel rims on early models. Plentiful in UK but high build quality means secondhand prices are quite steep. Now built in Italy.

XLV600VP Transalp: w/c, 4-str, 6-valve, sohc, 583cc, V-twin, e/s. Called the Rally Tourer, its name befits its description. True dual purpose machine, great all-rounder. Engine based on the VT500, and larger versions now power the Bros and Africa Twin. Unburstable and torquey motor churns out a claimed 55bhp but can be tricky to work on unless out of the frame. Expensive cosmetics worth protecting if you're going to venture off road. Early versions had drum rear brake which was prone to going oval. Suffers from rotting wheel rims (like Dominator) in certain cases, and single front discs (identical to CBR600s) can wear fast. Slight facelift in 1993 improved fairing

protection slightly. Later versions also come with handy centre stand which was an option on earlier models. Beware handlebar rubber-mountings wearing out giving 'twisted' and remote feel to bars. Sensible secondhand prices. **Verdict:** Superb trail tourer.

XL650V Transalp: (2000-on) w/c, 4-str, sohc, 6 valve V-twin, e/s. The latest 'Trannie' is blessed with a larger 647cc lump which offers a tad more power and torque than the 600 model it replaces. Smoother more rounded styling give this Italian built all-rounder a new lease of life for the new millennium. **Verdict:** Same as before only more so!

XLV750: a/c, 4-str, sohc, V-twin. Grey import mid-80s precursor to Transalp & Africa Twin but featuring shaft-drive, no fairing and distinctive red engine. Quite common in France.

KRV650 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.

KRV750 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. **Verdict:** Better off road than you'd imagine, especially on fast and dusty trails.

KRV750-R Africa Twin: w/c, 4-str, 6-valve, sohc, 742cc, V-twin, e/s. Lightened, lowered and improved 1993-on version of its forbear. **Verdict:** Superb, top quality all-rounder.

XLV1000 Varadero: (1998-on) w/c, 4-str, 8 valve, V-twin. Huge (and some say ugly) cast wheel shod super-trailie featuring a cracking retuned FireStorm motor. Weird and over complex linked brake system coupled to a dry weight of over 220kgs gives the 'Dero' only limited off-road ability. Honda luggage system available and together with a true 130mph plus performance makes this bike a serious adventure tourer.

Verdict: Point south, next stop Marrakech!
CRM250: (1989-2000) w/c, 2-str single, balancer shaft, oil injection, kickstart only. Only ever available as a grey import, since the mid 90s the CRM 250 has sold by the container load and has

changed the face of the British off-road scene. A fantastic smooth, powerful and more importantly grunty 2-stroke motor endows the CRM with more than enough performance to tackle just about anything. Surprisingly little changed until the advent of the Active Radical AR model in 97 - continues to be a good seller second-hand.

Mk1: (1989-91) Conventional forks, oil in frame, red plastics.

Mk2: (1991-94) USD forks, beefier rear shock, updated graphics.

Mk3: (1994-97) Restyled, up-rated suspension, separate oil tank, stainless steel silencer. Colours: Pink/purple, white/black and white/purple.

AR: (1997-2000) Complete redesign of the motor with it's 'eco-friendly' Active Radical ignition. More torque but less power. Up to date styling the AR is the best looker of the bunch. Colours: Black/purple, white/black/red and purple/white. **Verdict:** Quite probably the finest trailbike ever.

SL230: (1998-on) a/c, 4-str, sohc, 2 valve, single, e/s only, 112kgs. Big H's attempt to muscle in on the successful Serow market. Smooth, soft motor and supple suspension give the mellow230 a sensible trailbike image, this combined with a low seat height of 810mm and frugal appetite for unleaded make this an ideal bike for the short of leg novice green-laner. Less robust than the Serow however. Only available as a grey import. **Verdict:** Unusual and pretty

XR400R: (1996-on) a/c, 4-str sohc single, 5 speed, kickstart only. 118kgs Seat height 930mm. The much loved XR4 has undergone only minor updates since it's introduction to the trail/enduro market over four years ago. Heaps of useable grunt coupled to a quick steering chassis provides all the real world performance you could ask for. Decent suspension, good build quality

HONDA XR400R



and a bullet proof motor make the XR400 the people's choice. Red plastics for 2000. **Verdict:** The best all-round trailie thumper
XR650R: (2000-on) w/c, 4-str sohc 4 valve single, 5 speed, kickstart only, 144kgs(wet), seat height 935mm. Alloy framed, liquid-cooled successor to the XR6. Seamless grunt off the bottom together with arm wrenching mid-range and seriously quick top end makes the XR650 the one to beat. **Verdict:** Not for the faint-hearted

HRD

125/250 GS: w/c, 2-str, single, (6-speed 125, 5-speed 250), 118kgs (wet). Paioli fork, Ohlins shock, Excel rims and Nissin brakes together with the powerful Yamaha power-plant give the GS enduro bikes a trick factory feel. **Verdict:** Sensible exotica.



HUSABERG FE501

bikes. Earlier models (esp four-strokes) were renowned for their good power to weight ratios. Looking a bit long in the tooth by modern thumper standards, and left hand kickstarts (4-str) can be awkward.

WRE125: w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single, oil injection. Modern, superb, high specification trailie with powerful revvy motor and electronic powervalve. SM 125 supermoto also available.

WR125/250/360: w/c, 2-str, single, 6-speed, 93kgs to 104kgs. Seat height 890mm. Originally stylish and well appointed enduro racers - but starting to look a little dated. Major cosmetic make over for 2000 models. **Verdict:** Not the force it once was.



HUSQVARNA TE

TE 350/400/410/510/570/610: (1989-on). w/c, 4-str, 4 valve single, RAL lubrication system, 6 speed, 118kgs, seat height 900mm. The original high performance thumper is starting to look slightly old fashioned now. Still gives heaps of grunt and an eye watering top-end rush but very agricultural compared to more recent competition. Has it's loyal following and proves to be a popular supermoto conversion. Factory supermoto also available. **Verdict:** Are you man enough?

TE/E 410/600: (1998-on) w/c, 4-str, 4 valve single. 6 speed, e/s, dual oil pump, counterbalance shaft. Externally similar to the enduro model but this is an all new machine designed as a fully equipped and civilised trailbike. Kick start (now on the right) and electric start, luggage rack, full instrumentation and a dual 'cat' exhaust makes the TE/E a well-specified if slightly less 'lary' alternative. Factory supermoto also available. **Verdict:** Latin temptress with a Latin temperament.

HUSABERG

Swedish range of competition inspired four-strokes which use what is basically a two-stroke-style bottom end mated to a four-stroke barrel and head. Light, powerful and fast. Early ones suffered some reliability problems but later bikes much better. High depreciation shouldn't put you off what is essentially an exciting well-designed but occasionally badly detailed bike.

FE 350/400/501/600: (1994-on) w/c, 4-str, 4 valve single, 6-speed (enduro models), E models had e/s. 117kgs, seat height 950mm. Seriously quick light-weight, high spec thumpers some 470cc versions about using a mixture of 400 & 501cc engines. Later bikes have better lubrication systems. **Verdict:** Fast but occasionally fragile.

HUSQVARNA

Previously Swedish, but now Italian-owned company (Cagiva) manufacturing a range of trail, supermoto and competition enduro (and MX)



JAWA-CZ

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

KAWASAKI

KE: a/c, 2-str, trail. **KL:** a/c, 4-str, trail.

KLK: 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 & 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, very cheap and cheerful. **Verdict:** Ideal second hand bike for the vertically and financially challenged to start trailing with.

KE 125/175: 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: w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. 98kgs. Very able little trail bike powered by reed valve and KIPS power valve engine, which can easily be de-restricted.

KMX200: (1987-92) w/c, 2-str, 191cc, single, 6-speed, 100kgs. Big-bore version of the 125 which makes a more capable all-rounder. Though not as reliable as the 125 and when used hard off road had a propensity for boiling over. Suspension could also feel pretty soggy by modern standards. Occasionally KIPS valve can give trouble, as can clutch and radiator. 200 also lumbered with a 17 inch rear wheel, so it's quite common to fit the 18 incher from the 125 to improve off-road

KAWASAKI KMX200



KAWASAKI KDX220SR



tyre choice. KMX also suffered from indifferent build quality, and could be fragile off road. Pads and discs wore out quickly but low seat height is more accessible for shorties than KDX. **Verdict:** More tea vicar...?

