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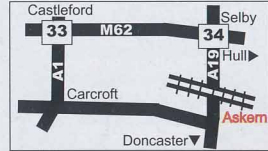
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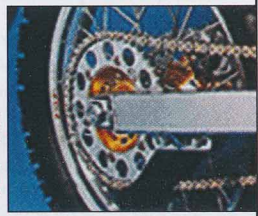
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Back to the Future...

The date is a Sunday morning, January 2020 and somewhere just north of London a small group of people are about to break the law. They don't intend to steal anything, or harm anyone, but in the eyes of the authorities, they are law-breakers all the same. They get geared up for their illicit activity - body armour, dark waterproof clothing, full face helmets which hide their features. Their mode of transport: high performance off-road dirt bikes.

One of them produces a map 'This is the route we'll follow today guys. Most of it is on old trails - all of which used to be legal in the good old days.' Everyone agrees and a few minutes later they slip away (not too silently) into the early morning mist. A short tarmac journey takes them to the beginning of the first trail which used to be at the corner of a field but which now lies underneath a modern roundabout. Not to worry, it's a trail right? The bikes mount the kerb, cut straight across the middle of the roundabout and grunt their way rapidly up the side of a steep embankment. At the top they drop off the other side, cross the new road and are away onto the remainder of the trail.

The same story is repeated all day long. The guys enjoy fabulous tracks, long since lost to the trail riding community. Most of these tracks are deserted - there's virtually no use of them now that the right of way has been extinguished. Unloved and forgotten they fall into disrepair. Some of them are badly overgrown, others barely definable except on the old Ordnance Survey map which they use. It is dated 1948! Many of the trails are simply marked as 'tracks' on this map. No longer recorded on modern day OS maps, they are nevertheless clearly visible on the ground. The tracks all lead somewhere - established for a purpose. And that purpose was to allow citizens the right of free passage. At least it was until the law changed!

The riding just gets better and better, all modern signs are ignored. There are no degrees of law breaking - something's either legal or it is not. The riders are fastidious however. They stick to their route, following only those trails which once possessed a lawful right of way. After all, they don't want to upset anyone. They just want to be able to enjoy themselves on taxed and insured motorcycles in a way which was perfectly legal 30 years previously.

Here and there they have to cross open ground: the edge of a golf course, a modern cycleway, new housing estates, even a motorway (via the bridge of course). The riders don't hang around waiting to be challenged. They simply keep moving, following the path of the old right of way.

Towards the end there's a nervous moment when a patrolling police car spots the riders covered in mud, but they're not doing anything illegal - they're simply riding home along the road.

Ten minutes later they're back in the safety of a large anonymous garage drinking huge mugs of tea, eating choccy biccies and laughing and joking about the ride.

There's no doubt in their minds that no-one was harmed during the making of this Sunday morning ritual. Only the date was in any doubt...

Si Melber



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Off Roading Under Threat... Again!



If proposals currently under review by members of parliament get given the green light, it could signal the end to all sorts of off-road motorcycling events such as local enduros and training schools, because of restrictions on the use of private land.

Currently under the so-called 'Fourteen Day Rule', landowners such as farmers are allowed to stage up to 14 events a year on their properties without applying for planning permission from local government. However, a report commissioned by the Department of Transport, Local government and the Regions (DTLR) has recommended that the 'temporary uses' provisions currently enjoyed by landowners should be withdrawn entirely. If given the go-ahead, this would mean that events could not run without express planning permission - a length to which many landowners would not be bothered to go.

The irony of this situation has not been lost on farmers. Since suffering the financial effects of the Foot & Mouth epidemic which slashed farm incomes last year, most farmers had been looking forward to a rather more profitable 2002 with the message from central government ringing loudly in their ears that they should be prepared to 'diversify'. Now however it appears the government intends adding yet another layer of bureaucracy - which in turn will prevent farmers from doing just that!

A public consultation paper will be issued early this year, so it's not too late to raise objections to this ridiculous proposal. TBM entirely opposes ill-conceived legislation such as this, and urges you all to write and complain to your local MP. Let's not sit idly by and watch enduros, trials and training schools disappear because of Whitehall's obsession with regulating the countryside! Watch this space...

Dirt Bike Show - No Show!

'Financial difficulties' have been blamed for the last minute cancellation of this year's Dirt Bike & Supermoto Show which was due to go ahead at Donington Park at the end of January.

Organiser Martin Christie declined to go into full details of why he pulled the plug on the show at the last minute, but conceded that it was a 'financial matter' and declared himself 'very disappointed' at the outcome. He said

afterwards 'I'm hoping to re-schedule the show for March sometime, but it depends on the racing schedule.'

But here at TBM we can't help thinking that that may be the end of the road for the long-running show which has been going for more than 20 years. With cancellation costing the exhibitors financially (many will have stocked up on kit, and reserved accommodation etc), it's hard to see them bothering a second time - especially as there is now an alternative in the Dirt Rider Expo.

Sadly from TBM's point of view (as a monthly magazine), the news came too late to warn readers of the closure, since the issue carrying the news story had already been on sale for two weeks.

SNIPPETS

★ Figures just released for the end of 2001 show that motorcycle sales are still at a 17-year high. Although marginally down on last year (169,000 units compared to 170,000), this still represents an incredible boom in bike sales during the past decade.

More importantly perhaps was the fact that sports bike sales were in decline - and tellingly the chairman of the Retail Motor Industry Federation Stuart Feeny said: 'Overall we expect that the market will continue to change with less emphasis on the 'race replica' sports machines and growth in commuter and niche sectors.'

Trail bikes and supermotos anyone?

★ Mitsubishi's latest version of its superb L200 turbo-diesel Pick-Up (which won 'Pick-Up of the year award 2001') has just been launched in

a special edition 'Animal' format. Teaming up with extreme sports gear manufacturers Animal, the new Mitsubishi L200 gets a double cab, air-con, ABS, two-tone paintwork, Animal branded graphics, six CD autochanger and a whole host of other extras.

Best of all the rear bed is designed specifically for sporting applications - including carrying dirt bikes. Prices start from £9995 on the road and go up to £17995 for the special Animal version. More details on 01285 655777.

★ Llanerchindda Farm in Cynghordy near Llandovery in the southern foothills of the Cambrian Mountains (near Monks Trod, Strata Florida, and the Cambrian Rally etc) is a 44-bedded farmhouse which has started offering B&B facilities to trailriders.

There's a huge workshop, drying facilities, power washers etc and a self-service bar, plus a warming log fire. For more information contact Nick Bointon on 01550 750274.

★ Wessex Cross Country Executives are a new company offering fully guided tours on identical electric-start XT225 Serows through parts of Hants, Wilts and Dorset (the old county of Wessex). They start each day with a 45 minute instruction session, to ensure that everyone knows basic off-road riding techniques, before hitting the trails. Staying away from the tarmac as much as possible, 110 miles a day is not unheard of. Prices start at £150 for one day, rising to £250 for the weekend. These include full riding kit but not accommodation. For further information contact Wessex Executives on 01980 863303.



LEARNING FOR Pleasure

Here in the UK the Spanish-built Alfers are best known for their two-stroke enduro bikes. But with the introduction of a new learner-legal thumper, Alfer have created a whole new class - that of serious learner trailie. Si Melber travelled to Wales to take a closer look...

The view was astounding. Up on the old Roman road above Llandoverly you could see for miles. And as the mist lifted and offered unparalleled views across the valley to Mynydd Bach and further on to the Crychan Forest - I stood and gazed for a moment, drinking in the spectacular clear light of a cold and crisp winter's day.

I'd just been for a short blast on the all new Alfer thumper. A bike with fantastic suspension, stable geometry, a light and lithe chassis, excellent brakes, great ergos, loads of ground clearance, and... a 12hp engine!

Ah yes. Did I mention the fact that the new Alfer VR125 is a fully learner-legal trailie? Thought not. Nevermind. The point is that this bike is like no other learner trailie. What we have here is a fully fettled enduro race chassis mated up to an electric-start, 125cc, air-cooled four-stroke. In keeping with its intended purpose as a proper trail bike, the bike is fully road legal - there's lights, indicators speedo and horn etc - and the package gels together so well that you'd

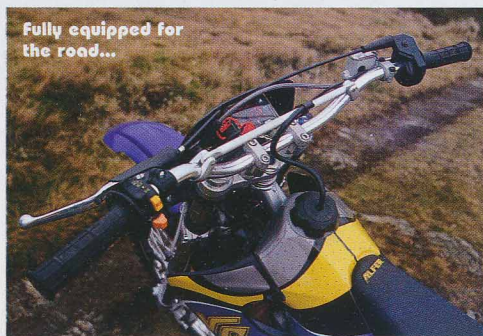


The Alfer VR125 is a very smart looking trailie...



The VR125 can tackle pretty much any sort of green lane...

LEARNING FOR Pleasure



Fully equipped for the road...

have thought the chassis was built around this particular engine.

It wasn't. It was built to hold Alfer's 250cc Rotax two-stroke enduro mill - an engine putting out nearly four times the horsepower. So it begs the question: what's the point in having this much chassis with so little power?

Certainly this bike isn't going to appeal to your average 17 year old. The asking price alone (nearly three and a half big ones) will surely deter all but the deepest of pockets, and the Alfer isn't especially low in order to suit a beginner (though it can be lowered). No, although this thing is learner-legal (ie less than 15hp - more like 10-12hp I reckon), I can see it appealing to a



Simple four-stroke lump fits the Alfer chassis nicely...

whole different type of customer. Here's how.

You see many learner-legal trailies are little more than chip-shop poseurs - tarted up road-bikes with a nod towards some off-road styling. Perfect for a spot of summer green-laning, but pretty useless when it comes to riding tough conditions. Which is what you'd expect of course. Their primary function is low cost transport and they are built down to a price. There are notable exceptions (DT125 etc), but even good bikes like that are still a million miles away in concept from this sort of machine.

The Alfer is quite unique. Because this is a genuine off-roader, albeit one which is limited in horsepower. But Alfer reckon that not everyone wants a 40hp motor underneath them, and they may be right. In slippery and wet conditions, power is the enemy of control. Too much wheel-spin, no traction, too much weight etc, it all leads to a frightening lack of control. Something which can intimidate the best of riders - let alone a relative novice or perhaps someone looking for an easy ride.

But not with the VR125. Put simply you know that you're never going to get out of shape - there simply isn't enough power to mess things up. Instead there's a gentle wave of mellow performance which continues to build right throughout the rev range in typical small-bore four-stroke

fashion. In fact the engine is sweet and willing - the only glitch, a small battery charging problem which caused a slight fluffiness in the bottom end on our pre-production bike. But the factory knows about the problem and has already sorted it out. Otherwise this is as gentle and easy an engine to get on with as you're likely to find. It starts on the push of a button, carburetes nicely most of the way through and simply delivers what you'd expect of a low capacity thumper. There's not a lot of extra performance to be had by wringing its neck (even with the addition of the optional 'competition' exhaust fitted to ours), but that doesn't mean you don't try.

It's tempting to go everywhere 'full beans', and certainly the chassis allows you to do just that. You rarely need to button-off as the bike will simply climb, ride, roll, or occasionally jump over everything in its path. All the time with the motor thrumming away in the background at high revs, while the stable chassis and supple suspension smooth the way for you.

For the rider who prefers a more gentle pace, keeping the engine in its midrange will do the job nicely. Like all small capacity dirt bikes there's a need to use the lower gears more frequently - in particular first gear for steep little climbs or hopping over ditches etc - but it's no big deal. With six ideally spaced ratios to choose from, there's a



LEARNING FOR *Pleasure*

There was still snow on the ground when we rode the bike in Wales...

gear for everything you encounter, and on the road the bike will happily rev out in top - reaching its maximum speed of about 55mph (approx).

Not fast, but fast enough. It will of course pull taller gearing should your riding include more road work, but for most riders the stock gearing should be spot on, and still allow the bike a useful turn of acceleration.

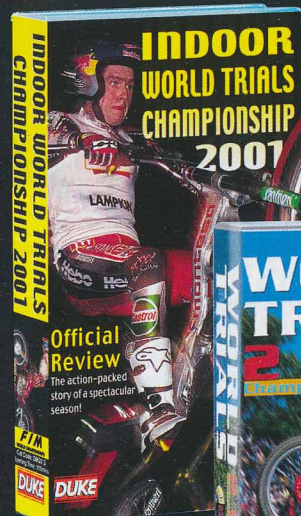
So who exactly is going to be looking for a bike with this combination of great chassis and components, but a limited amount of power? Well you might be surprised! I've got a hunch about this: that there are more than a few trail riders out there who love the idea of a top-notch handler like this thing, but aren't the least bit interested in performance. They want decent economy, four stroke power, not too much noise, sufficient oomph to get up hills, and a sweet handling chassis.

They may be a little older than average, probably very experienced, sensible riders, who've been off-roading for a number of years. They've done their charging about in their youth and now they want something which simply makes their trail riding easier. They don't want a Serow or one of the other small-sized trail bikes because they like the style and handling of a full-sized

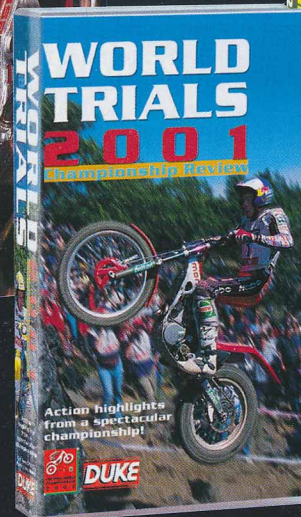


... Though the sun did eventually appear.

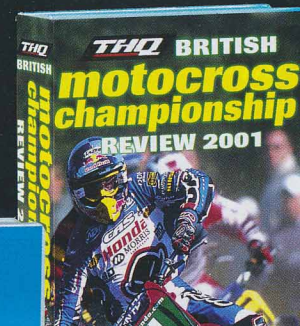
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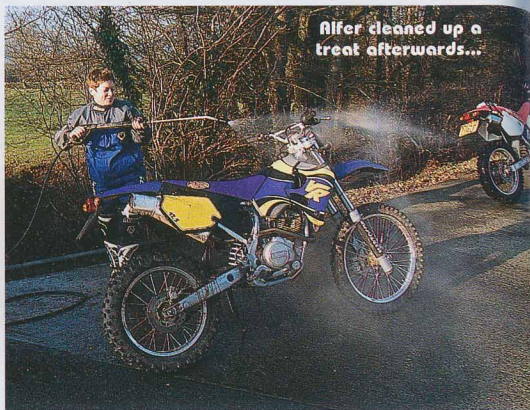


enduro type chassis. In the past they've owned bikes like the wonderful little XR200, but they've never found anything to replace it with. They are - for want of a better word - greybeards, and I mean that in the nicest possible sense. I've met a number of these sorts of riders and they are all extremely competent on a dirt bike. Follow them down a trail and you'll see what I mean. They rarely take their feet off the pegs, they cover the ground smoothly, efficiently and with a minimum amount of drama or wheelspin. And they are exactly the sort of person to whom a bike like this will undoubtedly appeal.

Mind you if it came in 200cc guise (or even 185-250cc), they'd be on the phone immediately wanting to know about availability. And this is something which hasn't gone un-noticed by Steve Plain, the bike's importer.

'I took it to a trial the other day' he told me, 'and it was the most popular bike there. Everyone wanted to know more about it. And would there be a bigger version available?'

For certain, creating a slightly larger capacity lump ought not be a problem. The air-cooled, counterbalanced, sohc, two valve Franco Morini motor has a strong enough bottom end which



looks to have been modelled on the good old Honda XL engine - a motor which has in the past happily stretched from 100-250cc without any significant reliability problems.

In the meantime though it's still a 125cc bike - but there's nothing to stop an owner from building their own big-bore version.

At the end of the day the Alfer VR125 sets out to carve a niche for itself and manages to fill it quite competently. This is a bike whose specifications (brakes, suspension, wheels, chassis, bars etc) are more than a match for any equivalent capacity bike on the market. One that's powered by a sturdy, reliable, air-cooled thumper with (let's just say) 'sufficient' performance to keep you interested. And unlike your typical Japanese learner trailie - it's actually built for the rough.

For the trail rider this means a fun and enjoyable ride if not necessarily a fast or frantic one. And for the learner it means a bike which not only looks the part - it is the part. Simple as that.

Can't wait to ride the 200cc version though...

ALFER VR125

Price:	£3450 (approx)
Engine:	Air-cooled, counter-balanced, sohc, two-valve four-stroke with electric-start.
Displacement:	124cc
Bore & Stroke:	57 x 48.6mm
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Home & Away

Dear Si,

Re: Issue 73 and Bruce Mathieson's trip along the north west coast of Scotland. Well, what a bumper! The only week that I'm away in summer, someone that I would really liked to have chatted to, rides to where I live.

You see, I live in the self-sufficient community mentioned (the unnamed one - thanks for that Bruce, much appreciated), and one of those old XLs is mine. Useful for all manner of tasks, including carrying gas bottles, boxes of chickens and children to school when they can't be bothered to walk! Seriously though it's not a bad life up here.

Bruce Mathieson's trip around western Scotland attracted a lot of praise...



Having left Hertfordshire in 2000 we were looking for a fresh start, and boy did we get one. My wife moved up here ahead of me while I worked out my notice. I finally made it up here at the beginning of December, but on the day that I moved in, we had a fire which basically destroyed the house. So I arrived to no house, and worse still was the fact that I had just spent the best part of £3000 moving everything up here (my wife should have let me use it to buy a new trail bike - if only I'd known). Everything was reduced to ashes, even my complete set of TBMs.