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 a bit raucous, the first models were however lighter, lower and torquier than the later w/c models.

KDX200/220: (1989-on) w/c, 2-str, 199cc, single. Completely redesigned from a/c version with increased suspension travel, revised Uni-Track rear end, and more top end power. Went on to become an extremely popular clubman enduro bike (helped by a one-make race series) but just as happy on a green lane. 220cc version from 95 on claimed to offer more torque but it's hard to tell the difference. **Verdict:** The original clubman weapon.

KDX200/220SR: 2-str, 199/220cc, single, oil injection. Street legal Jap-market trailbike version of the venerable KayDeeEx. Looks the part but rarely impresses, and in truth there are far better Jap trailies. **Verdict:** Looks can be deceiving.

Super Sherpa 250: (1998-on) a/c, 4-str, single, e/s. Low seat grey import trailie in the mould of the Serow. Strange retro/military styling but with modern running gear and a less vibey motor than the Yamaha, makes the Sherpa



a viable alternative for shorties. **Verdict:** Smooth Serow.
KDX250R: w/c, 2-str, single. Rather large for a 250 enduro bike but plenty of power from its lusty motor. Only officially imported for a couple of years during the early 90s.

KDX250SR: Street legal oil injection trailbike version of the above. Good well damped suspension at both ends and more power from the harsher motor than the CRM makes the 250SR the boy racer of the trailbike world. Oil tank a swine to get at and motor is not as robust as the CRM. **Verdict:** fast 'n' furious.

KL250: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 246cc, single. Late Seventies twin shock trail bike derived from the 200cc road bike commuter. Pretty basic but also pretty reliable, and extremely frugal.

KLR250: (1987-on) w/c, 4-str, sohc, 249cc, single, 120kgs (dry). Reliable if rather unexciting trailie which goes better than it looks (just as well). 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 road. Revived as a budget trailie alongside more expensive KLX having been dropped a few years before. **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.

KLX250R/S/SR: (1994-on) w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, 249cc, single. The four-stroke equivalent of the KDX, with similar perimeter chassis. Looks the business with handling and suspension to match, but performance of the street-legal S (e-start) trail version is a bit flat. The lighter enduro version is a lot more satisfying to ride, but early ones had carburetion difficulties and were difficult to start when hot. All need to be revved hard

to produce their power and are quite tall in the saddle. SR grey import offers a slightly better suspension set up than the S model but lacks the e-start. **Verdict:** Good but don't stall it.

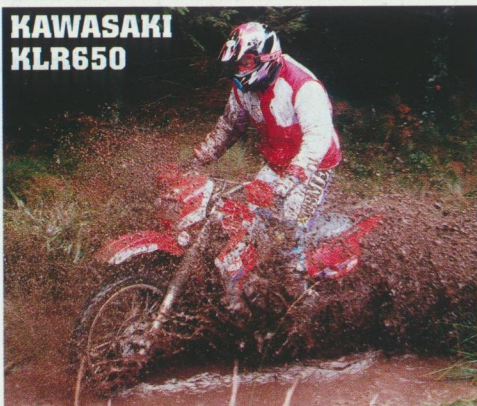
250 D-Tracker: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single, e/s, 127kgs, seat height 875mm. Cool looking factory supermoto based on the above. Great handling but pretty gutless for a hooligan tool, more at home in an urban setting than carving country roads. Nice try but needs more power. **Verdict:** Sheep in wolfs clothing.

KLX300R: (1997-on) w/c, 4-str, 4 valve, dohc 298cc single. Despite broadly similar spec to the KLX250 on which it is based, the 300 is a completely different animal to ride. More grunt, more top end and a superb sweet handling chassis makes this bike a serious alternative to the XR400. Low pegs and wide frame rails are a problem in ruts and the 300s can also be difficult to start when hot, but otherwise worth searching out. **Verdict:** Much underrated clubman thumper.

KLE500: w/c, 4-str, 8-valve, dohc, 498cc, parallel twin, 178kgs. Slightly oddly styled 'town trailie' which shares its engine with the EN500/GPZ500. The revvy little KLE makes reasonable power but is far less trail-friendly than the torquier Transalp and more firing on the road with its minimal fairing. Quite fast for the money and pretty good around town, but definitely not going to suit everyone's taste or backside.

Verdict: Strange.

KLR600: (1984-on) w/c, 4-str, dohc, 564cc, single, 164kgs. Big banger trail bike which started out with a kickstart but became the first big trailie to be fitted with an electric boot. Some had balancer chain 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:** Reasonable thumper.



**KAWASAKI
KLR650**

KLR650: (1987-on) w/c, 4-str, dohc, 651cc, single, 171kgs. Bored out version of the 600. Like the KLR250, 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.

KLR650 & (Tengai): (1989-95) 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.

KLX650 (& R): (1993-on) w/c, 4-str, dohc, 651cc, single, 153kgs. Bigger version of the 250 with the same drop-dead looks, but with USD forks. Early ones were designed without enough clearance between the rear wheel and the mud-guard 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(ish) but not much plonkability. Grey import KLX650R Enduro version was much meaner but overly wide tank and excessive weight meant it couldn't match the less sophisticated XR6. **Verdict:** Good but not good enough.

KRAMIT

Small Italian manufacturer building enduro/supermoto bikes. Using high quality components and the versatile 250 2-stroke Rotax motor, these rare machines offer more than their fair share of Latin style.

250GS: w/c, 2-str, single, adjustable power-valve, counter balancer, left side kickstarter, 6-speed, 107kgs. Drop-dead gorgeous styling together with high quality kit (Ohlins, Marzocchi, Excel) plus alloy fuel tank and carbon-fibre airbox and panels give the Kramit a works bike look. Slim and fast but slightly too specialised for some. 17" rimmed supermoto also available. **Verdict:** Rare, quality alternative, with looks to die for.

KTM

EXC: enduro bikes **EGS:** street legal versions of enduro bikes **LC4:** four-stroke trail bikes **SC:** four-stroke competition bikes
KTM has emerged to become a major player in



KTM 200EXC

the off-road enduro/trail/rallye scene. Older KTMs are reasonably abundant, and while most are competition bikes, there are a few trail bikes as well.

125/200/250/300/360/380 EXC: w/c, 2-str, 5 speed (125/200, 6 speed), 96 to 104kgs (claimed), seat height 925mm. Latest bikes 97-on are quite different to earlier machines. Early ones were good, later ones even better. All of the two stroke enduro racers are blessed with quick, torquey motors and fine handling chassis. This coupled with superb attention to detail and reasonable build quality makes the Austrian bikes extremely popular nowadays. Later bikes (97-on) feature hydraulic clutches and linkless PDS rear suspension as well as much narrower riding positions. Modern 125 & 200s differ only in capacity, and use a smaller lighter chassis to the larger bikes. 250 is the racer's choice, 300 makes a great (but rapid) sport trailie for those that like to ride race bikes on the trail. In '98 200EGS introduced in UK (alongside EXC enduro version), which featured full road legal kit, oil injection, softer springing, taller seat and a rack. But 2000 model became an EXC (GS) and kept only the oil injection. All bikes tough, fast and occasionally prone to headshake. **Verdict:** The racer's choice.

LC2 125/Sting: w/c, 2-str, single, 6 speed, oil injection, e/s, cat exhaust, 121kgs, seat height 860mm. Trailbike with a top specification. Brembo, Paioli, Dell'Orto etc make the LC2 a cut above the average 125. Sting 17" rim supermoto version also available with 'Duke' style ergos. Went out of production 1999. **Verdict:** Worth searching out.

350/400/620SC: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve single, 5 speed, 121kgs, seat height 940mm. Kickstart only competition bike that's been the mainstay of the KTM range for the last decade. Power, stability and dependability are the LC4 powered SC's strong points. Left-side kickstart and weight are

KTM 620SM



the downside. Out of production since 1999, still produces the goods but shows its age against more up to date tackle.

400/520EXC: (2000-on) w/c, 4-str, 4 valve single, e/s. 112kgs. Awesome power in a class leading lightweight chassis gives the all new EXC a competitive edge. Quality components coupled with the usual KTM attention to detail means that the bike sold out within weeks of its 2000 launch. All of this and an electric starter. **Verdict:** Serious racer!

400 EGS: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, single, e/s. 139kgs, seat height 900mm. Trail bike version of the old LC4 powered enduro bike, but with the added civility of a balancer shaft and e-start. Fast and exciting on forest roads, but not much of a chugger. Great on the road though lack of screen may be a problem for some. Tall seat height and left-hand kickstart make it tricky for shorties. Top notch suspension, but not as light as it looks. Major revisions for 1998 models LSE low seat (870mm) and supermoto version available.

Verdict: Tough, dependable, heavy.

620/640EGS: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, single. As above but more so. Major restyle for 640cc models for 1998 and 2001, LSE low seat model and supermoto version also available.

Adventure (& R) 620/640: (1997-on) w/c, 4-valve single. 166kgs, 940mm seat height. KTM's attempt to cash in on their successful rallye raid bike, the Adventure is a street legal rallye replica featuring a 28litre tank and a rallye style twin headlamp fairing complete with trip computer/GPS hook up facility. Early versions featured twin low level exhaust and no centre stand facility, later versions (98-on) came with high level single pipe and restyle. **Verdict:** You too can be Kini!

Duke 620/640: (1994-on) w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, single, 145kgs, seat height 860mm, e/s from Mk3

on. Strangely styled but quite unique Supermoto version of KTM's big-banger. Stylish little headlamp fairing and 17-inch wheels with wide, sticky rubber. Lots of fun, lots of cred, but expensive and rare since they're only imported in limited numbers. Went to 640cc in 1998 and major revision for 99 included twin under seat pipes, cast wheels and a fresh set of clothes. **Verdict:** Street rod.

MALAGUTI

Monte 50: (1975-77), a/c, 2-str, single, pre-mix, 6-speed, 50ccs of frantic, 9bhp screaming fun. Fitted with a full sized enduro chassis and running gear the 16er legal Monte offered the 70s teenager real Italian racer performance unfortunately at the expense of reliability. **Verdict:** The best and worse of the Italian bike industry rolled into one.

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 - cheap for an Italian bike. **Verdict:** Strangely alluring.

MOTO GUZZI

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: Not many around... for good reason!

Quota 1000ie: 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 the Italians do have a sense of humour!

MZ/MuZ

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 (not).

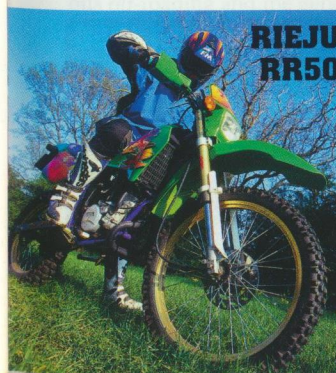
500 Saxon Country: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, Rotax-powered single. Old-fashioned looking trail bike, that's really just a roadster with a set of trail clothes on. Expensive for what it is. **Verdict:** Proof that the Germans have a sense of humour!

Baghira/Mastiff: w/c, 4-str, 5-valve single, e/s. Yamaha XTZ660 powered and downright weird styling gives the MuZ Baghira trailie and Mastiff supermoto an up to date motor and a unique profile. Capable off-road but much happier on the black top where the Yam motor shines. **Verdict:** German Rubik's Cube!

RIEJU

Spanish manufacturer of small bore bikes and scooters. Still rare in the UK.

RR50/125: (1997-on) w/c, 2-str single, 6-speed, oil injection, 89kgs. Good looking Minarelli powered mini trailie that can be great fun both on and off-road. 50 has very basic suspension but still performs surprisingly well in the dirt. Even rarer (full-size)



125 has up-rated running gear but faces much stiffer competition. **Verdict:** Cheap 'n' cheerful

SUZUKI

TS: a/c then w/c, 2-str, trail. **PE:** a/c, 2-str, enduro. **SP:** a/c, 4-str, trail. **RMX:** 1/c 2-str enduro & trail. **DR-Z:** o-a/c 4-str, trail & enduro. **DR-Z:** 1/c 4-str, trail & enduro.

RV125: a/c, 2-str, single. Strange looking fun bike from the Seventies with small wheels and balloon tyres designed for riding on sand. Looks a bit like a full size monkey bike. **Verdict:** 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.

SUZUKI PE250



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 its age.

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

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: a/c, 2-str, single. Modest trail moped with a roaring 3bhp on tap, and 'full floater'

SUZUKI RMX250S

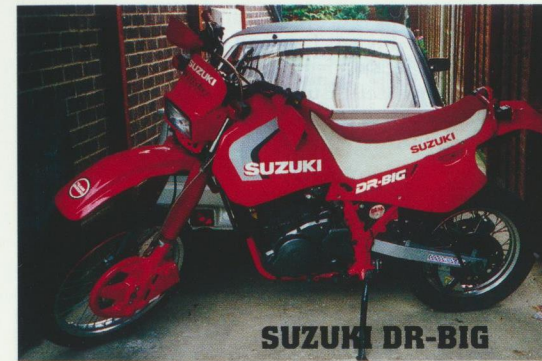


monoshock suspension. Good for a 50 though.
TS125X: w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Very competent learner legal trailie. Better than the equivalent DT at the time. **Verdict:** Good secondhand buy if cheap enough.
TS125R: w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Later version of above with power valve fitted that just 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 and better spec (alloy rims etc). Relatively popular Jap import.
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. **Verdict:** Not as nice as the 175.
PE400: a/c, 2-str, single. As above but with more power than most people could use in this chassis off-road. Not as nice as the 250. **Verdict:** Wild.
RMX250: w/c, 2-str, single, 5-speed, 113kgs, seat height 955mm. Enduro bike based on early RM moto-crosser, the RMX evolved slowly to become a regular sight in the enduro paddock. A tad heavy by modern standards the well suspended and grunty RMX is more KDX than CRE - but makes a good racy trailie thanks to plush suspension, 12L tank and comfy seat. Unfortunately for enduro fans, it never followed the RM's line of development. Cosmetics can soon look shabby but basically a sound bike - secondhand ones incredibly cheap. **Verdict:** Lots of bike for the money.
RMX250S: w/c, 2-str, single, oil injection, 5-

speed, 121kgs, seat height 895mm. Fully street legal version of the above with metal tank and indicators etc. Decent suspension for a trailie, with slightly more power than a CRM - motor can be vibey though, and indifferent build quality. **Verdict:** Suzuki's CRM!
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. **Verdict:** Good, cheap hack.
SP400: a/c 4-str, sohc, single. As above only more so.
DR125: o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Small and not very powerful trailie but with the benefit of being robust, reliable and frugal. **Verdict:** Slow but solid.
DR125 Raider: o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. As above but with false header pipe and (marginally) bigger P-D style tank.
DR200: o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. As above but despite bigger motor, still a bit underpowered. Not sold as street legal. Beware rear wheel collapse on early ones.
DR200 Djebel: o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single, e/s. Japanese home market version of above with more street mods (including electric boot), and less trailability.
DR200AE: o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. A truly hideous looking farm bike built for NZ sheep farmers to carry their girlfriend back to the farm! **Verdict:** Hurry up or all the pretty ones will be taken!
DR250: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, 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. Big headlamp Djebel version available. **Verdict:** Worth searching out.
DR250 (& Djebel): o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, e-start single: Later version of above with much more modern dohc engine and lekky boot -



most had electronic dials. Good suspension, nice styling and easy to live with. Fine trailie for those that like quarter litre thumpers - Djebel version came with big headlamp. **Verdict:** Mini DR-Z?
DR350S: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Superb little trailie with dry-sump motor, excellent suspension, but tiny petrol tank. A bit cheap in places, but lightweight and fairly robust. Better off road than on it. Front disc brake not very powerful and wears out rapidly. Can look tatty quite quickly. Kickstart only (until 95), and high seat height rules it out for sub five and a half footers. Engine feels unburstable and will rev and rev though some have been known to drop valves occasionally. **Verdict:** The definitive trail bike of the 90s.
DR350: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Enduro version of above which is slightly 'harder' all round. Different carb, stiffer suspension, altered geometry, simpler lights and no dials - but no 'leccy start versions available. **Verdict:** Cheap thrills!
DR400S: 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.
DR-Z400S: (2000-on) w/c, 4-str, dohc, 4-valve, single, e/s, 5-speed, seat height 935mm. The long awaited replacement for the DR350 has arrived and is a worthy successor to the much loved oil/air cooled trailie. Fully equipped for the street, the e-start only trail version has a superbly versatile liquid cooled lump that pulls well off the bottom and makes reasonable power all the way up to the red line. Quality suspension offers masses of adjustment for the compulsive fiddler (but lacks grease nipples). Over-gearred for serious off-roading and the general fit and finish could be improved upon, but overall the 400S takes the DR range a step in the right direction. **Verdict:** The king is dead, long live the king!
DR-Z400 (& E): (2000-on) w/c, 4-str, dohc, 4-valve single, e/s (E version), 5-speed, 127kgs, seat height 945mm. Enduro version of the above with far less in the way of road going niceties but more power/suspension, flat-slide carb, simpler electrics, altered geometry and ridiculously noisy (baffle-less) exhaust. Huge amounts of grunt means you're never stuck for power but the suspension feels soft for a race bike. Kickstart ver-