Looking on the bright side, the house was insured, no one was hurt, I now have no mortgage, I can ride my bike whenever I want and TBM comes through the post once a month regular as clockwork. So life is okay!

Keep up the good work Si. And Bruce, if you should ever visit again, please call in and see me. Just ask someone and they will point you in the right direction.

Peter Young
NW Scotland

Hong Kong Phooey

Dear Ed,

Having just topped up my subscription credits, and whilst I've got pen to paper, I would like to inform you that bikes in Australia are seriously cheap. How cheap? Well, a new Yamaha WR426F would set you back about \$9000 (Australian)

or approximately £3000.

As I live in Hong Kong I was planning on buying one and shipping it over, until I found out that the import tax is 40 per cent! So my cunning plan has failed, which is probably for the best as you can't ride anywhere off-road in Hong Kong. I would have looked a bit sad just sitting on it in my front garden, dreaming of cold, muddy lanes.

Never mind, I still have the mountain bike to ride.

If, however, you, or your readers, know of any off-road-ing tracks in Hong Kong please let me know. It's my last hope. Keep up the good work.

Adrian
Hong Kong

Loads a Money

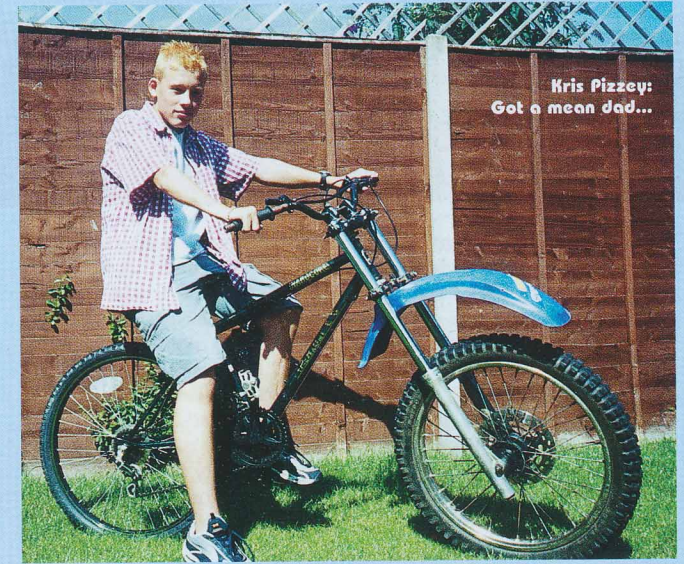
Dear TBM,

After visiting the Dirt Rider Expo I need to air a few frustrations. I took along my wife and three children (hoping to convince them that I need a new bike!) and the entrance fee was £35. 'What, no family tickets?' Never mind, let's all have a hot-dog. 'How much?! No thanks.' Alright then, I'll try out the supermoto course. '£20 please sir', 'What?!' 'That does include safety wear'. Oh good, I won't kill myself in front of the kids. Never mind, we'll watch the display instead. 'Dad, I can't see'. Neither could the majority of people.

With heads bowed we spotted our old friends the TBM crew, the people's mag, who cater for all budgets and are in touch with their readers. 'Over you go kids, get yourselves a free poster'. 'Sorry sir, they're £1.50 each'.

Bummer!

Please find enclosed a photo of my son, Kris. As you can see we've started to piece a bike together, so that he can go



Kris Pizey:
Got a mean dad...

green laning on his 40th birthday! Great mag, but better at two pounds.

Kev Pizey
Bedford

Wait a minute Kev. You're thinking of buying yourself a new bike (approx three to four grand), and you're worried about a £1.50 poster. Are you for real? In fact our posters were £1 each, or two for £1.50, which reflects the cost of printing them and attending the show. You're right - we like to think we're in touch with our readers, but we've got no idea what planet you're on. Anyone who can spend four grand on themselves but won't buy their kids a hot-dog has got to have a pretty weird outlook on life. Perhaps you should take a look at your own values before criticising ours mate...

What's In a Name?

Dear TBM,

I am writing to you regarding your magazine title. It is supposed to be Trail Bike and

Enduro, yet what does the December issue consist of? A test on a Husaberg, not the enduro but the supermoto. Hmm... Not quite the tool for a bit of green laning or an enduro. Ah... but it is a dirt bike (just about), then again maybe not.

Anyway, let us progress through the hallowed pages, to what next? Ah yes... the end of the year review, in which the revered hacks give us (the hoi polloi), their 'highs and lows of the past 12 months'. As I've got all the back issues I can review the 'highs and lows of the past 12 months' by flicking through them, but the pictures, all 35 of them, did fill the pages very well. Yes, they did bring back memories, but, come on guys, how many times do we want to see you lot bailing?

Next item, a real dirt bike albeit a motocross bike. At least it has off-road tyres. Going in the right direction, so why try to tart it up as an enduro bike by adding a front light, and then just flog it around a motocross track?

Let's get going to the next item, a trail bike item whoopee! After which Staff Bikes appears.

Dear Trail Bike...

Yes, he's having a go off-road and it is a trail bike (loosely). So things are looking up. Then the coup de grace, an IT490. I used to own one and still have the plates to prove it. This is more like real life dirt bikes.

To conclude, cut the supermoto crap and get back to basics; trail riding, Doing the Rounds, tests on enduro/trail bikes and more enduro stuff. Don't get me wrong, I still think that the mag is the gonads, I do like supermoto, and am well aware that F+M has ruined things this year. The 2002 bikes are out, so let's have a shootout of the different classes, that kind of stuff. You know Si, like in the good old days.

Martin Moore,
Cumbria

What's your problem Martin? You've got a supermoto test (Husa 650), a scoop first test of a brand new bike (CRF450), a bit of poignant humour to break up the tests (end of year review), a trail riding article (Crete), a staff bikes article (GS1150) and finally a fun enduro bike article (IT490). I'd call that a bl*dy good issue! Right from day one, TBM has always been a 'broad' read. Its lifeblood is its versatility, its breadth of coverage, its ability to look at the whole of off-roading with an open mind. Something you seem to be lacking.

Sure we don't cover MX because it's a specialist sport which is covered elsewhere in the press, but that doesn't mean we can't feature MX bikes in the mag (as we have done before) - especially ones which we know

will get converted into trail and enduro bikes (and that was the point of the CRF article - as we made crystal clear). Since that article was written, we know of a whole number of CRF450s which have already been converted into trail or enduro spec - nicely making our case.

Interestingly we got the scoop on that bike, riding it before the so-called MX mags got their hands on it. Yep, we only got to ride it around an MX circuit and yes we added a headlight for the photos (as we explained in the text), but we rode it first, and printed the story about its development and technological improvements. Obviously if you'd have been editor of TBM you would've turned down the opportunity for the first UK test ride on an all-new Honda off-roader (on the basis that it was an 'MX-er'). Thus denying your readers the opportunity to find out more about the bike, and then make up their minds for themselves. All I can say is, don't go applying for a job as a bike journalist Martin, you'd fall at the first hurdle.

Moving on. If you look closely you'll notice that the title of our mag doesn't say anything about 'rallying' either, but I notice you haven't written in to complain about our rally coverage in the past. As for our yearly review in the December issue. Well given your lack of foresight concerning the CR-F, I don't reckon you're in any position to lecture us as to what should or shouldn't be included in the magazine. That review was not just about us bailing off test bikes, it was also our chance to

remember friends like JD. That's the heart and soul of TBM and we reckon it's you who's out of step with the rest of the readership mate...

Positive at Last!

Dear Sirs,

I have to say that I really enjoy TBM every month, especially the supermoto articles. And now you are producing a magazine dedicated to 'motards', which I'm really looking forward to reading. It is with this in mind that I write to you. I have been riding for 13 years now, mainly sports bikes plus one or two small trail bikes. I now own a Ducati 748 and a Yamaha DT125. The Ducati is used occasionally and the DT is used all year round for getting to work.

The problem is that it's getting expensive to run both bikes, what with insurance, servicing etc. My fiancé also thinks that it's a bit excessive having two bikes, one of which I hardly ride. So it's crunch time! I need one bike that will do the job for pleasure riding and commuting all year round, as the bikes are my only form of transport. I have already looked at the big trailies and test ridden a BMW GS1150, which I found was just too big for me.

I really like supermotos and feel this may be the best route to go, but which one? Locally I have dealers for KTM, Husky, CCM and the usual Japanese manufacturers. I have taken test rides on a CCM and a KTM LC4 enduro but I still can't decide.

So it's over to you. Which bike would you recommend for all-year-round riding, good reliability, general fun/track days as well as the provision for the odd day out with my soon-to-be wife. I look forward to receiving your sound advice.

Tony Edwards
Leicestershire

Cheers Tony, that's a tough call. KTM, Husky and CCM all make very good big-bore motos, and frankly its as much about personal choice as anything. You've done the right thing by getting test rides on the CCM and KTM, now I would try and arrange a ride on the Husky and then you'll be able to compare all three in your own mind. If you still want more info then check out our new Supermoto Magazine which has a test on the KTM in issue one, followed up by a test on both the Husky and the new CCM R30 in issue two. Thereafter it's up to you mate...

Moto-Head

Dear TBM,

Congratulations on a great mag. My wife has just subscribed me to Supermoto Magazine as well. (I love my wife).

I've been reading TBM for a while now and I'm thinking of chopping in my R6 for an off-road bike. Your DR-Z v XR400 supermoto shootout in issue 71 finally made me see the light. The R6 has gone and I will be buying either a DR-Z or XR soon. I realised that trying to ride like Mick Doohan on our traffic free, beautifully smooth tarmac roads, free from the worry of speed cameras etc was just too much fun for me.

The reason I'm writing is that I wanted a bit more information about the bikes shown:

1. Both bikes had either DEP

or CRD end cans. Do these provide more performance or is it just a matter of noise reduction? Would the bike require rejetting?

2. I'm aware that there is a 440cc kit for the Honda. How much does it cost and does it make much of a difference to the performance or affect reliability?

3. Are there any cheap and easy modifications to gain a little more performance?

4. When fitting a 320mm disc you mentioned in the article a caliper spacer. Does this spacer allow the standard caliper to be used with the 320mm disc?

I haven't decided which bike to buy yet, but your magazine has definitely converted me.

Daniel McNeillage
Hants

The answers to your questions Daniel are as follows:

1) Yes they improve performance, but don't necessarily require you to re-jet. Though if you're carrying out performance modifications you might as well get the bike on a dyno and take a look at the jetting, otherwise you may well be wasting your money.

2 & 3) There are a number of ways of improving the performance of the XR. Simple gas flowing of the head will bring about decent improvements for under £350. Otherwise, HRC do a performance kit for the XR with a high comp piston and an altered clutch ratio etc. It doesn't actually increase the capacity, but it gives a power hike of about 10-15 percent. It costs somewhere between £850-1000. Alternatively you can go the big-bore route and get the 440cc kit fitted but this requires a fair amount of work. Budget on spending at least £1200+ for this conversion.

4) Yes.

Good luck.

Rash of Complaints #1

Dear Si,

Although in the previous month's editorial you state that it's a mystery why anyone would want to write in to a consumer magazine, apart from for obvious reasons such as receiving advice, I note with interest that you are only too keen to put across your own personal opinion in response to Owen Hilton's most welcome contribution in the letters section (that's my job as editor, Rachel - ed).

I would like to suggest that enlightening the publishers of a magazine as to what the readers actually want included is as good a reason as any to write in.

If you took the trouble to conduct some market research you would find that your female readers do indeed find it irritating that you deem it necessary to feature a model in bra and knickers, complete with stubble rash (meeow!), on the cover of the Christmas issue. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that this is not the way to encourage them to purchase the magazine. Why is it that you feel the need to patronise your female readers by implying that their role should be merely to decorate motorcycles in a style which would be more suited to a soft porn publication? Your argument that you might just as well say that TBM should not put expensive new dirt bikes on the cover because not everybody can afford them bears no relevance. You appear to have forgotten that the magazine is actually about motorbikes. If you, and your male readers, are that desperate to see pictures of naked women then there are plenty of top shelf magazines to choose from, not to mention the abundance of so called lads magazines, such as FHM.

I know many females who

Dear Trail Bike...

regularly maintain and ride bikes, and all of them, without exception, are tired of the way women are portrayed by the motorcycle media and trade shows. Let's hope that there are some men out there who are actually intelligent enough to make a contribution towards change and who realise that although female motorcyclists may still be a minority (is it surprising judging by what they have to put up with?) it doesn't justify the way everything is targeted towards a male audience.

Should anybody feel the need to reply in order to get the last word, suggest how ugly I must be etc, then feel free, but don't do so on my behalf. I will not be bothering to purchase this magazine again until I have seen a picture of a naked male on the cover.

Rachel Titcombe
Swindon

Then may I suggest one of the top shelf mags to help you with your... erm, 'desires' to see naked male flesh Rachel!

Rash of Complaints #2

Dear TBM,

It was great to see the letter in issue 76 from Owen Hilton on the subject of female models. Whoa! A chap with brains and a bike between his legs!

I am a keen, female motorcyclist with a like-minded husband into trail bikes. We both enjoy TBM but also feel strongly that the scantily clad models are



Looks like Jo Guest wasn't too impressed by your arguments either Rachel...

inappropriate. If she can't ride the machine (wearing the proper kit) then why is she there?

Anyway, to redress the balance I would like to ask you to publish some pictures of hunky chaps in thongs, sitting provocatively astride a few dirt bikes (obviously at such an angle that we girls cannot help but notice how very appropriate their machinery is). What's the betting you won't dare print this?!

Jill Westlake
Devon

Well you lost your bet Jill, but unfortunately you've also lost your argument. If you don't

approve of scantily clad models - what's the point in having male ones? Come on Jill you've got to make up your mind - you're either *for* something or *against* it. You can't have it both ways...

Rash of Complaints #3

Dear TBM

I would like to say thanks for a great magazine, so imagine my excitement when I saw the advert in November's edition for the long awaited Supermoto Magazine. I was beside myself with joy thinking at long last

this will be a great magazine, with great bikes for a specialised market.

Unfortunately you have decided to go down the route of every 'other' high street magazine and drape half naked bints over the bikes, I wouldn't mind but Jo Guest is not even nice. Is she short of money by any chance?

Come on guys you are better than that. TBM is a great magazine with no need for girls so neither should the long awaited Supermoto Magazine. If nothing else the girls obscure the wonderful bikes - which is the real reason people buy the magazine in the first place. If you are short of content to put in the magazine, I'd rather you didn't release it than padd it out with cheap girls. There are plenty of magazines to read if you want to look at girls aimed specifically at that market (FHM, Loaded etc). What you

need to ask yourself is what market are you aiming this magazine at? Spotty teenage boys, or men who are old enough to actually ride the bikes featured and indeed afford them?

Just in case you were wondering, I am not gay, but happily married and not very old either, not that that makes any difference. I for one won't be buying the magazine out of principle, even though it will pain me to do so, as I am interested in the bike features.

Jason Osborne
Norwich

Ahhhh yessss. Right after the smell of racing two stroke oil and hot rubber, the one we like best is the smell of burning martyr. Sadly for you Jason, biting off your nose to spite your face, probably won't improve matters on the smelling front.

But the whiff of hypocrisy and indignation lingering around you is likely to be impossible to disguise.

You can keep your offensive language and suppositions (referring to models as 'bints' and questioning their motives), you can keep your paranoia (...I'm not gay, honest!), and you can keep your opinions to yourself in future. As for your hypocritical remark about Ms Guest - 'I wouldn't mind but she's not even nice' - well what are we to assume by that? That it's okay use models just so long as Jason Osborne of Norwich approves of them? Or just that your sense of humour has yet to develop fully, and you don't understand the meaning of irony?

Thanks for the advice about publishing though mate - because now we know what appeals to you, we can be sure of completely avoiding it in the new magazine...



Stop that! It shouldn't be allowed. You can't just go round having fun you know

Dear Trail Bike...



No daddy. He should be counter-steering more and weighting the outside peg...

Back on our Side

Dear TBM,

Enough is enough, how the tides have turned!

I can still remember when, back in the '70s, as a kid I could catch a glimpse of lady flesh every month in those old custom car mags (we've all been there) and I don't recall an outcry over that. So what exactly is the problem now?

Shouldn't it be us blokes complaining? After all we have to wait for the time of year when 'tis the season to be jolly to be reminded by modern day photo journo's that there is more to life than just gawping at the beauty that is our dirt bike.

After all, year round, there are plenty of opportunities for the ladies to catch a glimpse of you strapping lads of TBM fame. Chances to see grown

men in impossible positions trapped under test bikes, covered in dirt, sweat, and sump oil, dressed as modern day gladiators about to do battle with the latest European chariots. For example, look at December's issue with Blez, string vest and all!

How a couple of artistic shots used to enhance a new bike can possibly be politically incorrect I will never know. Let's be more positive, why I've even used these pictures to help me with my Christmas present list...underwear for my wife, new CRF for me - luvverly.

One last thought, is it such a good idea under the present climate created by these women activists, to branch out into an S&M magazine? The anti-pain and torture leagues'll be down on you like a ton of bricks!

John Pohlman
Burnham

See. Girls love us

Dear TBM

I just thought you would like to see that even 18 month old girls were eager to see first pics of the new Honda CR-F. Excellent mag, keep up the good work.

Andy Boyles
Lincs

She's very cute Andy.

More Good News

Dear TBM,

Firstly, excellent mag, I look forward to it every month.

Secondly, the front cover of the December issue was spot on. We are a group of riders (girls and guys), 20 plus in number, who love our favourite pastime; every Sunday the mobile phones are turned off and we hit the trails around Cornwall.