sions are about 4 kilos lighter, but not so desirable. Cheesy finish and an exhaust system that'll wake the dead are the only problems - as standard it's too loud for enduro use!! **Verdict:** Slightly flawed genius!
DR500S: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Foreign market, bigger-bore version of the 400. None known in the UK (thank God).
DR600S: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 589cc, single, 136kgs. 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 awkward to start when hot till you get the knack. **Verdict:** Good secondhand buy at the right price.
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. Last version of above without the half-fairing or twin exhausts. Still over-gearred, still rather tall, but with the best suspension in class. Not very refined and feels a bit cheap, but definitely a step 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?

VERTEMATI



VERTEMATI V492

The Vertemati brothers developed their high performance gear-driven sohc thumper motor together with superbike builders Bimota. Following a short link-up with VOR, the brothers have gone on their own again to produce a more expensive development of the original. Superb attention to detail on these exotic enduro thumpers.

V492/400: w/c, 4-str, 4 valve gear driven sohc, 5 speed, 116kgs, seat height 940mm. These expensive and exclusive enduro bikes are more suited to serious competition use rather than more casual trail/play riding. Weird non-primary kick-start is forward acting, but works great once you get the hang of it. Needs to be ridden hard to get the best from the chassis and motor. **Verdict:** The Parmaggianno Reggiani of thumpers

VOR

Offshoot of the original Vertemati concern, aimed at serious thumper pilots who demand something a little different. Enduro and super-moto versions available.

400/503 enduro: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve gear driven sohc, 5 speed. Powerful motors coupled with high quality running gear makes the VOR

an exotic alternative for the serious racer. Fantastic attention to detail, but still no primary starting with the weird forward-kick design. A factory supermoto is also available. **Verdict:** Sexy!

TM MOTO

Small Italian concern with a long history of making big horsepower out of small two-strokes. Extremely well equipped enduro racers with high quality running gear, but not particularly suited to the novice rider. Pink plastics up to 1996 ensures cheap secondhand prices! Completely restyled perimeter frame design in 1999.

80/125/250/300 Enduro: w/c, 2-str, single, 6 speed (300 5 speed), 85 to 102kgs, 10.5 litre tank (optional alloy tank). High quality Ohlins and Paioli suspension matched to a stable sweet handling chassis and big horsepower motors makes for a good enduro package. 125s can feel peaky to ride, but engines are strong and spares relatively cheap. Big and small wheel 80s were available. **Verdict:** Are you man enough?



TM ENDURO

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. Mk2 fuel injected version much improved with lower C of G and neater styling. 2001 gets the latest 995

lump from the Daytona sports bike. **Verdict:** Rip-snorting Roadster!

YAMAHA

DT: a/c & w/c, 2-str, trail. **IT:** a/c, 2-str, enduro. **WR:** w/c, 2-str and 4-str, enduro. **KT:** a/c, 4-str, trail. **TT:** a/c, 4-str, enduro. **TTR:** a/c, 4-str, trail. **TW:** a/c, 4-str, trail/fun. **BW:** a/c, 4-str, trail/fun. **DT50/80mx:** a/c, 2-str, single. Dependable 16-er special that has changed little throughout the years. Not as sexy as the opposition. Rare 80 much better bet. **Verdict:** Solid but dull! **TY50P:** a/c, 2-str, single. The original Yam trail 50. Early unrestricted versions came with moped legal pedals! Not many around now. **Verdict:** Field bike special.

DT125/175MX: a/c, 2-str, single. The DTs are the bike that brought trail riding to the masses! Started out as a basic twin shock trail bike back in the late Seventies before adopting 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. **DT125LC/R:** (1987-on) w/c, 2-str, single. The DT came of age with the adoption of water-cooling, 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 easy to ride, but with the adjustable power valve kit fitted, even better! Although in the fashion stakes they've been overtaken by trickier looking tackle, they still top the sales chart because of their hard-earned reputation and are still the king off-road. **Verdict:** The best 125 trailie.

DT200(R): w/c, 2-str, single. Grey import big bore version of the above with slightly higher spec (ally rims etc). Extra oomph makes it easier to ride and all together more useable than the 125. **Verdict:** Competent all rounder. **DT200WR:** w/c, 2-str, YPVS, oil injection, single. 115kgs, seat height 895mm. Grey import trailie version of the WR200 enduro racer. Slim, well suspended light weight trailbike with a superb quick revving and powerful motor. Not as civilised as a CRM either on or off-road but additive top end surge more than makes up for it. **Verdict:** Cheap thrills.

YAMAHA SEROW



DT230 Lanza: (1998-on) w/c, 2-str YPVS, oil injection, single, e/s only, 125kgs seat height 875mm. Unusually civilised trailie with superb grunty motor which has the benefit of an electric boot, Suspension could be better but works well at low speed. **Verdict:** Well worth a look.

DT250MX: a/c, 2-str, single. Late Seventies cantilever shocked version of the smaller bikes, more power but less agility.

DT400MX: a/c, 2-str, single. Hairy chested version of above, not many left now - thank God.

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, 200 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 goggles at 50 paces.

WR200: w/c, 2-str, single. Brilliant clubman enduro bike with lightweight chassis and 'soft-tune' engine, but plenty of power and largish tank. Easy to ride with a nice light front end. **Verdict:** Modern classic.

WR250: w/c, 2-str, single. Enduro version of the YZ motocrosser but with wider ratio gearbox and slightly softer tune. All WRs make great

YAMAHA TT350



enduro bikes. Early ones had big tanks, but the later the model, the better they are. Last model (98 & 99 & some Y2k ones!) the best of the bunch - still very much in demand. **Verdict:** The best 2-stroke enduro bike - sorely missed!

WR500: a/c, 2-str, single. As above but using air-cooled YZ motor. **Verdict:** Why would you?

TDR250: 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, single. Small but perfectly formed grey import trail bike with kick and e/s versions. Light, manoeuvrable, and 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 it's a small price to pay for such a good bike. A steady development over the years means that the Serow is still a superb buy. **Verdict:** Makes sense.

XT250: 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 (1989-on): a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Foreign market mini XT350 with all the benefits but slightly lighter and smaller. Rare.

TT250-R/Raid: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single, e/s. Modern mini-thumper trailie that is as civilised as it is competent. Revvy motor and a reasonable spread of power, but metal tank and excess weight a drawback. Watch out for restricted header pipes on later Aussie spec bikes. Big tank/big headlamp Raid version more suited to tarmac. Latest all blue (plastic tanked) 2000 model has both kick and electric starters, and revised geometry and suspension.

Verdict: Mr Nice guy.

KT350: 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 trailie.

TT225: a/c, 4-str, 2 valve, single. Kick start only enduro/play bike version of the brilliant Serow built for US market. Basic spec, but nice and low and great fun to ride - starting to show its age now.

TT350: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Grey

YAMAHA XT600 TENERE



import enduro version of the XT, with improved suspension, more power, and more basic instrumentation and lighting. Looking good for the trail now. **Verdict:** Not bad.

WR400F: (1997-on), w/c, 4-str, dohc five valve single, 5-speed, 121kgs. Yamaha's latest generation of enduro thumpers promised much when it was launched. Fantastic powerful high revving lump coupled to a decent chassis makes the Yam a quick but stable enduro weapon. Early bikes could be troublesome starters (particularly when hot) and the quality of finish wasn't up to Yamaha's best. Much improved 2000 model features slimmer ergos, tweaks to the steering geometry and suspension. The motor also gets a few carb and ignition mods to banish any hot starting problems for good. The fit and finish are also much improved and the WR is now the bike that it always promised to be (almost).

Verdict: Definitive clubman thumper?

KT500: a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. The original big banger trailie that started it all. Produced for years and years, even when superseded by later versions. Twin shock, 6-volt, character building bike that could often get into more trouble than it could get out of. All sorts of special parts were produced for it for the would be overlander over the years. Vibrates like a jack hammer, and very basic by modern standards but the lack of sophistication is part of its charm, and the low seat height makes it much easier to 'paddle' than some of its more monstrous successors. Can be horribly unreliable and a pig to start, but its easy to work on and plenty still around. Classic buffs have inflated the prices, but don't pay over the odds. **Verdict:** Your dad would love it.

KT550: (1982-86) 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.

KT600 Tenere Mk1, II & III: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, single. Superb Paris-Dakar inspired big trailie with unburstable engine, supple suspension, mammoth tank and comfy saddle. Loved by overlanders the world over thanks to its huge touring range. Later versions inherited a full fairing and twin headlights. 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, but high mileage ones break second gear. **Verdict:** Best of the big Yams.



YAMAHA XT500

KT600E: (1989-on) a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, e/s, single. No frills version of the much loved XT. Heavier and more sluggish than the original thanks to steel rims and generally lower spec - still available new. Unsophisticated especially in the suspension department, but thoroughly crashable and respectable plodder. Heaps of grunt, but expensive for what they are.

Verdict: Not as good as the original.

TT600E: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve single, e/s. A much higher spec (Ohlins, etc) Belgarda Yamaha built model featuring the same old crusty air-cooled XT lump. Grey import only.

Verdict: Nicer than an XT!

TT600: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, single. Grey import enduro version, with off-road 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 at the right price.

TT600R: (1998-on) a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, single. High spec running gear with a stone age powerplant. Tall and kickstart only Italian built serious trailbike. Ohlins, Paioli, Brembo etc give the TT600R more show than go.

Verdict: Nice face shame about the legs!

KTZ660: 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 but plenty of power. Less crashworthy than the first and the taller saddle may put some off. Nevertheless eminently trailable (in the dry). Twin headlamps 96-on.

Verdict: Another good Yam.

KTZ750 Super Tenere: (1989-96) 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. **Verdict:** A good try.

TDM850: (1991-on) 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 gear-box and exhaust collector box rules out an after-market centre stand. Much improved from 97 onwards, fresh styling and updates to the gear-box. Not a true trail bike but no less trailable than the Triumph Tiger. **Verdict:** Brilliant roadster.

TW200/125: 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 (125 UK model gets a much needed disc) and needs an extra gear. Suspension very basic and tyres can be



expensive. Gearbox sprocket a special part due to outrigger bearing. 125 learner legal version becoming trendy now.

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-bummed version of above using XT350 lump.

Verdict: No thanks.

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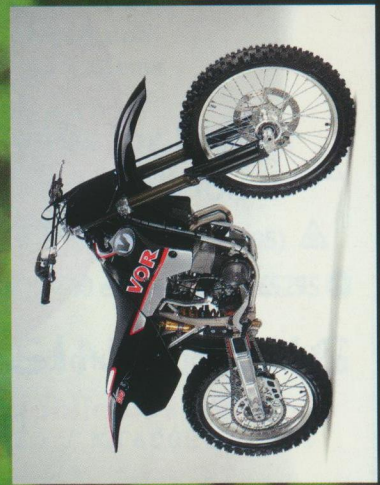
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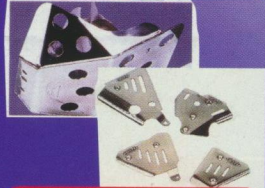
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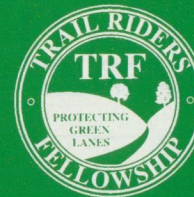
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From: W.O.W. or Welshman Out West! by Mike Rees, publishing in Off Road Review
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Trail Tales



Illustration: John Keogh

Dave 'Crasher' Cornish explains how he acquired his nickname...

You know the feeling, you've got it all horribly wrong... it's only a matter of seconds before the unavoidable impact between Scots pine, vicious bramble bush etc and your fragile defenceless body, all of which come together in one painful union.

It may or may not come as a surprise to you to learn that my crashing days started as soon as I took up the dubious pleasure of off-roading. In

my testosterone-filled youth, keeping the throttle wide open and hanging on for dear life meant I quickly ended up on first name terms with the local X-ray unit, who used to keep a bed ready for me each weekend, 'just in case'.

My introduction into the world of the really big get off started whilst at an MX practice track trying to race my

recently acquired DT175MX against some serious motocrossers.

After less than two laps I launched the mint condition DT off the largest jump full bore in third gear, and sailed

gracefully over the heads of the CR and YZ mounted opposition with a huge grin on my face, only to totally clear the landing slope and

land nose down on the take off ramp of the following jump.

The result of this error of judgement was a couple of broken ribs and a badly smashed bike (including a bent swinging arm).

The next big crash involved a beast of a YZ (a 465 I think), leant to me at a local piece of waste ground. The main feature of this makeshift

track was the huge 25 foot deep crater, dubbed 'The Bomb Hole'.

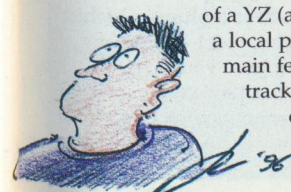
This simple hole in the ground

had a fairly steep drop in, and a fast but shallow exit surrounded by trees. With the throttle pinned wide open my trusty little DT (still with its bent swinging arm) would leap impressively into the air and land approximately 15 to 20 feet away. However with hindsight, my tactics on the big YZ ought to have been a little different. With me at the helm, the big-bore bruiser took off out of the crater like a surface to air missile gaining altitude as it went, until a huge branch from one of the surrounding trees knocked me clean off the back and dumped me on the ground some 15 feet below. While the unmanned YZ went on to make an expensive crash landing just in front of its shocked owner.

All of this was only the start of what's become (according to the ed) a bit of an occupational hazard. For instance many years ago at a multi lap enduro around the sandy Chippenham MX track, I was becoming increasingly impatient with the similarly mounted KDX rider in front of me. On the straights his bike just had enough power to keep in front of me, but on the jumps and into the corners he was frustratingly slow. Following this guy into a fast left hander before a large jump I decided to overtake him by not backing off the gas and simply out-jump him. The first part of the plan worked perfectly, exit speed from the corner was high and so was my take off velocity.

As I launched into the air I peered down and saw my rival way below, then just as I thought I'd pulled off the overtake of the afternoon, he veered over into my landing area. Apart from sound my horn, there wasn't much I could do but land on the guy - my KDX coming down straight onto the other bike's seat. The rest as they say is history, but needless to say I fell off big time, several following riders slammed into my bike ripping the exhaust clean out of the barrel and totalling most of the plastics. Funny thing was, my fellow Kawasaki rider wobbled off for another lap and didn't even stop. He only realised how lucky he was a bit later, when he found the knobby tyre print on the back of his race shirt.

Another incident this time Husky 510 mounted, saw me chasing three other bikes around the tight and twisty confines of the Blaxhall enduro circuit. With the slow steering Husky cranked over on it's right hand side I was totally committed to my line when unexpectedly the rider in front stalled. With little time to act, I tried to turn the big four-stroke to avoid tailgating the guy, but the Husky had other ideas - climbing the small berm and simply going ballistic. I was now head-



Trail Tales

ing straight for the largest tree at Blaxhall, and with the bike almost vertical, there was no way I could shut off. To cut a long story short the Husky came to a halt with the front wheel stuck in the bough of the tree and the back wheel a good four feet off the ground. Unfortunately, the next ten minutes are preserved for eternity on video (cheers Smokey), but at least this time I escaped with only a time penalty.

Of course pilot error is not always my main reason for binning it. A few years ago a friend (who should have known better) asked me if I fancied taking his painstakingly restored early twin-shock DT for a quick blast. This guy was a real perfectionist - the sort of bloke that spends months tracking down the original warning stickers which say things like: Preserve nature - always wear a helmet, that sort of thing. The location was a disused quarry - one of those on a number of levels with steep drop-offs where the rock had been dug away.