Jo Guest has now got pride of place on our club notice board at our local bike shop/coffee bar/second home, whatever you want to call it. Agreed, it is a shame to deface a copy of TBM, but it was in the name of art. Can't wait to send the next cheque when my sub runs out.

Kyle Abrahams
Redruth

Cheers Kyle. Well this selection of letters just goes to prove the point - that you can't please all the people all the time. This subject is now closed... Until next Christmas anyway!



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RANT!

Following up on the Rant published in December's TBM where multi British Enduro Champion Geraint Jones argued that we need to start a fund to help our sport grow, reader John Bottomley agrees wholeheartedly and continues the debate...

I am hopeful that Foot and Mouth Disease may have made us realise what it means not to have a sport. I am also encouraged that 2002 appears to offer a much better programme of events than we have seen for many years. We have to make sure 2002 is only the start and that 2003 is even better.

For those among us who only ride occasionally in a local event, they may see this as irrelevant to them. I would appeal to them to open their minds and make the effort to ride in better events and see what it is like. With the experience and satisfaction you can then make a more informed judgement to support this idea. We will all benefit from raising the standard of events. Raising standards does not mean riding harder courses. It means riding in events that are well organised. In other words where events run to a sensible time schedule, have good facilities and have a course that rides well and you go home with a sense of achievement. We have to be careful not to do what the Trials world has done and make things so difficult that only 20-30 people in the world can compete. Enduros need all the lesser mortals, like me, to make the business side of the organisation work. We, the average clubmen and women, in turn want value for money. It is this clubman mass that can make this idea work. At the same time the sport needs a training ground where youngsters with real talent, can be stretched and coached to be as good as the rest of the European riders.

I am ranting, (or should that be raving?) about Geraint Jones's idea for an Enduro Fund as postulated in TBM76. And my rave is targeted towards all those people who are in any way interested, involved or currently participate in enduros.

We all have to support this idea in whatever way we can, simply signing the petition is just the start. We all have to wake up to the fact that off-roading in general and enduros in particular are in my view, in long term decline. Something has to be done to reverse the trend. If not we will all be confined to the home looking after children (sorry Si it is pleasurable) - or worse still - decorating on a Sunday.

I would add to my rave, a special exhortation, to all those guys, who only trail ride and believe it doesn't affect them. Sorry I think it does.

Have you retired from competing? Well don't be selfish - put something back into the sport. Do you fancy competing in the future, when you have honed your skills at falling off? Well please lend a hand to ensure our sport is a good one. When you start you may get hooked on it. I firmly believe that if the competition side declines then the related aspects (such as trail riding) will also suffer. Finally on this point, I appeal to everyone who follows the Welsh Two Day Enduro or similar events, and has enjoyed a great time being part of that special atmosphere. What would you do with your holiday in Wales if the event disappeared? Also consider if you had three or four similar events to follow of the same standard as the Welsh, then you would have the real challenge of finding the extra time off work. Too good to miss for sure.

The only negative comment I'd make on Geraint's proposal is that I personally believe it doesn't go far enough. It is an excellent first step but it does not address the more strategic question of how we can change the framework within which the sport is managed. How do we develop the management structure of the sport for the long term, so it can be flexible enough to adapt to any changes?

Let me try to add some thoughts on how to begin to change by providing some ideas. Whether we like it or not we live in a world in which the media has a huge impact. The business world is now seeing itself in more global terms. You are probably thinking 'well yes, but what has that got to do with enduros and riding my bike as I have always done?' Well, it has a great deal. The point I am making is that the rest of the world has changed and we are getting left behind. It starts regrettably, as Geraint identifies at 'Centre' level, and with the ACU. I am not trying to be an ACU basher - I have been involved and participated in this sport for over 45 years and have never competed in anything other than an ACU organised event. However, the ACU is in my view, so far out of date that they appear to me to be only focused on trying to maintain the status quo circa 1960. In so doing they are promoting the terminal decline of the sport. By making this statement I realise I could be upsetting many people at Centre and club level who put far more into the sport than the meagre efforts I have contributed. I am writing this to get these people to think, as the Americans say, 'outside the box'. In other words to look at the broader picture. To further emphasise the point I would

highlight the fiasco over the British Six Days cancellation. We have to change. Doing nothing is not an option.

I do not advocate breaking away from the ACU, that is unless change cannot be effected from within and in a very short timescale ie 6-12 months. We need to look no further than Formula One motor racing for our lead. No one can deny they have been successful. Their major metamorphosis took place when they stopped focusing on racing cars and realised they were in the 'entertainment' industry.

So I pose the question: what business are we in? Just riding our bikes for fun on a Sunday? I think not. We need to answer this question before we can move forward. I throw this on the table for debate. Maybe the ACU, or what is left of it, could take up the discussion. I believe once we have established this broader vision, we can then start to decide how we adapt the sport's organisational structure.

Coming back to the enduro fund. I am disappointed that riders who already struggle to compete, will have to cough up themselves. I do agree however that this is the only way forward in the short term. It should also be possible to obtain some contributions from related sources to share in the financial burden. What about our £27 license fee? A pound or two from the ACU would certainly help!

Also what about the associated industries that all spend money on advertising and promotion? I am not suggesting they spend more money - simply that they spend it in a different way. If they put money into the fund, then they in turn could get back exposure and promotion. It doesn't even have to be money, it could be in kind. This is usually a far more cost effective way for a business to contribute.

I also consider we need to start to link into the mainstream media a bit more. This is another large debate we need to have and too complex to add in now. Another source of income has to be the hotels and the regional development groups. Is anyone investigating this?

In conclusion I have to endorse what Geraint is trying to do (no apologies for repeating myself, I know all bikers are deaf). I have written this to support the initiative. I am prepared to put out more ideas and pay a little more. However my main contribution will be to ride more in better events until that terrible thing called A-G-E finally catches up. I look forward to seeing the results from this initiative and offer my help. I hope, at the very least these words of wisdom, will help to fuel further ideas and concerted action.

John A Bottomley

RANT!

And reader Simon Wright has his own ideas on the best way forwards...

I read with considerable interest the 'Rant' in the December issue.

Although it is great to see a former champion getting enthusiastic about moving the sport on, I can't help thinking that some of the issues need to be thought through in new ways. For a start, I don't agree that off-road motorcycle sport 'deserves' a higher profile than it currently has. It has

the profile that it has earned - which in the case of enduros, is no profile at all.

To be visible, a sport needs to capture the imagination of the public. A great example is darts - not a sport, but a game - which has risen from pub entertainment to multi-million pound industry. This transformation was brought about by one man, and although he no longer controls the empire he built, there can be no doubt that he raised the profile of the game to its current level. To this day I'm not sure why? Darts on TV consists of a large room, equally filled with beer and cigarette smoke, where two, usually grossly overweight contestants with silly shirts, fling pointed objects at a round target. Gripping isn't it? Not exactly!

Now is enduro riding a better product than that? Of course it is.

So, the problem becomes, how do we do what this one man did, and get enduro riding into the public consciousness?

Let's look at our off-road cousins, motocross and trials. Motocross is also a multi-million dollar industry (particularly in the US), and deservedly so as the product is entertaining, well covered by TV, and has a significant merchandising arm. Of course, Supercross has really made the sport what it is today.

Trials, whilst not quite at the same level as motocross, has shed its 'old bloke with cloth cap on ancient British single' image, and by moving indoors has generated a large following. Some would argue that the indoor version, leaping about on giant beer cans or cigarette packets, is not really trials at all. However, it has brought a lot of money into the sport, has made superstars of the top riders, and has brought a major investment in technology and marketing - all of which can only benefit the sport as a whole.

Now, obviously we can't bring the majority of enduros indoors (though the article on the indoor enduro in Spain in the January issue

showed us what a bit of lateral thinking can achieve). But perhaps there is room for a synthesis of motocross and trials, where the track is fast in places, very technical in others, but presents all the challenges of an enduro condensed into one small area? Add a slippery killer-hill or two, some deep bogs, a few slow, technical sections etc. Now that could really fire the public imagination!

I hope you can see what I am getting at here. We need to think big. Forget the local band-aid approach, we need to get money and public enthusiasm into the sport. The only way that this will happen is if we get big-time sponsorship, and that means TV. There is a cascade effect here - once the sport has a higher profile, manufacturers will be falling over themselves to get a slice of the action.

Once we have investment and a media presence, we will be in a position to help the sport at grass-roots level. The major problem here is that we live in a country where off-road motorsport in general is reviled - apart from rallying of course. The main reason seems to be the tricky problem of land ownership and use, together with groups such as the Ramblers holding altogether too much influence. A secondary problem is the poor image off-road motorsport generally has. I doubt you would find a local civic body anywhere in the country that would welcome an enduro on their doorstep in the same way that you find on the continent. Most would cringe at the thought. Changing that is going to be hard - but there are ways.

For a start, local riders need to pro-actively befriend their communities. They can do this by riding responsibly, being self-policing, obeying the law and generally being a credit to the sport. They can also help by offering to keep trails in good order, keeping a check on those riders who abuse the countryside (we all know of some kids with unsilenced MX bikes that have no regard for anyone but themselves), going to local schools to show pupils what a dirt bike is, and preaching the gospel of safe, considerate riding. More importantly even than that, local riders should become involved in local politics, and become visible supporters of our sport. Raising money for charity (for example by being sponsored in the Weston beach race or Welsh Two Day Enduro etc) is guaranteed to get a picture and a few lines of copy in the local rag. It's only a start but it's the way forwards.

Turning back to another point from the December Rant, enduro organisers should never be in the position of contemplating a

loss. If they can't raise the sponsorship necessary to run the event, or procure the necessary equipment to service it, they shouldn't run the event. This is simple economics. The costs should be easily quantifiable before the event starts. And income should equally be able to be accurately forecast well before the event goes ahead. It's simply a matter of good business practise.

Now, it is my belief that the money is out there to run events. Yes, finding sponsorship is not a simple matter, but it is achievable. Once found, the relationship with the sponsor needs to be maintained and nurtured. Simple stuff, you might say, but I am constantly amazed at the way in which sponsors are ignored until a few weeks before the event.

Equipment such as timing gear should not be a big problem. Apart from the central computer to keep tabs on everything, all you need at each stage is a basic laptop with a link to a suitable cellphone. Hardly rocket science. Equipment should of course be pooled and shared.

Personally, I am against any levy (ie tax) on riders. Riders spend enough on buying bikes and equipment, getting to the venue, and then repairing their bikes and themselves after the event - and all for what? The distant hope of a prize that is probably worth less than a couple of gallons of fuel. Great. We should, as a sport, be able to flourish without taxing riders, and I suspect most riders would agree with me on that one.

You will notice that I have made no mention of the ACU. That is quite deliberate, for two reasons. First, I know nothing about their inner workings, being as I am a New Zealander. Secondly, and more importantly, I have noticed that the mere mention of the ACU tends to result in much passion, accusations, and general back-biting. I'm not interested in politics, I'm interested in enduros. If they won't help the enduro division of the sport, then let's move on without them.

To summarise then, we need to radically rethink the way we approach the problem. Forget taxing riders, let's see some innovation and initiative. Forget the past, let's look forward to a new beginning for the sport. There are ways forward that have not been tried yet, and we need to grasp the nettle and be a little bold and inventive. At local level, we need to make friends with our local councils, raise the profile of the sport, and become part of the system that regulates our activities. If motocross and trials can do it... So can we.

Simon Wright



TALKING *Dirty*

Chris Evans finally comes of age, and as usual at this time of year, gets paid vast amounts to watch others suffer in the Saharan sun, while whinging loudly about his own discomforts...

Happy birthday to me, happy birthday to me, happy birthday dear Chriiii-iiiiis, happy birthday to meee. Yes once again I find myself in the middle of nowhere, in Tichit in Mauritania to be precise, auto-congratulating myself for reaching the pivotal age of 40. You're probably saying to yourselves 'stupid boy (or should that be stupid middle aged man?), why doesn't he just tell his mates and they could all have a sing-along together.' Except that on the fight for survival that is the Dakar Rallye, nobody has the time, let alone the energy to expend on anything other than their all consum-

ing goal - getting to Lac Rose in Dakar. And yes I have got some mates thank you very much!

Ironically it was at this very same village of Tichit last year, lost in the sands of the Sahara, that I vowed never to come back. I remember the precise moment vividly. It was five o'clock in the morning, and I was on all fours, with bodily fluids squirting out of both ends. Of course by the following August, the thing that the Dakar relies upon for its continuing existence - the fact that us humans have a psychological survival mechanism which ensures that we forget the bad stuff and only remember the good bits - meant I was once again signing up for a spot of motorized madness in the otherwise quiet month of January.

Mind you even in my dotage I haven't become completely idiotic - I at least made sure that I didn't accept the same job. Oh no. As it turned out, I picked one much worse. Not that I or anybody else was to know. Previously I'd always worked for the organisers' press service, replacing a slightly-frazzled Blez in this prestigious position. This year however I jumped at the chance to do the press for the Schlesler buggies and the French KTM team. How was I to know that every day in Africa I would 'lose' one competitor per day and then have journalists all over me clamouring for information that was impossible to obtain. I mean I'm not telepathic. How should I know exactly why Stephane Henrard has stopped at km 102 when I am 500km away with no means of contacting him? At this point I'd like to be able to say something philosophical like, 'well you live and learn', except that I am living proof that this is clearly not the case...

Excuse me - a little interruption here - I just had Alfie Cox leaning over my shoulder reading this while waiting for me to let him use my satellite phone so he could tell his wife about his win in today's 'special'. Without the expletives this is pretty much what he had to say. '****-it man I've stopped reading your ****in' column' (he gets the mag sent out to South Africa because he's an advertiser) 'cos you're always ****y whinging on about something. It's too ***** depressing.' I tried to tell him that my column was meant to be tongue-in-cheek (they're not big on irony where he comes from), but I suppose he has a point. Let's see what I can say which is positive.

Hmm not easy. Running in chronological order the start in Arras was surprisingly good. When I first saw that we were starting from this sleepy northern French town I thought that the organisers had finally had too much sun. I mean Arras doesn't exactly have the glamour of Paris or even

Granada. In fact it turned out to be a damn good choice. According to the police more than 100,000 people came to see the competitors off and there was a genuinely festive atmosphere. After that things went badly downhill for me with a 2.30am start to catch a coach down to Le Bourget airport just outside Paris and from there a plane and then another coach to the first special at La Souterraine. We eventually arrived there at 9.30am and if you watched it on the telly you'll have seen that the place was largely under water. What you wouldn't have seen was me freezing my wotsits off in a marquee with no heating and nothing to eat.

At about 7.30pm we finally left the special by coach and then got a flight to Perpignan and yet another coach to Narbonne, arriving in the pouring rain about midnight. That wouldn't have been so bad - except I of course had no hotel room reserved and had to pounce a floor to sleep on. The Dakar had barely started and I was already ****ed (as Alfie would say).

Things picked up again after the Château Lastours special with a thrilling 800km drive to Madrid in a photographer's 4x4. The guy driving this Dessoude-prepared missile has done every Dakar except one and doesn't hang around. As one of the world's most nervous passengers I was of course moderately tense, but he drove so well that I was able to relax enough to marvel at all the people crowding the motorway bridges along the entire route to watch the rallye caravan roar past. When we arrived in Madrid it was absolutely mad with lines of people standing in the middle of the road applauding us as we bullied our way through the rush hour evening traffic. Photographer's cars have race numbers on them as they cover the whole route, and happily the beautiful Spanish señoretas begging me for my autograph were unaware of my non-hero status. I confess now that as they leaned through the window to kiss me on the cheeks (I'm not kidding here) I did nothing to put them straight on the matter.

From Madrid I had just one more complicated plane /coach interface to negotiate before snuggling into the warm and welcoming bosom of the organisers' logistical structure (ha ha).

Incredibly it all went without a hitch and at midnight on 31 December I was actually sitting in a restaurant in Rabat stuffing my face while watching an extremely attractive belly dancer shake her booty (as they say in these parts).

Without a doubt I'm most definitely never coming back on this thing again - well, not until next year of course...



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TRAIL

Tips

This month a use for plastic gloves, some free tuning mods, a handy tool, a good tip for riders with small hands and an alternative to fitting unbreakable wing mirrors...

We start this month with an alternative use for garage forecourt plastic gloves. Should you have any unused electrical connections on your bike (perhaps you've taken off the road kit but have left the wiring) then protect them from the elements with one of these gloves. Cut a finger off the glove and push it over the connector, having first sprayed a little WD40 into the connector. Tape up the open end of the finger and your connector now has a little waterproof bag. Thanks to Neville Daytona for that one.

Tuning mods usually cost, but Yamaha TTR600 owners get this one for free. Under the seat you'll find the CDI unit with a single black/red wire, which joins on a bullet connector to an all black wire. If you disconnect that connector (and protect it

inside a finger from a plastic glove!) you get a slight midrange power increase. While we're with the TTR, the chainslider on the swingarm may clatter a bit. But if you get one off a WR200 it's made of a softer material and doesn't clatter as much (though it may need a slight trim). Dave Green from Stockport is the man responsible for those two gems. Cheers Dave.

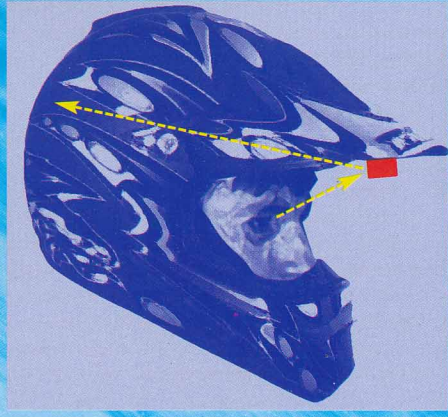
Following on from last month we have some more maintenance tips courtesy of Stuart Strong. 'Whilst browsing through the tool catalogue at work,' muses Stuart, 'I came across a useful item to stop the HT lead pulling out of the boot when removing the spark plug from your trail bike. Called Spark Plug Boot Pliers they have an angled insulated nose, which grips the spark plug boot and pulls it cleanly off the plug. Really useful for plugs set in a deep well. They cost £8.90 and the Draper part number is 54504.' A worthwhile addition to anyone's toolkit which could also come in handy when holding a plug while checking for a spark.

Next up we have a tip we picked up when out riding the Alfer VR125 in this month's issue. Spotted in Alfer importer Steve Plain's workshop was his girlfriend's immaculate Yamaha XT225 Serow (the only Serow we've ever seen with a set of Talon wheels!). I digress. The Serow doesn't have adjustable span levers and Steve's girlfriend Fiona only has small hands and so has trouble reaching the clutch lever when

it's fully out. The solution Steve found was to use a good strong cable-tie which fits around (and into) the open jaws of the clutch perch (when the clutch is pulled in), and prevents the lever (once released) from returning to the fully-out position. Obviously it's then essential that you adjust the clutch so that there is still free-play at the lever. But it's a great tip which would work well for anyone who finds that their hands aren't big enough to grab the levers in an emergency. Nice one.

Finally, a slightly odd alternative to bar mounted mirrors sent in by Ivan McMillan. 'If you buy one of the square block-type stick-on overtaking mirrors (designed for car wing mirrors) you can glue/screw it on to the right-hand front corner of your helmet peak for the ultimate rear-view mirror. The flatter profile ones I find are the best - hold some up in front of you in Halfords and you'll see what I mean.'

That certainly goes down as one of the strangest tips we've ever received Ivan, but it looks like it might work so we've included it. Keep those tips coming in and we'll keep on publishing them...



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Doing the Rounds

Starting up a whole new series of Doing the Rounds, Paul Blezard spends a day riding out-of-bounds tracks entirely legally whilst marshalling at a mountain bike race with the Wiltshire TRF...

Wiltshire is a big county, and no mistake. It stretches from the outskirts of Southampton in the south almost to Cirencester in the north and from the edge of Bath in the west to just outside Hungerford in the East. It's the home of Salisbury Plain. It's also blessed with a wealth of wonderful green lanes, a great many of which now have full Byway status, in marked contrast to the unsatisfactory rights of way situation which exists in most other English counties.

However, Wiltshire also has a large chunk of 'No Man's Land' right in its middle. Most of Salisbury Plain's several hundred square miles are occupied for much of the year by the army and their various forms of deadly weaponry. The eastern half between the A360 and the A345 is criss-crossed with byways which can be ridden (with care!) when the red warning flags aren't flying, but the western half between Tilshead and Westbury has no rights of way across the middle at all - not even public footpaths. They were all expunged in the 1970s for the army's benefit.

Abandoned Imber

In the centre of this area is the abandoned village of Imber which was 'temporarily' taken over by the army during WWII, and has never been given back. The village and a vast tract of land around it has been officially closed to civilians ever since except for a handful of days per year.

One such exception is between Christmas and New Year when the Salisbury Plain Challenge (SPC) takes place, an annual mountain bike race in aid of charity. It attracts over a thousand cyclists of all abilities, who have a choice of riding three different routes of 25, 38 or 50 kilometres, or of racing the full 50k against the clock.

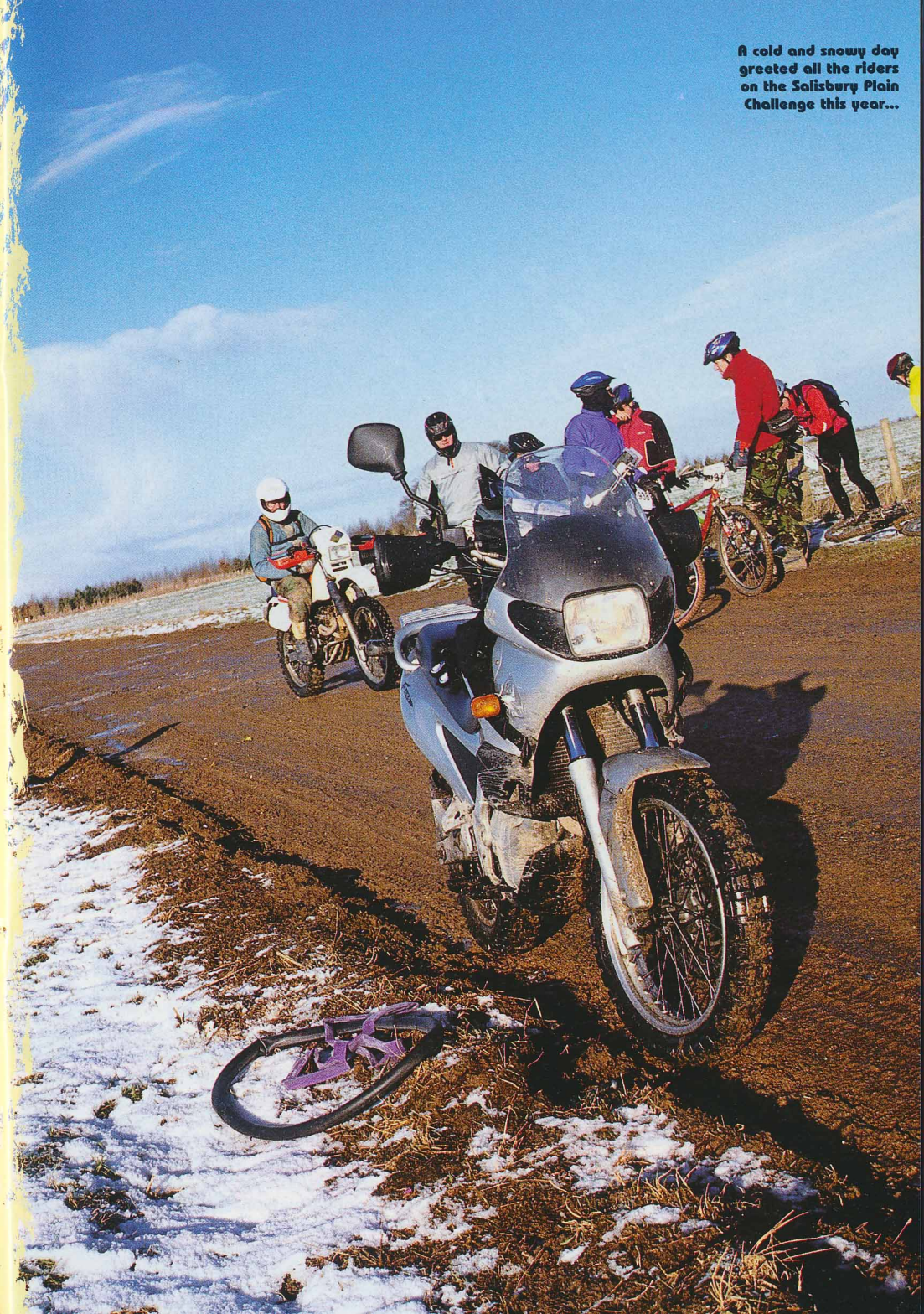
Opportunity knocks

As you can imagine, an event this size takes some marshalling and the organisers call upon a variety of clubs and people to provide the necessary back-up, including the Wiltshire TRF. The attraction for trail riders is that (as with horse trials) you get the chance to ride along a lot of tracks which would be illegal on any other occasion. The unique aspect of the SPC is that large chunks of the going isn't even legal for pedestrians in normal circumstances, let alone horses, pushbikes or motor vehicles (it's okay for tanks though!). When the Wilts TRF kindly invited me to join them in the task of shepherding hundreds of masochistic cyclists along the tracks and trails of the Plain it was an offer I couldn't refuse.

It was literally freezing when I set off on the 15 mile journey from a friend's place near Warminster for the 8am Sunday morning rendezvous in Shrewton on the Funduro I'd borrowed for the weekend. By the time we got to the start of the event at Erlestoke on the far side of the Plain most of my six companions were chilled to the bone but I was feeling smug thanks to my heated jacket and grips. I just hoped the Beemer's civilised bulk wouldn't prove too much of a handicap once we left the tarmac behind.

No less than four of my companions were from Shrewton itself, thanks to the recruiting skills of the club's vice chairman Jerry Abel. Two of them,

A cold and snowy day greeted all the riders on the Salisbury Plain Challenge this year...



Doing the Rounds



Just some of the Wilt's TAF crew...

Neil Chapman and John Rhind-Tutt, were still on L-plates, which is a first for Doing the Rounds. At the other end of the skills spectrum were former motocrossers Neil Chapman and Mark Kernan and ex-enduro champion Alan Ranger. Alan and his uncle John Towle were on a brace of brand new Huskies and his mate Chris Shephard was on an XR400.

There were also some trail riders recruited by the event organiser Stewart Sidebottom but as he told me later, 'I quite often have motorcyclists phoning me up asking to marshal, but I won't use anyone who isn't personally known to me or recommended by someone I trust'.

Briefing Encounter

There was a short marshals' briefing during which we were all given a map of the three different routes and Stewart explained the form if riders got into difficulty. Basically there were radio-equipped checkpoints every few miles, a set of roving 4x4s and a couple of 4x4 sweeper vehicles - one to pick up the course markings and another for stragglers in difficulty. We motorcyclists were free to roam around the course (with care, obviously) giving assistance where required and relaying information to the nearest radio-equipped vehicle. There were space blankets for us to carry for distressed cyclists, and (an unexpected bonus this), packed lunches for all helpers. Yum-yum.

The paddock exit opposite Erlestoke Prison

was suddenly swarming with the biggest bicycle traffic jam I've ever seen in my life as 1092 lycra-clad masochists set off on the 10th Salisbury Plain Challenge and headed up the hill on the main road towards Little Cheverell before turning south towards the Plain and dividing between the different 25, 38 and 50km routes. (Over 800 of them did the full 50kms).

We rode in pairs and Jerry Abel and I marshalled the full 50km route which roughly followed the Imber Range Perimeter Path that skirts the entire 'out of bounds' area. However, to get the extra kilometres it went off on a loop towards West Lavington and we missed the very first turn because the sweeper truck had already removed the first few signing arrows! A couple of missed turns later we caught it up, although the signing was pretty sparse throughout and we still managed to miss several more turns on our way round, as did some of the cyclists.

There was a pushbike broken down within the first few hundred yards and we caught up with some stragglers pushing up the first big hill a mile or so further on. I thought 'Blimey, if they haven't got the energy to keep cycling within the first few kilometres, they'll be knackered before they're halfway round!'

One guy was definitely made of sterner stuff though. I got the biggest surprise of the whole day shortly afterwards as we approached a bloke who was cycling bolt upright, no hands, going down a bumpy hill. I thought he must be an

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Doing the Rounds

There were a few slippery descents adding to the challenge



incurable show-off until I got level and realised that he didn't have any handlebars to hang on to, because he only had one wheel! Every time we stopped to help someone, the mad unicyclist would catch us back up and he went on to finish the full 50 clicks.

Pedalling Furiously

The 50 and 38km routes merged for several miles and just after they joined we met up briefly with Alan Ranger who was trying to stay ahead of the pack on the 38k route, which started after the 50k riders. It was quite a shock to see just how quickly the faster cyclists were moving even on the flat - they must have been close to the TRF's voluntary 25mph speed limit and downhill they were definitely well over it! Hard to beat having an engine for the climbs though (even so, the fastest MTB did the full 50 clicks in just 2 hours 18 minutes!)

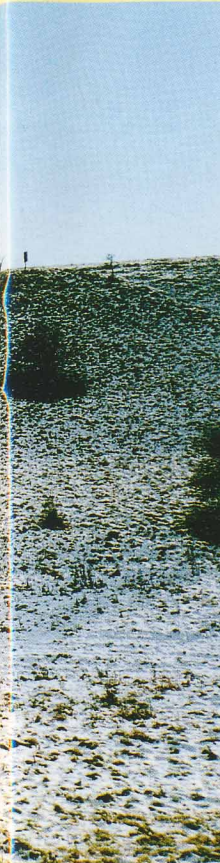
While trying to keep out of the way of some cyclists I was overtaking, I brilliantly managed to ride straight through the near-invisible wire of an

electrified cattle fence, which we hastily repaired before the curious heffers strolled out. It was rather a 'shocking' experience though - I never realised until then that the wire can still give you a shock even after it's broken in two!

The famous 'German Village' near Tilshead (built by the army to practice urban warfare) was the first place I recognised from previous trail rides on Salisbury Plain. It's outside the restricted area and has byways all around. The mountain bike route followed a bridleway past the village which though firm, had quite a snotty coating of slippery mud on it. In trail riding terms it wasn't difficult going at all, but it played havoc with the derailleur gears on the pushbikes and many of the cyclists came to a dead halt with gummed-up sprockets.

Breakheart Bottom

The route passed north of Chitterne and then carried on westward along the quaintly named 'Breakheart Bottom' to the halfway staging post just north of Heytesbury. As the welcome sight of



Can you ride Tandem?

the hot soup and burger wagon hove into view, we had to negotiate the trickiest descent of the day to get to it. It was on the far side of a gully with a precipitous drop-off down a narrow footpath which must have concentrated the minds and tested the brakes of all the cyclists - it certainly com-

manded my full attention on the Beemer. Turned out the food wagon was owned by the brother of Swindon TRF member John Shepherd who recognised me as soon as I took off my Arai. The hard racing men cycle straight past without stopping but most of the non-competing 'leisure' riders were only too pleased to stop for something hot, and the wagon was surrounded by cyclists drinking soup and fettling their machines.

Whilst chatting to a few riders I was shocked to discover how much you can pay for an MTB these days. Turned out most of the machines used for the SPC cost the best part of a thousand pounds and a top of the range full suspension downhill racer can cost six grand! I chatted to three guys who had ten thousand quid's worth of bikes between them and was interested to see one girl's bike with disc brakes front and rear - although she was about to retire because both brakes had stopped working!

We also bumped into John Taylor from Taylor's of Calne who was marshalling on a brand new CRF450 with two of his mates on a brace of

KTMs, a 520 and 400 respectively. They were using a neat pair of helmet-mounted Canadian-made voice-activated snowmobile-talkies to communicate with one another at anything up to a mile apart. 'It's good for getting advance warnings about nasty holes up ahead' the guy on the 520 told me, 'You can hear the bloke in front scream as he goes over the handlebars'. He also admitted that the 520 was 'just too much' on the dirt, 'I'm going to swap this for a 400' he told me.

John Taylor kindly let me have a quick squirt on the CRF (Wow!) while Jerry had a bumble on a Gas Gas 80 trials bike that John Shepherd had with him on a trailer - ideal for teaching kids to ride, he reckoned. And then it was time to move on.

Tanks for the memory

For the first few hundred yards after the halfway drink station the route followed a concrete tank road down a series of perfectly smooth, radiused curves that would have made a superb hill climb sprint in the opposite direction. The army built the road at vast expense to reduce the tanks' damage to the Plain and believe it or not it actually runs for 30 miles from Warminster right across to Ludgershall. You can tell it's no ordinary road simply by the fact that the distances are marked in kilometres. A warning sign says, 'Sharp bends for 1.8kms'. I've never seen kilometres on any UK road sign in my life before.

We were soon back on the snotty stuff and I offered Jerry a sampling of the F650 in exchange for a go on his trusty XR250, which felt like a toy by comparison! He gave the Beemer back after



about a mile, and marvelled at my expertise in keeping such a heavy beast upright in such slippery conditions, so naturally I dropped it within 30 seconds of getting back on board! Fortunately it went down on the left, the same side that its owner, Pat Keenan, had dropped it in Ireland last September shortly before I ran him over on my Armstrong, so there was no new damage and it was my only spill all day. However I did have a 'seriously sideways' moment coming down Battlesbury Hill, where even the 4x4s had to take a detour off the bicycle route.

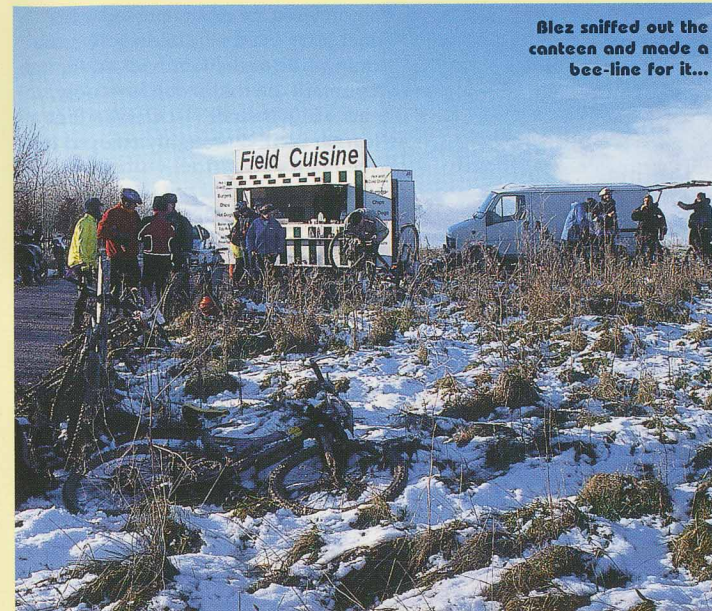
It was strange to find ourselves riding through the middle of Elm Hill barracks on the outskirts of Warminster, and on the way out we came across our first serious victim of cramp - bad enough to force him to retire. We met another cramp sufferer on the long climb out of Ramscombe Bottom, where a lot of stragglers were clearly struggling. He was pathetically grateful for Jerry's offer of coke and chocolate and this 'medicine' had a wondrous effect and he was soon on his way again.