The pristine Yam seemed to be coping well with the hard stony track - or at least it was until the carb top came loose. This minor problem set in motion a train of events which were to have catastrophic consequences. With the carb top loose there was nothing to stop the needle from popping out and jamming the throttle wide open - which it did, of course. And with little or no time to take evasive action, my friend watched in horror as his pride and joy (closely followed by yours truly) wheeled out of control and disappeared over a cliff edge, booking me another trip to the Norfolk General Hospital.

Of course falling off on the dirt is almost expected during a day's dirty fun, but I've had a few incidents on the road involving brand spank-

ing new test bikes. The most memorable involved a fresh-from-the-crate Aprilia 125 which I'd been given the task of carefully running in. Sat astride the bike in the workshops I snicked it into gear and eased out of the doorway before leaning over and feeding in the power. The Aprilia's snappy response and brand new tyres saw the back end step out, grip and then chuck me straight over the high side. Red-faced I picked up the bike and rode straight back into the workshops with the bodywork all smashed on one side. The trip meter showing just less than one tenth of a kilometre. Oh dear.

But the crash that sticks in my mind as being a particularly big one involved the whole TrailBike team: Blez on his XR600, the ed on his recently acquired CRM and the brand new (and I do mean absolutely brand new) Serow that I was riding (on trade plates). This time the location was a country back road on the Witley long distance trial.



Following Si and the XR600 mounted Blez meant juicing the little Serow hard in order to keep up. As we approached a side road I kept the throttle wound on and sneaked a quick glance at the route card taped to my tank. When I looked up again, both the other bikes had stopped dead in the middle of the road in order to turn into the junction. I somehow managed to scrub off about half my speed before the impact with the blissfully unaware editor who was torpedoed

over the handlebars of his new bike into Blez, knocking him over in the process - whilst the cartwheeling Serow exacted its revenge on my defenceless body. A post incident damage report revealed horrendous damage to the poor Serow which was so badly buckled it had to go home in a van. Meanwhile the editor's newly acquired CRM got badly scuffed up with a dent in the tank the size of the editor's plums. Ouch!

If all of this has you thinking that I deserve my 'Crasher' name-tag then I suppose you're right, but let's face it if you don't 'try a bit' every now and again, how do you know how much you can get away with? Well, that's my excuse anyhow, what's yours...?

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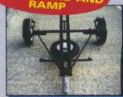
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KTM 380SX R-reg, road reg, tax, FMF gold series pipe, brushguards, fast and reliable, excellent cond, £1750. Tel Graham on 01228 532 123 (Cumbria)

Honda XR400R T-reg, 7500km, standard, original, excellent cond, mainly road use, £2400. Tel Gary on 01354 680 359 (Cams)

Kawasaki KLX250E L-reg, T&T, full road spec, elec start, Japanese import, beautiful cond, spare shock and tank, new tyres, £1650. Tel Robin on 01926 817 183 (Warks)

KTM 400SXCLC4 1999, excellent all round cond, light trail and road use, recent c&s, pads, tyres, fully road legal, £2300. Tel 01435 873 985 (E Sussex)

KTM 125EXC '00 V-reg, immaculate condition, ultra light weight, many extras including softer fork springs, carbon-fibre bashplate, ready to race, bargain at £2450. Tel 0208 997 9585 after

Honda CR250, 2000, built for this year's cancelled Gilles Lalay Classic by previous finisher. Ohlins rear shock, 270cc, black Excel rims, heavier flywheel, lighting kit, 12 litre and standard tank, revalved forks, Tag bars, rallye guards, One Industries graphics and seat cover, Devol rad protectors - UK registered and very tasty, £2800. Tel Chris Evans on 00 33 1 43 72 86 02

Kawasaki KLX250ES 1995 MoT, taxed, good clean cond, spare c&s, brushguards, green lane use only, £1750 onvo. Tel Dave on 01948 667 418 (Shrops)

Kawasaki KLX250 elec start, trail version, Werx graphics, new rear tyre, chain, sprockets, MoT, £1750. Tel Gordon on 07712 54711 (Staffs)

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Honda CRM-AR 1999, stolen recovered with receipts, needs ignition switch, clocks, lights, excellent cond, £1595 ovno. Tel Mark on 07976 153 244 (Kent)

Triumph Tiger 900 K-reg, blue, 28,000m, recent service, new f/discs, winter bargain £1900 or p/x TT600, XT600 Dominator DR350 WHY. Tel Steve on 01482 442 938 (E Yorks)

Yamaha TTR250 L-reg, elec start, MoT, tax, hand/frame guards, Renthals, sprockets, new chain, CRD pipe, very clean bike, £1995 ono. Tel Mike on 01202 676 576 (Dorset)

Honda XR600 1997 3000m, excellent cond, green lane use only, delivery to UK can be arranged, £2600 ono. Tel 01624 674 786 (IoM)

Triumph Tiger W-reg, yellow, 2700m, just like new, not one scratch, service history, £4900 ono. Tel Craig on 0161 652 5056

Husaberg FE400 N-reg, T&T, excellent cond, DCR pipe, titanium pegs, new c&s, bearings, Renthals, reliable, very little use last two years, £1400. Tel Guy on 01367 252 522 (Glos)

Yamaha YZF400 1998 new cond, Ohlins, suspension, new tyres, chain, Decals, £2200. Tel 07931 216 411 (London)

Kawasaki KLX250 1994, elec start, 7000m, Werx graphics, MoT, immac cond, £1990 ono. Tel Richard on 07855 094 096

Honda XR650L M-reg, T&T, recent c&s, 22ltr tank, Supertrapp Dynojet, includes standard tank and exhaust, first class cond, £2250 ono. Tel 01904 788 115 (N Yorks)

BMW R100GS H-reg, 35,000m, tax, MoT, fully loaded, must sell, £2495 ono, can deliver anywhere for free. Tel Stewart on 07949 487 781 (Berks)

Suzuki DR350SE 1999, elec start, one owner, 4000m, very well looked after, Renthals, Acerbis h/guards, DEP pipe plus original, £2295. Tel Adrian on 01787 228 520 (Essex)

Suzuki DR350s R-reg, black, excellent cond, only 1500m, £2200 ono. Tel 01202 770 511 (Dorset)

KTM 125LC2 V-reg, immaculate, 4000km, e/start, elc power valve, autolube, road use only, £1950 ono. Tel James on 0771 529 9694 (N Yorks)

Honda XR200 1983 monoshock, new tyres, chain, sprockets, plastics, MoT, good cond, Christmas bargain, £825 ono. Tel Mark on 01430 422 293 (after 6pm)

KTM 400SC R-reg, 2000km, excellent cond, genuine reason for sale, £2500. Tel 01765 600

470 (after 6pm)

Honda XL500R 1984, taxed, tested, new tyres, ride away, £795 ono. Tel Jeff on 01562 60504 (Worcs)

Yamaha XTZ750 Super Tenere 1993, white, 33,000m, crash bars, high screen, bit scruffy but 100% reliable, £1500 no offers. Tel Richard on 01299 401 859 (Worcs)

Aprilia Tuareg 350 excellent cond, 24,000km, needs registering, import, many new parts, would make excellent trail bike, genuine reason for sale, £950 ono. Tel Tom on 01686 430 521 (Powys)

Yamaha Serow 1989 green/white, kick start, T&T, 15,000km, good cond, £1250. Tel Paul on 01643 706 808 (Somerset)

Honda XL500 1983, rebuilt engine, new tyres, sprockets, chain etc, excellent orig cond, £795. Tel Lindsay on 01761 232 641 (Somerset)

TM 125E M-reg, MoT, vgc, hardly used, must go, offers. Tel Tom on 07710 124 380

Kawasaki KDX125 H-reg, enduro spec plus road equip, light, fast(ish), reliable, some spares, a nice bike and cheap at only £695 ono. Tel 0208 567 2609 (W London)

Yamaha WR250 N-reg, WR and YZ tanks, two seats, extras, some new parts, maintained religiously, superb bike, £1600 ono. Tel Mark on 01282 832 988 (Lancs)

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Honda CRM250 MK2 all extras, excel rims, totally maintained and spares, ready for trail/enduro use, £1895 ono. Tel Paul on 01453 883 651 (Glos)

Suzuki RMX250 T&T, excellent cond, new back tyre & seat cover, handguards, green lane use only, £1725 ono. Tel Neil on 01243 544 553 (W Sussex)

Kawasaki KLR600 B-reg, 8500km, full history, good orig cond, new Hagon shock, £1295 or swap WHY. Tel Steven on 02380 491 005 (Hants)

Kawasaki KDX200E2 G-reg, MoT, tax, new rear disc and pads, Renthals, highly reliable, manual included, £800. Tel 01483 838 373 (Surrey)

Honda XR400R R-reg, vgc, disc, frame and h/guards, little use, £2500 ono. Tel Paul on 01234 308 671 (Beds)

Honda XR280 G-reg, big bore, race cam & pipe, very useable power, ideal enduro/green laner, T&T, £1375 ono may p/x WHY. Tel Pete on 01543 360 349 (W Mids)

Honda CRM250 MKIII L-reg, MoT, 20,000km,

road use only, new tyres, Renthals, vgc, £2000 ono. Tel Matt on 07939 579 644 (Middx)

KTM 125EXC 1999, registered & taxed, mature owner, as new, first to see will definitely buy, £2195. Tel John on 01254 239 643 (Lancs)

Yamaha XT600E R-reg, 11,000m, white, fsh, 23ltr Acerbis tank, ss rack, some spares, £2400. Tel Ian on 01259 217 477

Honda XR650R W-reg, only 400m, as new not raced, £3600. Tel Glen on 01502 742 085 (Suffolk)

Yamaha IT465 A-Reg, alloy tank, Renthals, h/guards, vgc but needs clutch cover repairing, still running, £650 ono, bargain may p/x. Tel Pete on 01543 360 349 (W Mids)

CCM 604E P-reg, white/purple, elec start, tax, MoT, £2795. Tel Dave on 01865 209 344 (Oxon)

Husqvarna TE410E only 3 mths old, UK bike, 2 years warranty, only just had 1st service, new job forces reluctant sale, hence £3000. Tel Shaun on 01323 504 180 (E Sussex)

Kawasaki KLR650 1999 3500m, excellent cond, Supertrapp and orig pipes, new Bridgestone trailwings, £2650. Tel Andy on 01869 347 925 (Oxon)

Kawasaki KDX200EI enduro F-reg, T&T, FMF pipe, handguards, Bridgestone Grittys plus spare engine frame and other parts, £1150. Tel Tim on 01782 788 341 (Staffs)

Honda CRM250R L-reg, vgc, MoT, new 'O'ring, chain, pads and wheel bearings, mainly road use, good tidy bike, £1875. Tel Andy on 01282 606 821 (Lancs)

Suzuki DRZ400 3wks old, 40km, may p/x cheaper 250 2-stroke WR, KTM, RMX WHY or sell £3500. Tel Gary on 01229 718 024 (Cumbria)

Honda SLR650 1998, taxed, 3000m, Renthals, immac cond, service records, orig bike, elec start. Tel Mark on 01363 774 168 (Devon)

Honda XLR125 elec start, £1275 ovno, also **Yamaha** DT125R white, very clean, £1075 ovno. Tel Jeff on 01524 781 779 (Cumbria)

Suzuki DR350 blue, motocross plastics, h/guards, sumpguard, Acerbis h/light, new clutch, digital speedo, orig bits included, best looking DR yet!, £1400. Tel Jack on 07775 904 100 (London)

Husaberg FE501 1994 new engine rebuild, many other new parts and spares, road registered, £1400 ono. Tel James on 01525 752 248 (Beds)

Husqvarna TE410 Y2K enduro, road legal, 300km, UK bike, just run in, 1st service, road

use, un-marked, as new, manual, paperwork, £3600 ono. Also **Husqvarna** WR250 V-reg, enduro, road legal, many new parts, c&s, tyres, looms, brakes, vgc, spares, manual, serviced, £2000 ono, work injury forces sale. Tel Richard on 0208 844 2774 (Middx)

Moto Morini 501 Excalibur K-reg, met black, beautiful cond, T&T, £2500, exchange for trail/enduro bike cash either way. Tel Brian on 01633 790 730 (Gwent)

Yamaha WR400 2000 model, green lane use, standard with factory lighting kit, £3450 or p/x late DR350 or DRZE. Tel 01773 590 818 (Derby)

Suzuki RM250 1989 enduro trim, good cond, owned since '89, some spares, new bike forces sale, cheap enduro £695 ono, also Kids Suzuki LT50 quad, vgc, white/blue, engine & throttle restrictions plus parental control cut-out, suit 3-7 year old, £550 ono. Tel Paul on 01279 771 724 (Herts)

Kawasaki KLX650 1993, Farnham tuned, Dynojet, k&n filter, new c&s, 19" front, very quick and reliable, 10,000m, £1950. Tel Paul on 01403 259 805 (Sussex)

KTM 620 Duke P-reg, 4th edition, Remus exhaust, John Deacon tune, one owner, fsh, vgc, T&T, 5500m, £3300 ono. Tel Ian on 01509 812 286 (Leics)

Honda XR280 R-reg, Renthals, barkbusters, bashplate, good tyres, green lane use only tax, MoT, good cond, £1900 ono. Tel Darren after 6pm weekdays only on 0113 225 9984 (Yorks)

Yamaha WR400F 1999 full FMF graphics, carbon fibre f/guards, green lane use only, must be seen, £2880 ono. Tel Nick on 0208 656 6275 (Surrey)

Yamaha XT600E 1995 good cond, new knobblies, Scott-oiler, fsh, little off road use, £2200 ono. Tel Richard on 01798 867 305 (W Sussex)

Honda XR400 T-reg, taxed, 11,000km, UK bike, Renthals, disc/fork. Hand, sumpguards, lowered, mostly road use, not abused, easy starter, may p/x CRM £2700 ono. Tel 01603 431 420 (Norfolk)

KTM 250 H-reg, recent service - Eurotek, excellent cond, 1500km, green lane use only, includes single bike trailer, reluctant sale £1300. Tel John on 01904 479 005 (N Yorks)

Suzuki DRZ400S UK bike, yellow, Suzuki warranty, full AA recovery, 1400m, as new, £3750. Also Bridgestone Gritty ED661 front tyre 90x90x21 60m use, £25. Tel 0115 973 1454 (Notts)

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Honda XR400 V-reg DEP pipe, handguards, frameguards, bashplate, taxed, excellent cond, £2700. Tel 01482 602 128

Honda Dominator '96 blue/silver, new tyres, chain etc, 14,000m, tax, MoT, very tidy, ideal winter bike, £2200 ono. Also wanted Africa twin 96-98 model low miles with history, must be mint cond. Tel 01505 874 180 (Scotland)

Gas Gas 350 Pampera 1998, 1300km, immac cond, £1800. Tel 01234 768 040 (Beds)

Honda CL250 1981, vgc, never been off road, £550. Also KDX spares. Tel 01242 582 930 (Glos)

Honda XR650 enduro 2000 model, 1000km, Renthal bars, green lane use only, excellent cond, £3595 bargain. Tel Martin on 01227 281 088 (Kent)

Honda CRM250 MKI 1989, new brake discs, front and rear, recently serviced shock, 14,000km, good cond, £1150. Tel Chris on 01730 813 791 (W Sussex)

Honda CRM250AR R-reg, 9000km, sumpguard, optimised gearing etc, spares, excellent cond, light green lane use only by mature owner, £2800. Tel John on 01229 889 109 (Cumbria)

Yamaha YZ400 1998 registered and taxed, sound condition, £1995 or swap Serow, KDX200 of similar value. Tel 0117 932 2207 (Bristol)

KTM 250EXC 1994, good cond, well maintained, some spares, £1100. Tel Chris on 0238 025 2426 (Hants)

Yamaha WR200 1998 excellent cond, green lane use only, £1795 ono. Tel 0208 943 5299 (Middx)

KTM LC4640E 1999, 5000m, tax, full KTM service history, orange/silver, e&k/start, £3500 ono. Tel Nick on 01258 837166 (Dorset)

Honda XR200N M-reg, white front disc model, well maintained, 8500m, MoT, tax, £1250, Tel 01775 711 378 (Lincs)

Husky TE350 K-reg, Excel/Akront rims, otherwise standard, not used for last 12 mths, £1000 ono. Tel Tim on 0771 562 9495 (N'thants)

Honda XR250 P-reg, 5000km, completely standard, £1600 or p/x or swap KTM 300EXC. Tel Tony on 0798 974 1353 (N'thants)