Near the Westbury White Horse we met a couple more marshals on a CCM and XR400 and just before the final merge with the 25km route there was a marshal in an unusual Suzuki jeep with Dakar insignia all over it - apparently it was part of a Suzuki-GB Dakar support team back in '93.

On one of the very few tarmac sections we caught up with the last of the two tandems in the event and followed it down the steep track through Hill Wood above Erlestoke where we came across some young lads having an illegal practice on trials bikes. 'Cowboy' riding of motorcycles is a problem right across the Plain by all accounts.

Shortly afterwards there was a descent through trees which was just like being in an enduro and the only time all day that the going was narrow enough to worry about the width of the handlebars. This came down to a really nice bit of 'two-track' that skirted the bottom of the woods before finally dropping down to the finish back where we'd started.

In the whole scenic 50kms of the outer route less than 10 percent had any right of way for motor vehicles and no more than 20 percent would have been legal even for a bicycle on any other day. In fact the general public were specifically banned from most of the route, even on foot. The 'forbidden fruit' aspect alone made the day worthwhile for me - the fact that the sun was shining too was a welcome bonus. There's also no doubt that the presence of responsible trail riders, willing and able to lend a hand to cyclists in distress, does no harm at all to our public image which, let's face it, needs all the help it can get.



Blez sniffed out the canteen and made a bee-line for it...

Fulsome Praise

Race organiser Stewart Sidebottom told me afterwards. 'I have nothing but praise for the TRF marshals. They've been helping with the Salisbury Plain Challenge for several years now and most of them know the local names for the hills and trouble areas and recognise the routes even in the snow and ice. I know they give 100 percent effort to look after the inexperienced cyclists and keep in contact with the radio units and 4x4s to help out when and wherever necessary. The event could not run without the assistance of these volunteers. And they all help to make the SPC the best and safest winter cycle enduro in Britain'. Well said Stewart.

It had been a thoroughly enjoyable day and my only regret is that I didn't see the abandoned village of Imber, but only the shortest 25km route went that way. It won't be open to the public again before Easter and then for only one day via the tarmac access roads. The only way to enjoy the tracks and trails of the Imber Range by motorcycle legally is as a bona fide event marshal - but it's a method that I can thoroughly recommend. It's also all in a good cause - the event raised some £8,000 for CliC (Cancer & Leukaemia in Children) and the local air ambulance service.

As we headed back down the A360 in the freezing cold of the gathering gloom I was damn glad to be plugged back into my heated jacket. Over a cup of tea and a bite to eat at Jerry's place I found out a bit more about the Wiltshire TRF and his local Shrewton 'posse'.

The Persuasive Vice Chairman

Jerry Abel has been riding bikes since he got his first Yamaha 'Fizzy' (FSIE) at the age of 16, along with thousands of other youngsters in the 1970s.

Unfortunately he wrote it off riding into the back of a Transit van and his parents wouldn't let him keep the T110 Triumph he'd been preparing for his 17th birthday but he eventually passed his test on a Honda 125. By 1987 he was persuaded by a friend to get a DT175 and go out on the green and pleasant lanes of Surrey.

He continued trail riding when he moved up to Yorkshire on a '91 DR350

which he also used for commuting. Then when he moved back down to Wiltshire about three years ago he chopped-in the ageing DR for his current '94 XR250 although this proved less reliable than most. He ended up buying a complete but ailing Baja XLR250 for £200 which he cannibalised to repair the XR. It now boasts the Baja's bottom end mated with the top end from the XR all in the XR chassis.

Now 41, Jerry commutes over 150 miles a day to sell high-tech oil extraction equipment from an office on the outskirts of London but he's become a pillar of the Wilts TRF. Last year he spent seven solid days, with several other stalwart volunteers, clearing a completely overgrown 'bridleway' that is being upgraded to full BOAT status and more lane clearing is scheduled for 2002.

He's also proved to be a pretty persuasive recruiting agent for the local TRF; in the last six months he's persuaded three of his neighbours in the small village of Shrewton to join the club, all of whom helped out at the mountain bike event.

The Sportsbike Convert

Andy Chapman, did schoolboy motocross as a lad and got into road bikes when he was old enough to get a licence. He recently swapped his GSX-R750 for a Fazer 600 but has only been trail riding for six months. Andy 30, and his older brother Neil run a building business together in Shrewton. Andy got his Italian Yamaha TT350 for £1700 but is planning to move up to a much more poky WR400 some time soon.

The Scooter Convert

Despite being a couple of years older than his brother, Neil Chapman is much less experienced on two wheels. He did have a Suzuki TS125 'field bike' as a youngster but never had a road bike until he got a traditional Piaggio Vespa PX125 geared scooter fairly recently. Still a learner, he's currently riding Yamaha's funky TW125 fat wheeled fun bike which he bought new when he joined the TRF last year. He's been out trail riding every month with the club since and thoroughly enjoyed the day out marshalling on the Plain. He told me he really likes the TW and found it easy to get on with in the slippery conditions.

The Tax Accountant

The other novice in our little band of MTB Marshals, John Rhind-Tutt is the third member of the Shrewton 'chapter' of the Wilts TRF recruited by Jerry Abel. John, 39, comes from a celebrated dirt riding family - his cousin Robin famously made fire-breathing sidecar motocross outfits for many years in the days when big twin cylinder four strokes were the motors to use and even went on to produce his own engine.

However, motorcycles somehow passed John by until he met Jerry via their children. 'I come from the farming side of the family, even though I'm a tax accountant' he told me! John's only been riding his XL125R since last October but like fellow learner Neil, thoroughly enjoyed his day out on the Plain.

The Ex-Enduro Champion

Alan Ranger must be one of the most accomplished riders in the TRF. Now 32, he's been riding bikes since he started schoolboy motocross at the age of eight and continued the sport till he was about 20. He also used to get top 30 places in the Weston Beach race on CR250s and 500s. Tiring of motocross, he bought a DR350 when they came out in 1991, entered his first enduro at nearby Tidworth and won the four-stroke class at his first attempt. 'We tuned it up with a White Brothers piston and various other bits but then the gearbox went and I decided to get something a bit more serious, so I bought a Husky TE350 from Mike Carter at Husky Sport'.

Alan managed to win the clubman championship in 1993 and with a bit of help from the late great John Deacon went on to win the expert championship in '94, which was the year JD won the British enduro championship outright, also on a TE. 'Deaks helped me a lot with the general set up and lent me his super-trick pre-production 420 for a week and we copied a lot of bits off it'. Alan decided to quit while he was ahead after becoming expert champion. 'If I'd carried on seriously in enduros I would've had to race against the likes of Deaks and Rob Sartin in the championship class and I couldn't see myself being competitive in that sort of company. My only regret now is selling that tricked up TE350 and not doing the ISDE'.

Alan got married, settled down and concentrated on helping in the family Peugeot business in Durrington near

Amesbury. He actually stopped riding altogether for a few years and it was the lure of trail riding that got him back on a bike. 'I bought a cheap XR400 a couple of years ago and nowadays I just do the odd enduro for fun'. Alan did the Natterjack and John Banks enduros at the end of 2001 and turned up for marshalling duty with a 400 which has already been tuned by HM Racing.

The Ex-MX-ing Copper

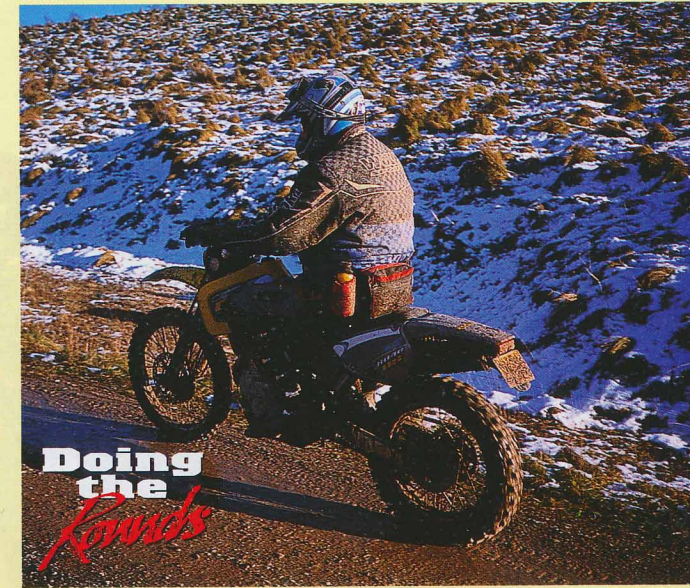
Mark Kernan started riding off-road on an old BSA Bantam at 13 on some suitable heathland where he grew up near Poole. He moved onto a Malaguti Cavalcone 50cc trail moped and then raced 125 motocrossers for five years from the age of 17. He gave up when it became increasingly difficult to fit in the racing with his career in the police but he's had road bikes on and off ever since - the last a VFR400 NC30.

Mark also tried his hand at trials for a couple of years riding a Fantic 212 but found the switch to the feet-up game ultimately unsatisfying after the adrenaline charge of motocross, despite doing several national police competitions. Mark started reading TBM in '97 and joined the TRF the same year before he even owned a trail bike. He bought a KLX250 and has been really enjoying himself on the lanes ever since. Now a sergeant in the firearms squad, Mark bought his current steed, a Husky TE410, when it first came out in 2000 and is well pleased with it.

He also got involved with organising some novice-oriented 'funduros' on suitable patches of local land and has two more planned for this year. He bought his ten year old son a little KX60 for Christmas so it looks as if a new generation of Kernans will be carrying on the motorcycling tradition.

The Modem-Fixing Chairman

Reuben Alcock has been chairman of Wilts TRF for three years despite being a mere boy of 34. He would have been out riding on the Plain with us but for the fact that he was 'on call' in his job as a service engineer for a computer networking company. However, he turned up at the finish of the SPC so I got a chance to talk to him face to face after several phone conversations beforehand. Turned out he has a penchant for riding off-road



on big trailies, which makes him something of a kindred spirit of mine.

Reuben used to have a Suzuki DR250 as his principal green laner but about 18 months ago fell in love with the Husky TE610E. To raise the funds for a new one he flogged the Suzi and combined the dosh with a part-ex on his GSX750F road bike. He didn't intend to use the Husky as his main trail bike but got on so well with it on the lanes that that is what it has become. He's sensibly modified the low air box intake to cure the Husky's notorious problem with hydrophobia. 'I'm very pleased with it' he told me, 'I've ridden it all over the country and it survived one of Chris Evans' raids despite smashing the clutch case on a rock. We fixed it with chemical metal which bonded perfectly.

Reuben also has a Kawasaki Tengai which he originally bought to do a Moroccan trip with TBM contributor Neil Pidduck who used to live nearby. In the end the trip fell through but he kept the Tengai anyway and recently did the Big Trail Bike Club Coast to Coast run on it.

As if those two big thumpers weren't enough for anyone with masochistic tendencies, Reuben also owns a 1974 Triumph TR5T Adventurer twin on which he finished the MCC's Exeter long distance trial the week after we met.

The Unsung RoW Hero

Bill Riley is truly a legend in his own lifetime. I remember hearing about his rights of way work when I first joined the TRF nearly 20 years ago. Now past retirement age, Bill works full time on

Total hero... or complete masochist?



So you thought pedalling was hard? That's nothing! 23 year old Joe Marshall did the full 50kms on a unicycle in 5hrs 47mins. He finished half an hour ahead of the last two-wheeler to be credited with a finish. He gets plenty of practice commuting the 6 miles from Balham to Waterloo every day in about 40 minutes but the SPC was the longest ride he'd ever done off road. And on a unicycle you can't freewheel - the pedals are your only brakes, so going downhill is almost as tiring as going uphill!

rights of way issues in Wiltshire and spends three days a week in the Wiltshire County records office at Trowbridge. 'TRF Wilts wouldn't exist without Bill' Jerry Abel told me, and in fact the Editor informs me Bill helped with RoW info on some of the first ever issues of TBM. As Bill himself writes, 'Wiltshire seems to be the only county prepared to reclassify RUPPs as Byways Open to All Traffic; other counties are content to do nothing and so allow them all to become Restricted byways (ie no longer open to vehicular traffic).



Bill co-ordinates letter writing campaigns, although as he complains in the club newsletter, 'It can take an awful lot of cajoling and arm-twisting to get some members to write'. His comments actually apply to anyone with an interest in preserving our right to continue to use untarmacked rights of way: 'Apathy is our greatest enemy'. Unusually, Bill was apparently a green lane enthusiast who found motorcycles to be the best way of exploring them, rather than the more usual situation of a bike enthusiast who discovered the joys of trail riding.

The Veteran Mountain Bike Racer

Mark Chapman (no relation to the other Chapmans) usually takes part in the Salisbury Plain Challenge on a pushbike himself, but he turned out on this occasion on his DR-Z400S to help with the marshalling. Based in Stroud in Gloucestershire he's actually one of the best over 40 downhill racers in the country and also manages the Saracen MTB racing team. Mark obviously had the lobotomy a long time ago because as a lad he used to race AMCA motocross events on a 400 Maico and Suzuki 420 but he's been racing mountain bikes for over ten years now. For downhill mountain bike racing the riders wear very similar gear to motocrossers. He told me, 'It's like downhill skiing nowadays. Most guys actually wear full face motocross helmets and full body armour and yet I still managed to break my collarbone'.

And according to Mark, mountain bikes do go downhill faster than motorcycles. 'I wish I could

get downhill as fast on the Suzuki as I can on the MTB' he said, adding, 'For downhill racing you need about the same level of fitness as you do for motocross and you need high quality suspension at both ends too.'

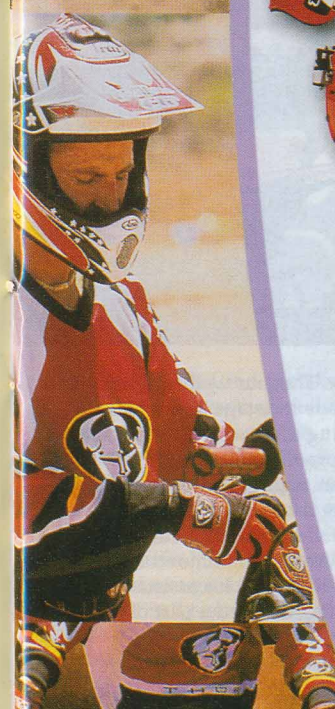
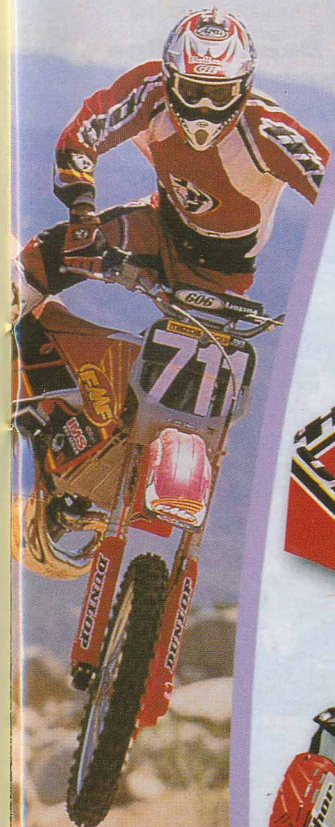
Lessons Learned

- If someone raves about your riding skills, you're guaranteed to fall off within minutes, if not seconds!
- Whenever you think the going's tough, spare a thought for the guys with no engine - and only one wheel!

Wilts TRF meet on the first Tuesday of the month at The Bell On The Common, Broughton Gifford. Runs are usually held on the last Sunday of the month in Wiltshire, Somerset or Gloucestershire. There are also runs on Dartmoor, and in South and Mid-Wales and members have recently ventured to France, Andorra, the Picos and Mallorca in Spain and also Morocco.

The club also has occasional classic bike green lane outings and members marshal at several local horse events including the prestigious Longleat Horse Trials. Their entertaining website is well worth a visit at www.wiltshiretrf.co.uk. For membership details contact Alan Yandell 01225 864187, Mobile 07813 503012 email: alan.dragon@clara.co.uk.

Many thanks to Jerry Abel, Reuben Alcock and Alan Ranger of Wilts TRF and to Pat Keenan for the loan of the trusty F650. Pat runs a new mobile bike servicing business, specialising in BMWs: Phone 077795 28715.



thor

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Despite fears to the contrary, this year's Dakar Rallye turned out to be an eventful race with a surprise result. No-one has a better insight into this gruelling event than race translator and TBM columnist Chris Evans who was attending his seventh 'Dak'. Chris takes up the story...



Story: Chris Evans; Pics Alain Resignol

There are three clichés rallye-raid regulars like to trot out each year at the Paris Dakar Rallye: 'every Dakar is different', 'it's the cruellest race it the world' and 'it isn't over till you get to Lac Rose'. And the 24th edition of the Arras-Madrid-Dakar proved to be no exception to the rule.

Starting for the first time from the sleepy northern French town of Arras, with a long night liaison, the 'Dak' proved mercilessly cruel right from the off with torrential rain following the competitors all the way to the site of the first

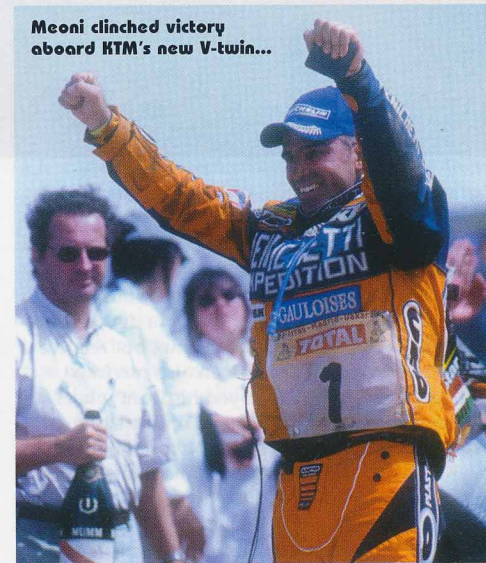
special at Châteauroux. The four well organised KTM factory teams made the stage bearable for their riders by equipping them with road helmets and heated and waterproof clothing, but for the privateers the European stages proved sheer misery, with many arriving in Africa on New Year's Eve already exhausted. For Brit entrant and 'friend of TBM' Dave 'Ammo' Hammond it was a particularly stressful time with his assistance lagging far behind having donated a part of their Land Rover to a UK car entrant.

Imposed on the competitors by the organisers

Twin PEAKS

2002 DAKAR RALLYE

Meoni clinched victory aboard KTM's new V-twin...



for commercial and sponsorship reasons, the European stages thankfully made no major impact on the overall rankings, though young French hopeful Cyril Despres suffered a cruel blow when his mechanic and mentor was hospitalised after his assistance vehicle was involved in a road accident.

On arrival in Morocco all the competitors heaved a huge sigh of relief thinking that they could finally get down to the serious business of racing. The organisers and federation officials had other ideas however. At the pre-race briefing

in Arras, rallye boss Hubert Auriol had made it very clear that TSO would not tolerate any speeding through villages and for once the threats of radars and penalties was backed up by concrete action. On the very first 'real' stage from Er Rachidia to Ouarzazate a total of 77 motorcycle riders were sanctioned for riding at over 60kmh in a 40 zone - among them two times winner Richard Sainct. Originally 'awarded' 29 minutes of speeding penalties, Sainct, like all the others competitors who fell foul of the federation's radar gun, eventually had his penalty cut in half, but as

Much of this year's Dakar took place in the huge golden dunes of Mauritania



far as the Frenchman was concerned, his race was over before it had begun and he struggled to regain his motivation for the rest of the race.

The four man French/South African KTM Gauloises squad suffered another serious blow when Cyril Despres went out with a dislocated hip. Six times world enduro champ, but relative rallye-raid novice, Kari Tiainen also ran into difficulties when he destroyed his front wheel and melted his rear bib mousse on the stony Moroccan pistes. In all, the popular Finn lost over an hour, and yet another potential winner fell by the wayside.

It took until the eighth stage, between Tan Tan and Zouerat for anything other than crashes, penalties or mechanical problems to make an impact on the rankings, with Fabrizio Meoni putting the power of his prototype 950 V-twin KTM to good effect to win the special by over seven minutes. At the time, last year's winner claimed that it was the only stage on which he would have an advantage over his single cylinder rivals, but in the end it nevertheless proved a turning point in the rallye. In winning the 793km stage the Italian took the overall lead by 3'07s over the Chilean rider De Gavardo with 'Nani' Roma just seconds behind in third.

By the time the rallye rolled into Atar the



rest day the race had once again settled down with Meoni, the Spanish Telefonica Moviestar team riders Roma and De Gavardo and Alfie Cox all looking like possible victors. The stage before Atar however was to prove pivotal for two of the three British riders entered on the rallye. Top level UK enduro rider Mick Extance aboard the only Husaberg in the race, sheered his kick start shaft at the start and decided to go by road to Atar, as did South African UK passport holder Murphy Neville. Having not attended the previous evening's briefing, where it was announced

Twin PEAKS

2002 DAKAR RALLYE

Below: another one bites the dust...



that the organisers had added a secret third check-point (CP) (the rules stated that it was permissible to miss three CPs on the rallye) both saw themselves excluded from the race just before they could benefit from a much needed breather. The more experienced 'Ammo' however arrived in Atar in much better shape - holding 20th position overall (at 3h28'39s) and looking well on target to achieve his ambition of a top 20 placing.

During the rest day many of the top riders took the opportunity to complain about the ease of the stages, grumbling that the profile of the specials wasn't allowing them to make the break. The organisers responded by promising that all that was about to change - and for once they were as good as their word.

Although this year's Dakar was one of the

shortest in its history, and for geo-political reasons largely confined to the Mauritanian dunes, the second half of the rallye was to prove one of the hardest in recent years.

Ironically that didn't stop the front runners from finishing the days that followed within a few seconds of each other. Using his advantage gained from the Tan Tan - Zouerat stage, and his many year's experience of racing in African rallies, Fabrizio Meoni successfully compensated for the apparent handicap of riding the big twin and more or less controlled the race - though Roma, De Gavardo and Cox continued to snap at his heels. To try and break up 'the pack' the federation announced over halfway through the rallye, that the first ten would now have to start at two minute intervals.

Having anticipated the problem long before the start, TSO innovated with 'no GPS' days and marathon stages. But right until just before the end it looked as if the top three would finish within seconds of each other. The scenario whereby the rider who won the previous day's special would lose two minutes the next (because the following rider would catch him up) seemed so firmly established that team managers and journalist spent hours calculating who would arrive at the last stage with the crucial two minute advantage. Then suddenly, and completely without warning, the status quo was blown apart in spectacular fashion.

The first indication that the race, which by everyone's calculations would go in Nani Roma's favour, had been turned on its head came via a radio message stating that a rider was being

Twin PEAKS

2002 DAKAR RALLYE



evacuated by helicopter and was in need of 'psychological support'. Rumours spread like wildfire through the bivouac and were finally confirmed when a ghostly Roma was lead out of a medical plane and into the organisers field hospital. Apparently the Telefonica Moviestar rider had got lost, and rather than retrace his steps, had

simply (and understandably) cracked under the pressure. Suddenly it looked like Meoni was going to achieve the unimaginable - win the Dakar on a bike that less than a year ago didn't even exist. This shock news was quickly followed by reports that Cox, De Gavardo, Arcarons, Esteve Pujol and Sala had all either got lost or

locals of the dangers, and though it is difficult to realistically evaluate the impact of this initiative, as far as we in the press are aware, no local was injured in any accident involving a rallye vehicle whilst on African soil.

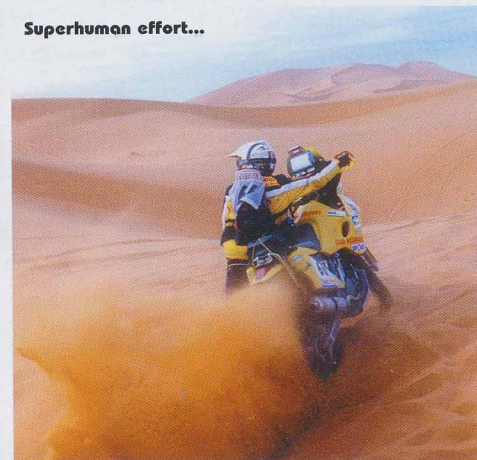
While the arbitrary nature of the organisers' speed traps was heavily criticised by the competitors, they all nevertheless rode much slower through populated areas after the penalties were awarded and the organisers and federations' resolve should be applauded.

Against that, the two marathon stages involving night liaisons were universally feared by the competitors, who were quite understandably extremely concerned about riding on unlit African roads in the dark with no medical helicopter cover. The long assistance routes were also much criticised.

Lack of competition

The 2002 Dakar was unique in the sense that never before had the make of the winning bike

Superhuman effort...



missed the second 'secret' CP of the rallye. In the end it turned out that Cox had managed to rectify his mistake quickly enough to 'pinch' Roma's second place, while the others had dropped so much time that they had allowed Richard Sainct, the only other rider apart from Meoni not to get lost, to move up from eighth to third overall in the space of one special! An almost unimaginable turn of events for the Frenchman who had started the day more than 1hr 30m behind the leader.

Sadly the Tichit - Kiffa stage proved disastrous not just for Roma and his team mates but also for the plucky Dave Hammond. Apparently Ammo, who remained remarkably fresh throughout the

rallye, 'exploded' over a sand dune and was evacuated to the same field hospital as 'Nani'. At first thought to have suffered serious back injuries, at the time of writing it appears that Dave's condition is less critical than initially feared. So close to achieving his top 20 dream (ironically due the errors of those ahead of him, he would in fact have managed it with ease), all at TBM wish him a very speedy recovery.

All that remained after the drama of the Tichit - Kiffa stage was the much criticised 1000+km night liaison and the 31km special around Lac Rose. Miraculously, despite the combined dangers of fatigue and unlit African roads, the positions remained unchanged and at the finish line a jubilant Meoni inaugurated KTM's new twin in a way that the Austrian company's marketing men hadn't dared dream of.

Another cruel and unpredictable Dakar had held us in suspense all the way to Lac Rose.

RESULTS 2002 DAKAR

1	Fabrizio Meoni	(It)	KTM LC8
2	Alfie Cox	(RSA)	KTM
3	Richard Sainct	(F)	KTM
4	Carlo De Gavardo	(Chi)	KTM
5	Esteve Pujol	(Esp)	KTM
6	Giovanni Sala	(It)	KTM LC8
7	Jordi Arcarons	(Esp)	KTM
8	Eric Bernard	(F)	KTM

The 24th Arras-Madrid-Dakar Hit or Miss?

To say the Dakar has always been controversial would be something of an understatement, but in recent years criticism has gradually boiled down to three main issues - safety (for both participants and locals), lack of competition between factory teams, and the negative impact of GPS. Every year the organisers have tried to react to these problems with varying degrees of success and the 2002 edition was no exception with TSO introducing a larger than average number of innovations.

Safety

One of the Dakar's main sponsors, Euromaster, distributed comic strips ahead of the race to warn

been known before the rallye had even got underway. KTM should be congratulated for devising their four-team strategy and for their lack of team orders, but clearly other manufacturers need to be attracted to the race if it is to continue to thrive. An idea floated by some journalists on the rallye, of limiting bikes to 450cc and thereby rendering products from Yamaha, Honda and Suzuki (among others) competitive, has certain merits, though experience has shown that more restrictive rules don't necessarily make for better racing.

GPS - stopping the procession

TSO took the brave decision of banning GPS on two 'loop' stages but many top riders felt that they should have gone further. The marathon stages were less successful and resulted in many privateers riding for long periods without rest. The two minute start intervals brought in after the rest day eventually bore fruit, but many criti-

cised the organisers for not introducing them from the start. Clearly TSO are keen to break up the procession but at the same time wary of creating a situation whereby gaps between the front runners become too large, too early in the proceedings, and the race loses its interest.

Conclusion

Obviously the Dakar is an easy event to criticise but an extremely difficult one to organise. While not all the innovations worked out the way they were planned, most on the rallye considered that the actions taken by the organisers were at least a step in the right direction.

From a sporting point of view the large percentage of time spent in Europe offered little in the way of excitement, but the race was nevertheless fiercely contested almost all the way to the Beach in Senegal, to produce an extremely merited victory for Meoni and KTM's astonishing new bike. A mitigated hit then for the rallye - though sadly a resounding miss for the small UK entry.



TRACK & TRAIL

TBM got the first UK test of the totally new four-stroke Gas Gas EC400FSE. A bike which has been eagerly awaited by the off-road fraternity. We headed off to the track and then the trail to put some miles on it and find out for ourselves exactly what it's capable of. This is what we found out...

Story & Pics: Si Melber

If you're going to launch a brand new model, you might as well go the whole hog and introduce some novel technology as well. That way you can be sure of getting your new bike noticed. Certainly that would appear to be the thinking behind Gas Gas's new four-stroke (the EC400FSE), which features not only an electric-start, but also electronic fuel-injection as well. BMW and Cannondale aside, we can't think of another dirt bike which offers this sophisticated level of fuelling.

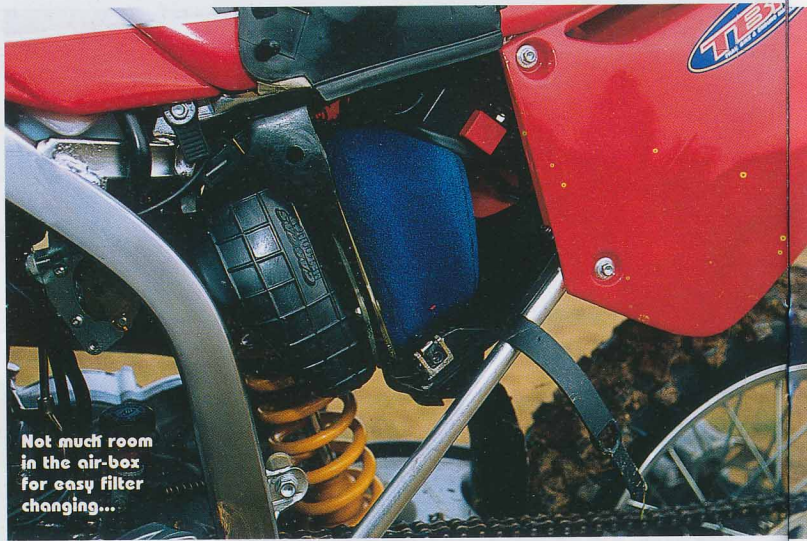
Perhaps it was the fine-tuning of this notoriously complex form of aspiration which resulted in the Gasser's delayed launch. After all they've been experimenting with thumper technology at the Spanish factory for at least four years that we know of. Or maybe (as we'd like to think), it was because Gas Gas needed it to be right first time. Whatever the true reason behind the lengthy gestation it appears to have paid off. The bike we tested was factory fresh and certainly carbureted perfectly (if that's the right word) the whole time it was on test.

And before you dismiss this with a shrug of your shoulders, remember this - the Japanese have flirted with fuel injection on motorcycles in the past, and found it difficult (and expensive) to perfect. Okay, a number of two- and four-cylinder Japanese (and European) superbikes now come with fuel injection, but certainly cost has been a major issue in the past. On a sports-bike costing seven or eight grand it's possible to hide some of the expense of a pricey fuel injection set-up - but with a single cylinder dirt bike, which is pared to the bone in terms of costs it's an altogether differ-

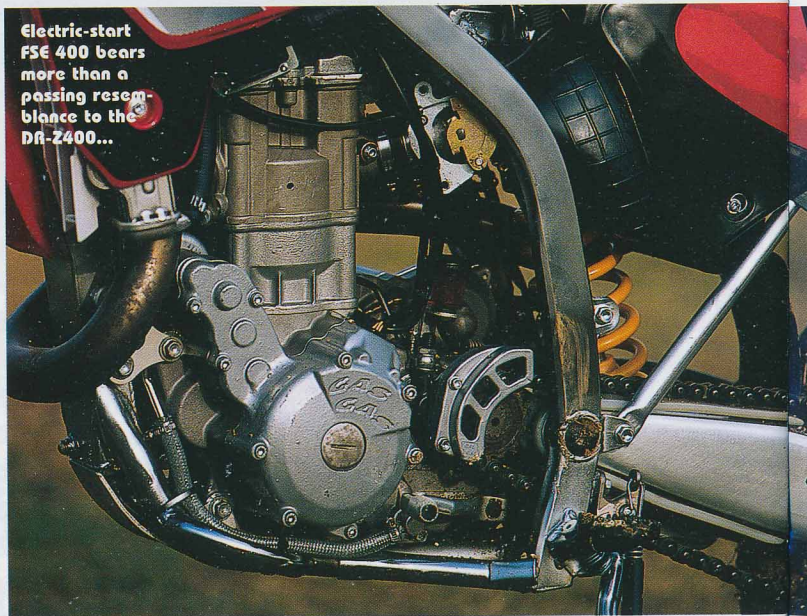
ent matter. And experience has so far shown that getting the fuelling correct on a largish capacity single is rather more difficult than with a multi-cylinder engine.

Once perfected however, the advantages are clear. No rejetting needed. No choke needed. No carburetion glitches during large changes in altitude. Better fuel consumption, easier hot and cold starting, and best of all an extremely light throttle action.

And certainly that's the first thing you notice



Not much room in the air-box for easy filter changing...

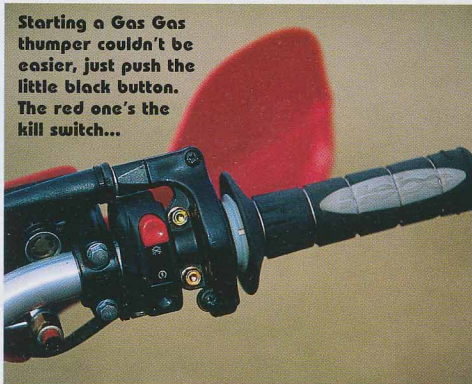


Electric-start FSE 400 bears more than a passing resemblance to the DR-Z400...



We like the Gasser's clean lines, modern looks and sensible design. The only thing we don't like is the old-fashioned rear light...

TRACK & TRAIL



Starting a Gas Gas thumper couldn't be easier, just push the little black button. The red one's the kill switch...



The 400 Gasser is a stylish combination of trail and enduro bike...

Gas Gas is surprisingly easy to ride on an enduro track thanks to its superb linear power delivery...