Suzuki DRZ400 X-reg, enduro model, kick start, immac cond, little use, easy starter, £3100 ono. Tel 01304 841 656 (Kent)

Kawasaki KLX300R 1999, under 2000m, brushguards, bashplate, Renthals, taxed and road registered, loads of spares, excellent cond, £2650. Tel Andy on 01908 373 287 (Bucks)

Armstrong MT500 1986, T&T, Dell'Orto spare tyres, bags, toolkit and manual, new wheel

bearings f&r, regularly serviced, all receipts, £1000 ono or p/x for CCM + cash. Tel Tim on 01709 324 502 (S Yorks)

Yamaha TTR250 e/start, good cond, MoT & tax, Renthals, brushguards, recent tyres, excellent first green laner, £1000. Tel Steve on 01604 514 634 (N'thants)

Honda XL600R 1986 American import, registered, MoT, tax, rebuilt engine, p/c frame, new chain, vgc, £1250 ono. Tel Jon on 07970 781 929

Honda XR250 R-reg, taxed, Renthals, handguards, bashplate, 3000km, frame guards, well maintained, little use, £2000. Tel 01298 73500 (Derby)

Suzuki DR250 dual/sport, M-reg, e/start, twin cam, T&T, 14,000km, Renthals, sumpguard, handguards, oil cooler, stainless exhaust, excellent bike £1695. Tel Les on 01663 741 191 (Derby)

Suzuki DR400S 1980 white, MoT, twin shock, pristine cond, £850. Tel 017687 78587 (Cumbria)

SPARES

Boots Wolfsporn, excellent cond, size 45 (UK 10) small fitting, black/white, very strong, very waterproof, hardly used, £45. Tel 01535 642 003 (W Yorks)

Yamaha DT200WR spares, gearbox, crank & case, head barrel, swing arm & shock etc. Tel 0118 967 0791 (Berks)

CCM new Venhill throttle & clutch cables, drive belt & oil filter plus used sparkplugs, engine manual etc, £50. Tel 01858 575 697 (Leics)

Kawasaki KLX650 breaking also Laser exhaust. Wanted KLX250 or 250CDI unit. Tel 01733 766 660

Honda XR600 HRC kit £400. Mikuni flat slide pump jet carb £150. Talon wheels gold hubs £450. CRD exhaust system £150. Tel after 7pm 01322 271 358 (Kent)

Honda CR125 1987 cycle parts, good cond, all cheap, rads £15. Each tank £10. Seat £5. More available. Also XL125 engine, very low mileage, Chinese copy, perfect cond but needs CDI, ideal replacement or special project engine Tel 07967 631 073 (Devon)

FMF Fatty pipe to fit Yamaha WR250 (98-on) £80, also Alpinestar Tech 8s (size 9) £70. Tel TBM 020 8840 4760

Honda XR400 Supertrapp silencer cost £220

will accept £130. Tel 01302 709 510 (S Yorks)

Pair of wheels from '98 CR250 includes sprocket, discs, tyres, will fit most CRs & XRs plus anything else with spacers. £200. Tel 01484 402 302 (W Yorks)

Suzuki SP370 carb £20 plus p&p. EK 'o'ring chain 520 x 106 links £25 plus p&p. Other spares available. Tel 01896 830 577 (Scotland)

XT600 e-start engine complete less clutch & starter motor, good cond but in boxes, best offer over £200. Also Gas Gas Pampera front and rear wheels complete with discs, excellent cond, £125. Tel 0118 962 9307 (Berks)

Leather cordura jacket, trousers, quilted lining, blue/yellow/white, boots to match plus Wolf clothing £250 may split. Tel 01782 750 884 (Staffs)

BMW R1100GS parts: front mudguard yellow £25, pillion seat £25, pillion footrests £20, sumpguard £10, grabrail £55, rear mudguard £5. Tel 01622 755 354 (Kent)

Supernoto wheels to suit DR350 including discs, sprocket & tyres polished alloy £500 no offers. Tel 01793 812 291 (Wilts)

Honda XR400 parts: Acerbis large tank original h/light assembly brand new. New filters plus many more parts. Tel 01229 718 024 (Cumbria)

Suzuki DR200 parts as new, clutch cable, throttle cables, rear sprocket cover, oil seals, rocker cap, £8 the lot. Also wanted Suzuki DR350 parts please Tel 01268 413 136

Talon wheels Exel rims gold with discs and sprocket as new fit '99 CR250 £400. Acerbis 11ltr tank £100 for CR250. Tel 01634 580 105 (Kent)

Yamaha YZ/WR400 full exhaust pipe standard mint cond, recently repacked adds BHP to WRs £150 ono. Tel 07880 733 287 (Essex)

XR600 1994 assorted parts, forks, brakes, plastics, too many to list, also new Venhill s/s front hose, CR500 frame, forks, swingarm. Tel 01920 823 894 (Herts)

WANTED

Wanted Suzuki DR400 1980 engine must be in good cond, also exhaust system for same. Tel 01586 552 252 (Argyll)

Wanted Any overland parts for BMW R100GS ie tanks, shock, forks, seat all items considered. Tel 01440 761 247 (Suffolk)

Wanted any trailbike/enduro to p/x for immaculate Fireblade L-reg, black/burgundy, low miles, worth around £3500 WHY. Tel Mark on 01484 402 302 (W Yorks)

Wanted Suzuki PE175, looking for the best bike, good money for the right bike. Tel 01708 222 417 (Essex)

Wanted XR400 wheels and other spares. Dell'Orto carburetor and stainless exhaust to fit Armstrong MT500. Tel 01829 781 605 (Cheshire)

Wanted DR350 electric start as standard as possible but anything considered up to £2000. Tel 07967 048 790 (SE London)

Wanted Husky TE410E, XR250 or any late e/start 4 stroke enduro bike. Cash waiting for right bike, no dealers. Tel 0161 627 3574

Wanted XTZ660 1991 rear wheel crash bars, cash waiting, will collect. Tel 01892 540 475 (Kent)

Wanted off road clothing any condition considered, boots size 10, jeans XL-XXL, body armour, knee pads, cash waiting Tel 01246 410 695 (Derby)

Wanted Suzuki DR250/350 parts wanted: rear shock, ignition, mudguard etc. also looking for a trail partner. Tel Derek on 0208 979 3497 (Surrey)

Wanted W/shop manual for Yamaha TTR250 photocopy would suffice. Tel 01858 575 697 (Leics)

Wanted Honda CR500 engine complete or bottom end '95 onwards please also power front pipe. Tel 07730 815 126 (Essex)

Wanted Genuine Kawasaki w/shop manual for KDX200 H3 model ('97). Tel 01403 734 525

Wanted Acerbis tank for 1986 Yamaha XT600. Tel 07931 765 475 (London)

Wanted XR rear wheel early drum brake model, 110mm drum pro-link s/a 18" preferred, anything considered or hub only. Tel 01926 817 183 (Warks)

Wanted Honda WX650 Dominator engine must be low mileage and in good condition, will travel. Tel 01539 620 697 (Cumbria)

Wanted CRM250 parts, front sprocket cover, chain guard, underpanel toolbox, speedo drive hub, lower stanchion non break, hey, worth a try!! Tel 01484 861 608 (W Yorks)

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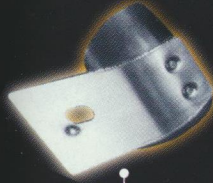
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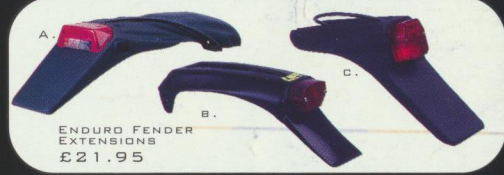
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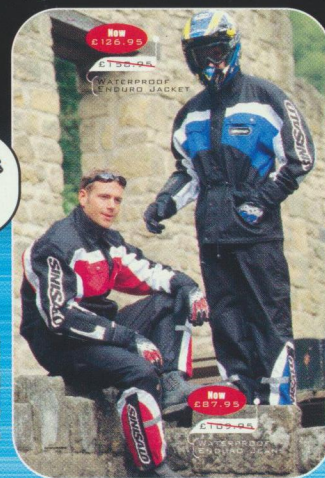
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