TRACK & TRAIL

four bangers (despite the factories' best efforts to persuade us). But in fact it's the leisure market where the biggest growth has been. The likes of you and me. People that require a little bit more from their dirt bike than just pure performance. Yamaha's WR426F aside, the growth of the thumper market has been on the whole, linked to bikes which come fitted with an electric start (KTM, DR-Z etc). Many of these are used for competition of course, but (and this is crucial), you're equally likely to find a pure racer like the 400EXC being used on the trail these days. That's because the majority of purchasers want a bike for trail riding and enjoyment, which can double up as a competitive mount whenever the mood takes them. Few can afford the luxury of owning a dedicated racer as well as another bike for trail riding on. No, the majority of us want a machine which can do both jobs. And that's essentially what Gas Gas have given us.

Cast your eyes over the new Gasser and you'll find an extraordinary number of very sensible features which will doubtless appeal to the potential owner. For a start there's the electric boot. Small, neat and reliable it has boundless amounts of energy contained within its battery. Plentiful starts are not a problem. Then there's the seat height. Forget the numbers for a moment (940mm if you must know), and let me tell you that anyone taller than about 5'7"



should feel comfortable enough on the Gasser. If you're 5'9" or above you'll be able to get both feet more or less flat on the ground. The seat is actually reasonably high, but the plush suspension squashes down considerably once aboard.

The riding position is modern: slender(ish) and forward canted with narrow bars and nice wide pegs. The perimeter frame allows for a commendably low (if slightly wide) tank - though it's nothing to be concerned about. Controls are excellent - the best in class, and by some margin. Allied to this is a set of high quality switchgear. Finally Gasser have equipped one of their bikes with really decent switches. And guess what? For the first time on any Gas Gas there's a proper horn - one which doesn't sound like a baby's rattle. The headlight too is fantastic: powerful and reliable whatever the rpm - even though ours pointed in entirely the wrong direction. There's an electronic cooling fan fitted as standard - we like that. Yes it adds a bit of weight, but it also adds reliability and helps prevent boiling up and expensive seizures. Underneath the motor there's an alloy glide-plate to protect the bottom of the engine, and of course the Gasser's clear plastic tank tells you exactly how much fuel you've got left.

Of course it wouldn't be a Gas Gas if it didn't also come with a list of niggles which we'd like to see corrected. So before we get too carried away, consider these for a moment. The welding and overall finish on the frame is frankly appalling. It used to be that people made jokes about the finish on Japanese bikes

with splatter-gun welding etc, but the Japs have made giant strides in this area. Gas Gas need to do the same. The welding around the headstock for example was really atrocious - I reckon I could do better than the monkey who welded this one. Lumps of weld had been crudely

F5E400 felt equally at home on the trail...



TRACK & TRAIL

Light throttle and good suspension make for an easy bike to ride all day long...



ground off with an angle-grinder leaving a generally poor standard of finish. We didn't like the fact that on our one-week-old example, there were rust spots already appearing on the frame where the hard chrome plating had failed to take. This needs urgent attention Gas Gas if you're going to get taken seriously by the leisure market.

Less significant perhaps but just as annoying is the fact that (unlike on a KTM), the wires and connectors for the rear lamp run completely exposed underneath the rear fender where they are subject to the abuse of all the crud thrown up by the rear wheel. This makes jet washing that area more difficult as the mud tends to stick to the wires and connectors etc. We've moaned about this before - now it's time to get it sorted.

On another subject, Gas Gas have followed KTM's lead by introducing a backlit electronic digital speedo on all their machines, but it frankly isn't as good as the one found on KTMs. It's nowhere near as clear, partially obstructed by the bar-pad and headlight surround, and what's more - driven off the rear wheel: 'watch me do 100mph through this muddy puddle, guys'.

And finally the sidestand needs to be a little

SECOND OPINION

Dateline 7.30pm Friday, my kitchen telephone.

'Hello Si? Are we going out trail riding tomorrow or what?'

'Certainly, what time?'

'9 to 9.30, okay?'

'Fine, I'll be there. You wait till you ride the Gasser - it's awesome. The throttle's like silk.'

'Excellent, see you tomorrow.'

Oh rats, I thought. Not another good Gasser. Blimey there's me always moaning about them and now all they do is bring out good models.

Dateline 9.30am Saturday, my back garden, mobile phone.

'Hello Si, where are you?'

'Er... lost. I'll be there in a few minutes.'

TRACK & TRAIL



Stylish, modern and reasonably low once you've climbed aboard...

shorter. Either that or you need to firm up the suspension a little. Our bike fell over when it was clattered in mud because the weight of all the goop compressed the suspension enough to topple it away from the stand.

But that's about it (for now). Not a serious list of complaints for a totally new machine like this. Frame finish aside, we're confident that Gas Gas's ever improving quality of finish will help convert a few Euro-sceptics out there. It still isn't a match for a KTM in terms of integrity, but then it doesn't cost as much either. Where the Gasser does beat the KTM however is on the quality of its plastics. At first they feel a wee bit flimsy, but in fact they keep their shine much better than the stuff attached to KTMs these days. The modern front fender has a nice shape, and items like the airbox are stronger than they used to be on the Gassers of old.

Ah yes the airbox. Not a serious problem I'm sure - we went through some incredibly deep water crossings during our testing period and the bike never missed a beat, but I reckon changing the filter may be a bit tricky. Because Gas Gas have dumped a whole load of electrical compo-

nents in the airbox in order to keep them safe and dry - in the process, limiting the amount of space available for easy filter changes. It's only an observation rather than a criticism at this stage, but time will tell whether it begins to frustrate owners a little.

Sticking with the subject of the airbox for a moment, the single Dzus fastener which holds the airbox door in place has a fiddly attachment. Ours had already been taped up (along the top) by the importers so this is probably another area which could well do with looking at. All told the Gasser has three or four small items of concern, but there's very little which a committed owner couldn't address for themselves. Not too bad, considering it's a new model.

Finally before we move on to riding impressions, it's worth noting a few little other points. Styling may well be a matter of personal taste, but we reckon the Gas Gas looks pretty right. Decent graphics, a nice slim seat, and that fairly compact frame and engine helps create a look which is modern and pleasing on the eye. Even though it's a mystery to us why the Spanish factory went and spoiled the looks by attaching an

old-fashioned rear light and number-plate carrier on the bike. Something smarter could've been found, surely?

Gassers always come with what many people consider to be about the best suspension set-ups on the market, and the new 400 doesn't disappoint. A splendid Öhlins shock takes care of the damping at the rear, while a set of gunmetal-coloured usd Marzocchis (or optional WPs) work the front end. Attached on either end is a set of DID semi-oval-section rims (as found on some of the KX Kawasakis), which look slightly different to the norm and are shod with superb Comp III Michelins. And finally (as on most Euro bikes) we get a decent set of alloy bars as standard along with some highly effective enduro handguards and some decent graphics. Excellent.

Starting the Gasser couldn't be simpler. There's no fuel tap (as is traditional with injected engines), so you simply need turn the ignition key to 'on' and press the starter button. Whatever you do, don't touch the throttle, the bike turns over once or twice then fires up and settles into a rhythm almost immediately. In fact on the twistgrip there a little button which once depressed, raises the idle speed slightly (closing the throttle switches it off), but we found that it wasn't necessary to use it most of the time. Starting

a warm engine, the throttle should be kept closed and then opened once the engine catches.

Occasionally the bike showed a slight reluctance to start for a few seconds, but it always fired up eventually and the starter had absolutely no problem cranking the engine over for an extended period of time. Gas Gas (like Suzuki with their DR-Z) are obviously confident enough about the bike's ability to start, that they haven't bothered fitting a kicker, and we never found it a problem. Though the importers inform us that future bikes may indeed start sprouting kick-starts as well. Whatever.

In fact that's not the only similarity with the Suzuki DR-Z, because if you take a closer look at the liquid-cooled, DOHC, four-valve engine, you'll notice that it bears more than a passing resemblance to the Suzuki lump. That's not surprising. Gas Gas sources are quite open about the fact that there's been a fair amount of copying done (on Gas Gas's part) when it comes to designing their new donk. Okay the Spanish bike has its compact electric start located forward of the barrel (the Suzook's is to the rear), and there are six cogs within the Gasser's gear-

Ho hum I thought, another typical day out with Mr TBM. Still nearly true to his word, 20 minutes later, he turned up with the TBM tour bus, and wheeled out the much awaited Gasser - liberally caked in goopy mud from the previous day's photo shoot. 'Watch this' he said, and with a quick stab of the magic button the engine whirred... but failed to spark into life. Oops, try again. No? One more even longer press, ah there we go, and straight away the engine started singing its lovely tune - an exhaust note that was macho but not masochistic like the DR-Z. I mention the starting not as a fault, because all bikes tend to be a bit stubborn the morning after, but more as a plus point. 'Why' I hear you cry? Well because on a bike caked in wet, day-old goop, sporting a full set of lights (which were on), the mere fact that the battery coped with prolonged starting I think is a boon. Especially as the bike also has a nice electric cooling fan, which as anyone who's had a boiling session with a WR-F will tell you, is a definite plus.

Once on the muddy trails of my local area, the Gasser continued to fulfil its early promise. After getting used to the throttle which is oh-so-light (maybe in hindsight a little too light - a bit like power steering with not enough feedback), the FSE made good progress through the thick gloopy going. The engine's bottom end had more than enough grunt to pull itself through the worst of the mud, but didn't leave you hanging on for dear life. And on the more open grassy going the bike surged on through the six-speed box.

Personally speaking I would say that this engine is just about right. Not quite as punchy as a WR400 at higher revs, but also not as grunty as a DR-Z at the bottom end. If that's a confusing compliment, well just think of it as a case of less is more.

Certainly it revs very cleanly right the way through its range. No flat spots or sudden surges - due I'm sure to the fuel injection. It amazes me that this is the first true off-roader (that we've seen in the UK) to incorporate this feature. If a small Euro manufacturer can do it, why not the Japs? Still I guess they need to get those complicated starter motors sorted first! Time and again the FSE started first time every time and gave no cause for concern.

On the chassis side, Gas Gas seem to have got it right as well. A nicely balanced set-up allows you to throw the bike about,

TRACK & TRAIL



At 131kg (fully fuelled) Gasser isn't the lightest 400 on the market but it's not the heaviest either. Si Pavey was grimacing because he hadn't had his Weetabix that morning...

box cases as opposed to the DR-Z's five, but in most other respects this could be a DR-Z lump. Which as far as the punter is concerned is great news. The DR-Z has one of the most user-friendly engines we've tried and not surprisingly, the Gas Gas feels likewise.

There's a lovely mellifluous growl erupts from the FSE's stylish silencer when you start the bike - which should keep the majority of thumper pilots happy. It's perhaps on the slightly boisterous side for truly anonymous trail riding, but it couldn't be described as offensive. Certainly when on the bike, the noise is audible but not excessively loud. No need for aftermarket pipes here though.

But the best bit is still to come. Tweak the absurdly light throttle and the Gasser's lump picks up revs instantly. The free-spinning engine has that lovely modern feel to it whereby power is easy to come by. In fact I suspect that the FSE lump is by no means the most powerful 400 on the market (though the factory claims 47bhp!), but the power which is available is absurdly easy to use. This thing has fantastic bottom end, superb mid-range and a reasonable top end - not unlike the DR-Z in fact. In truth it probably makes just a tad less down at the very bottom

than the Suzook (which is no bad thing), but that just makes it all the more usable. Imagine a cross between the DR-Z and an XR400 (but with considerably more power than the XR) and you have the FSE's motor.

Incredibly Gas Gas have managed to harness all that torque and make the power delivery incredibly linear (I suspect this is as much to do with the fuel injection as anything else). But however it's been achieved, the new Gasser has that trademark super-smooth powerband with no peaks or troughs in the delivery. Finding grip is absurdly easy (far easier than on the Suzook for instance), thanks to the fine-tuning which can be achieved with that delicate throttle. Every one of the six gear ratios feels the same (but taller) and the Gasser simply accelerates quickly and rapidly.

Unlike Yamaha's WR-F (or to a lesser extent the KTM EXC) there's no second stage to the powerband and once power starts to fall away you simply notch it up another cog and away you go again. This has the effect of making the EC400 feel incredibly easy to ride: turn the throttle, power comes in and is fed to the ground and you accelerate forwards. Fast but not frightening. Big handfuls of throttle will certainly reward you with serious performance especially in the

all-important lower midrange where for instance coming out of corners the bike will hook-up and drive brilliantly. But I guess it's fair to say that it doesn't scare you in the way that a 426F can.

This is no bad thing. The Gasser retains grip and accelerates where other bikes are fighting for traction. Lurid rear wheel steering is not quite as easy on the Gasser as it is say on the DR-Z or WR-F (though these bikes exhibit this trend for entirely different reasons: the DR-Z because the chassis can't keep control of all that hulking bottom end, and the WR-F because it only takes a split second to get the engine into its upper reaches where absurd amounts of power would break the traction of any chassis). Whatever - you can easily powerslide the Gasser into and out of corners, but it's noticeable that with so much grip available, it tends to rail corners rather than drift around them.

Modern steering helps. The Gas Gas has got quickish steering which lies somewhere between the latest WR-F and the EXC (a pretty good combination). Not quite as stable as the Yam, it nevertheless doesn't exhibit the KTM's levels of headshake, though it's fair to say that it does wag its bars at times - albeit at a much lower frequency than the KTM is inclined to do. This is particularly noticeable when powering hard through soft mud. The front end keeps nice and light (which is what you want it to do), but has a slight tendency to flit from side to side.

In all other respects the chassis is good and stable with Gasser's trademark supple and well controlled damping. On standard settings we actually found the suspension a little too soft (though it's all adjustable), but having ten kilos of mud coating the bike probably didn't help.

What this all adds up to however is a brilliant new 400 which combines so many of the best elements of other machines. It's easy to get on and ride immediately, and you find yourself chucking it into corners and driving out the other side, hard on the throttle - confident in the knowledge that the bike's well controlled suspension, and linear power delivery will keep you on course. In really tight, nadgery going you can occasionally feel the bike's weight (approx 130kg all in), but all thumpers exhibit this tendency to some degree. Where the Gasser scores however is its usability. Get on. Push the button. Ride. It's as simple as that.

After half a day spent on an enduro track we took the bike for an extended trail ride the following day, and were mightily impressed. This really is the Gasser's forte - its ability to combine both disciplines in stock form. A lot of people like to ride competition bikes on the trail these days, and the Gasser is probably the ideal choice.

and although the steering lock is probably the worst of all the 400s I've ridden, it didn't impede progress on the toughest of the nadgery stuff we rode. Although when I think of some enduros I've ridden, this could become a real pain at the end of a long gruelling day. The bike tracks very well and didn't get deflected too easily, it also carries its weight nicely and feels very light, until that is you get into trouble with an acute angle of dangle (we've all been there). And then like all four-strokes, it shows its weight.

The seat didn't feel as narrow as the WR that was out with us, but seemed pretty comfy. The tank was no fatter than the perch, so forward movement wasn't a problem. Also I was pleased to find I could put both feet fully down and I only have a 30" inside leg madam! For me the bars were too low and narrow, although I do ride with cow horns on my KTM.

The suspension was up to usual Gasser standards although to me it felt like it had a two-stage damping effect, with the second part of the stroke being a bit firmer, but that was just my impression.

The controls were well sorted and I never cease to be amazed by the clutches on Gassers - they're always a pleasure to use. Even the switchgear looked like it actually cost something to be manufactured. The only blight is the silly speedo binnacle which the Spanish marque now fits as standard. In a word: useless!

In conclusion, I loved the bike for a first lunge into the four-stroke market. I think Gas Gas have come up with a real winner. Okay it's not a pure bred racer like the KTM, but I reckon most riders would certainly get around quicker on the Gasser. More importantly I think it's definitely how the average Joe would want his bike - very adept at trail riding, well up to competing on in an enduro, and come summer just right for having a couple of supermoto hoops thrown on for a bit of scratching.

If I had a gripe, it would be the one I've always had which is in the quality of finish: decidedly average. If you're spending four grand plus on a bike, I can't imagine there's anyone out there who wouldn't begrudge paying another 20 quid or so for a decent quality speedo, and some proper welding.

It's the difference between a good bike and a great one!

'Dangerous' Kevin Marshall

The Rusty Dream-ons of Dirt.
Are you sure you meant
down here mate? It looks
awfully steep to me...

TRACK & TRAIL

If it has a competition edge to it, but with all the creature comforts and equipment you'd expect to find on a well-specified trail bike. Except one perhaps. The FSE has a very firm seat. Personally I like it that way, but not everyone feels the same as me.



On the road between lanes the Gas Gas has got the legs and the gearing to comfortably stay ahead of most of the traffic. As you might expect, it rides the tarmac brilliantly and is helped by having probably the best set of brakes on any 400. Strong at the front, smooth and progressive on the rear. But turn onto the dirt and the EC4 really feels at home. With that brilliant engine offering all the power you need right down to the very bottom, it's easy to be seduced by its abilities. Open the throttle at any rpm and the engine responds with a willing growl. Only the slight notchiness of the gearbox on our bike could spoil an otherwise excellent set of manners, but in fairness I should point out that the gearchange improved considerably throughout the test. Certainly clutchless changes were no problem but thanks to the super lightweight feel of the hydraulically operated clutch it was only a matter of flicking one of your fingers to momentarily disengage the drive. At low speeds it's a cinch to keep one finger on the clutch and chug around feet up - though it's easy to get caught



Owners wanting a bit more power out of their FSE400s will no doubt welcome the factory's three-stage power-up kits which it will be making available for the new model. The Stage I kit comprises of a new free-flowing tail pipe and a modified ECU (the bit that controls the electronics which work the fuel injection system). Stage II is the same but includes a new bigger-bore header pipe as well, while Stage III involves a big-bore 440cc conversion with a new cam, complete exhaust system and ECU chip. No details on prices, power or availability were available as we went to press. For more info Call Gas on 01298 25460.

out by the lack of steering lock. A combination of using USD forks and a perimeter frame (the frame splays away from the headstock) means there's no easy solution.

Nevertheless all told the Gasser impressed me hugely and I wasn't the only one. Virtually everyone who tried the bike over the two days (including a former British enduro champion) were mightily impressed by the Gasser's blend of power and rideability. This really is one of those bikes that can do it all. It's a trail bike you could easily race, or alternatively a competent four-stroke racer with great trail manners. Gas Gas are making a supermoto version of it as well which thanks to the power delivery should be a fun road bike.

All told then we welcome this addition to the four-stroke firmament, which at £4450 (plus on the road charges) seems to be pitched about right. It may not have the WR-F's blinding power, the KTM's build quality nor the DR-Z's knock-down price tag. But it seems to combine some of the best elements of all three in a package that works extremely well. As the Gas Gas importer remarked: 'It's a DR-Z with proper suspension' which is almost certainly true... But we reckon it's even better than that!

GAS GAS EC400FSE

Price:	£4450 + otr
Engine:	Liquid-cooled, DOHC, four-valve single with fuel injection and electric-start
Displacement:	399cc
Bore & Stroke:	90 x 62.6mm
Transmission:	6-speed with hydraulic clutch
Chassis:	Cromoly perimeter frame with alloy swing-arm
Forks:	USD 43mm WP or 45mm Marzocchi (295mm travel)
Shock:	Öhlins with progressive linkage (320mm travel)
Front brake:	260mm disc with Nissin pump & caliper
Rear brake:	220mm disc with Nissin pump & caliper
Wheels/tyres:	DID U rims/Michelin Comp III
Wheelbase:	1475mm
Seat height:	940mm
Ground clearance:	340mm
Fuel capacity:	9L
Trail weight:	131kg

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WHICH Handguards?

Words: James Barnicoat;
Pics: Ben Swyre



Choosing a set of handguards can be a tricky business. Here's a selection to help guide you through the maze...

Whether blasting across a Moroccan desert or bimbbling through a Welsh forest, a set of handguards is an essential pre-requisite these days. Sticks and stones, unfortunately, may break bones so protecting your pinkies with durable plastic, or alloy is a

sensible move. Most handguards also go some way to deflecting debris away from switchgear and master cylinders, whilst easily breakable levers are partially shielded should you crash.

Putting function before form means that most handguards are unlikely to elicit much of a response from your peers (when was the last time your mates called you up with: 'Bob, you've really got to come and check out my new handguards?'). Some manufacturers, however, are developing more modern shaped 'guards to match the futuristic styling of many of today's bikes. As it is, most are made in a variety of colours to match OE plastics.

Being virtually indispensable means that there is now a huge range of handguards on the market, from short plastic deflectors to fully wrap-around alloy 'guards. So here, for your delectation, is a selection of protection from the leading manufacturers:



Cemoto Six Days Brushguards

The 'Six Days' from Cemoto is their take on the plastic wraparound handguard. Quite a high front face gives good hand coverage whilst being both simple in design and very light in weight. Cemoto aren't generally renowned for their high quality plastics, but these were actually very well finished with a glossy lustre and decent quality sticker. They looked exceedingly good value for money, coming as they do complete with fitting kit. →

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96/N	TTR 250	£1695
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NEW 2002	XR 400	£3950
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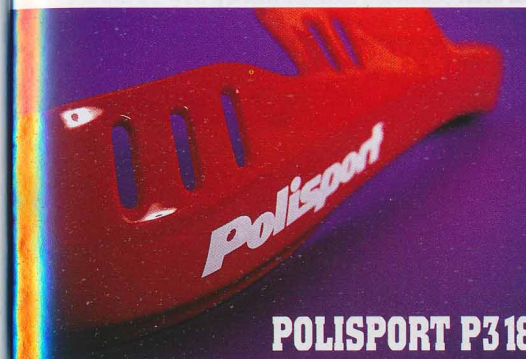
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phone 01844 261372

- Colours: black/white/red/YZ blue/yellow/orange.
- Weight: 120g each (plus fitting kit).
- Retail price: £23.95
- Available from: TWS on 01531 631266 for stockists.

Verdict: Nice at the price.

Polisport P318.2

Polisport are renowned for producing incredibly low priced plastics and these wraparound handguards are no exception. Hand coverage is fairly minimal for a plastic 'guard, though they are light in weight and reasonably well finished, with a printed Polisport logo. The fitting kit comes with nylon bar clamps, rather than alloy. Whilst not quite up to the quality of some of the other 'guards shown here, they certainly seem to offer protection at a very fair price.



POLISPORT P318

- Colours: black/YZ blue/green/orange/violet/yellow/white.
- Weight: 144g each (plus fitting kit).
- Retail price: £17.67
- Available from: A number of off-road shops or you can phone Bike Alert on 020 8297 7970 for stockists.

Verdict: Cheap and cheerful.

Polisport P321

One of only two non-wraparound 'guards here, the P321 (catchy name!) nevertheless gives a good level of protection thanks to its height. Quite sturdy plastic construction means that they should be more than up to the task of deflecting flying debris and light branches, though they probably won't stop your levers breaking in a serious tumble. The bar clamps are alloy, rather than the nylon of the P318.2, and the finish is actually fairly high with a proper printed logo.

- Colours: black/white/blue/YZ blue/green/red/yellow.

POLISPORT P321



WHICH Handguard?

- Weight: 98g each (plus fitting kit).
 - Retail price: £9.98
 - Available from: A number of off-road shops or phone Bike Alert on 020 8297 7970 for stockists.
- Verdict:** Cheap protection for under a tenner!

Apico Pro Brushguards

An alloy bar runs through the middle of these wraparound 'guards making them incredibly sturdy, but also slightly weighty (though they're not too bad for this type of design). Nonetheless, these are some of the smoothest looking 'guards available (in their mock carbon-fibre look). A little low in height, they won't offer quite the protection from flying stones that some of the others might, but they project a fair way forward, leaving plenty of room around the levers. Well made, they come complete with a fitting kit.

- Colours: black/white/carbon-look. A clear version is coming soon.
- Weight: 300g each (plus fitting kit).
- Retail price: £39.99 (black/white), £52 (carbon-look)
- Available from: Numerous Apico stockists, more details from Vesty UK on 01483 450560.

Verdict: To match your carbon-laden trailie.



APICO PRO



Acerbis Rally II

Although they can't claim to have invented the idea of wraparound handguards (the original Bark-Busters were and still are an Aussie product), Acerbis more or less pioneered the idea of using lightweight moulded plastic guards instead of alloy. Their latest take on the idea is the new Rally II, a futuristically styled 'guard which puts the protection where it's needed, with little coverage in-between. This makes the Rally II light in weight. The plastic 'backbone' seems reasonably strong though the deflectors appear quite flexible and mark very easily. But the Rally IIs are the only set here with the name actually moulded into the unit. Quite expensive given that the fitting kit is extra.

- Colours: black/white/green/red/blue/yellow/orange/grey.
- Weight: 166g each (plus fitting kit).
- Retail price: £43.50, Fitting kit £21.80, Pro Taper fitting kit £27.75
- Available from: Most off-road shops or phone BHR on 01582 472374 for stockists.

Verdict: If Buzz Lightyear rode enduros - he'd have a set of these.



UFO Explorer Bushguard (1607)

Just one of many handguards from UFO, the Explorer is one of the cheapest of the wraparound style in their range but that makes them damn good value too. UFO have used a reasonable thickness of plastic, nevertheless these 'guards are particularly light despite giving a good level of coverage. Well made, but the slots by the master cylinder guard look a little cheap and the UFO logo is only a sticker. A fitting kit is included in the price.

- Colours: black/green/fl. green/white/various reds/blue/reflex blue/RM yellow/carbon-look.
- Weight: 132g each (plus fitting kit).
- Retail price: £31.50
- Available from: MD racing on 01935 429646 for stockists.

Verdict: Sensible value for money.



UFO Jumpy Bushguard (1619)

The oddly named 'Jumpy' is UFO's alloy reinforced wraparound handguard (a copy of the Acerbis Rally Pro). The plastic looks tougher than that of the Explorer's, and the alloy bar lends extra strength (and weight) to the 'guard. Quite large coverage means that they offer a high level of protection. Once again the UFO sticker looks like it won't last the first jet-wash. Also available to fit Pro Tapers at no extra cost.

- Colours: black/white/reflex blue/KTM '98-'02 orange.
- Weight: 317g each (plus fitting kit).
- Retail price: £49.95
- Available from: MD racing on 01935 429646 for stockists.

Verdict: Good product, daft name.



Enduro Engineering handguards

Well-made simple anodised alloy handguard should be well up to the job of protecting the levers. Adding the optional plastic deflectors (which we would recommend - though they seem pricey for what they are) gives a huge amount of hand coverage, but the plastic's quite soft and would deform in a spill. However, it should spring back into shape and will protect even the biggest of hands from flying debris. The handguards come with a robust-looking fitting kit (including allen key), whilst the deflectors come with a drill bit and screws. Finish is reasonably high and the logo is a good quality sticker.

- Colours: Handguard: black/silver, Deflector: black/clear.
- Weight: 380g each including deflector (plus fitting kit).
- Retail price: Handguard: £34.99, Deflectors: £17.99, Pro Taper kit: £29.99
- Available from: Eurotek on 01765 608209 for stockists.

Verdict: Weighty but well made.



Hebo wraparound

The Hebo wraparound handguard is very light in weight, but with a bit more flex than we'd like. Build quality is okay though they are slightly lacking in height which means hand coverage is minimal. One nice feature is that both sides have master cylinder guards, thus protecting the reservoir on hydraulic clutches. A printed Hebo logo adds the finishing touch.

- Colours: white/black/yellow/red/green/blue/orange.
- Weight: 125g each (plus fitting kit).
- Retail price: £33
- Available from: Gas Gas dealers or contact Gas Gas Motos Ltd on 01298 25460 for stockists.

Verdict: Bit pricey really.



Hebo enduro-style

Hebo's non-wraparound offering is quite small in size, and is subsequently the lightest 'guard here. Hand coverage is reasonable and, whilst they are taller than the Hebo wraparounds, there are bigger 'guards of this type available. There is quite a bit of flex evident and levers are likely to suffer in the event of a big spill. Putting the Hebo sticker in a moulded recess is quite a nice detail but overall build quality is pretty poor. And are we the only ones who think they've been styled to look like the ears of a pig?

- Colours: black/white/red/blue/yellow/orange.
- Weight: 64g each (plus fitting kit)
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Verdict: The porcine pair.

In only his first full season of World Enduro Championship competition 22-year-old Manxman David Knight has proved that not only can he compete against the world's best but that he can beat them too. Riding for the Italian UFO Corse Belgarda Yamaha team, Knighter has gone from International newcomer to World Championship runner-up. With his 2002 preparations already well under way, David begins a monthly column by looking back at a truly remarkable year...

Looking in detail at my first full season of World Championship competition has made me realise just how enjoyable, challenging, and occasionally disappointing it really was last year. In terms of results, I knew, having won a few special tests outright at both the 2000 and 1999 International Six Day Enduros, that I could mix it with those expected to top the quarter-litre class. I also knew that staying consistent throughout a six round, 12 day series would be difficult.

Having aimed to finish the year within the top five, ending the season as runner-up in the 250cc class is an achievement that I'm extremely proud of. The only trouble is there's really only one place for me to go in 2002 - and that's to become World Champion.

Breaking the season down, the first round of the championship in Portugal was interesting to say the least. With nothing really expected of me by either my team or the established names within the class, I was quietly confident and knew that I could rank among the front-runners. The weekend, or day as it turned out to be, was certainly eventful, and being wet played right into my hands.

After crashing on the opening motocross test, things thankfully improved. And by the time I got to the end of the day's first cross-country test I was riding well, finishing second and third on most of the day's tests from there on in. Second in class was a great start to the season.

Spain the following week proved to be more of

GOOD SPORT KNIGHT

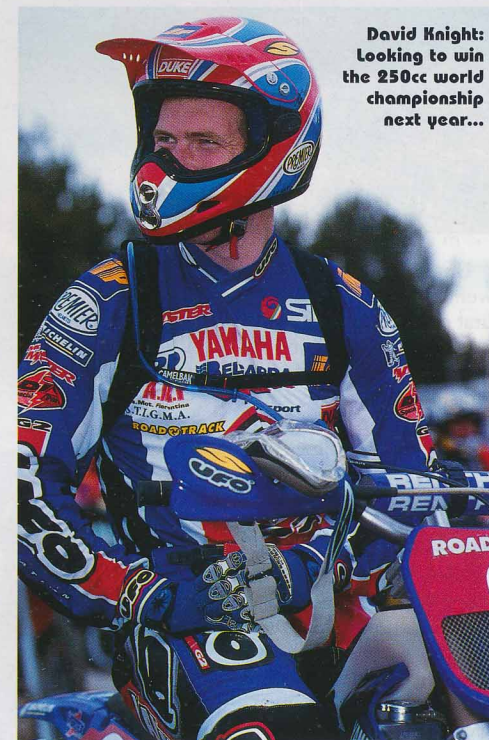
the same. Trying to go too quick too soon, knowing that a win was on the cards if I rode well, day one was spoiled by silly, unnecessary falls. On the second day I got myself into gear, narrowly missing the win. With class winner, and then two-time World Champion, Juha Salminen finishing only 0.6s ahead of me at the end of the day, I realised that a win certainly wasn't out of the question.

The third round of the championship in Slovakia was, for me, both the hardest and most enjoyable event of the year. Despite the ground being hard on the grassy motocross tests, the cross-country tests were where I produced some of my best test times all year.

Round four of the championship was another great event - hardly surprising really being in Italy where the sport is so popular, but some of the Italian riders proved to be extremely fast on their home soil. Despite finishing third twice, I came away from the race second in the championship. Although I was hoping for a better result for the team, with the final two rounds of the series being held in Finland and Sweden, and being surrounded by Finns in the championship, points were the priority.

Knowing that series leader Juha Salminen, and more worryingly third place rider Samuli Aro, would both be hard to beat in Finland, third on day one was a result I was happy with - but fifth on day two was not. Despite being less than six seconds behind second place finisher Simon Wilk on the second day, the points I lost in the championship meant I made things a whole lot harder for myself with only one round to go. I also learnt just how important each and every second is at World Championship level.

The big surprise in Sweden was that KTM had decided to send Juha to a race in Austria. With the championship already his, the decision angered



David Knight: Looking to win the 250cc world championship next year...

many including the organisers, but eased the pressure on me; or so everyone kept telling me.

Having held second in the championship from day one, the team and I knew all too well that a mistake could ruin a year's worth of hard work. Needing to finish in the top three on both days meant riding without mistakes yet fast enough to claim the points - not easy when you're riding in what looked like building-sand all day.

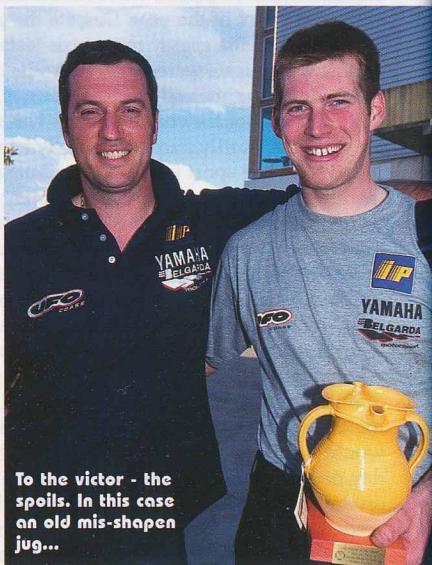
GOOD KNIGHT



Unsurprisingly, Aro went all out and won the first day, but for me third was what I needed and thankfully what I got. Finishing 48 seconds ahead of the fourth place rider, it was then that I knew that second place in the championship was mine.

Day two was a weird day really. I knew what I needed to do, and feeling more relaxed than I was on the Saturday, I went out and did it. Going one better than I needed to - finishing second to Aro - gave me second in the 250cc two-stroke World Enduro Championship, much to the delight of the UFO boss Vito Consoloni. Aro had ridden for the Yamaha team in 2000 and had jumped ship to Husqvarna for the 2001 season, something that didn't impress Vito at all.

One thing that surprised me was how little pressure the team put on me throughout the year. I guess all concerned have been around long



To the victor - the spoils. In this case an old mis-shapen jug...

enough to realise that one bad result doesn't count you out of a championship, although it does cause a few sleepless nights.

Not everything went to plan last year of course. Teaming up with my brother Juan and Paul Edmondson to try and win the club team



section of the ISDE in France was something that I'd been looking forward to for much of the season.

Unfortunately we all underestimated just how difficult it would be to try and compete on level terms with the Trophy team riders from the back of the field. Nevertheless our results improved during the week until firstly, I hit a pile of logs and had to retire and then, Paul got excluded on the final day for an illegal front tyre. This just left Juan. Having not ridden much all year, Juan by his own admission, was expected to be the team's weakest link, but ended up being the only one of us to get to the finish!

One thing that might come as a surprise to you is that my YZ race bike from last year was almost stock. With the exception of the Solva forks, a few

simple engine mods and the usual bolt-on stuff, the bike was pretty much straight from the crate. With standard suspension being so good these days there isn't really that much need to use aftermarket bits, that's why I used the standard shock.

The only time I used anything other than my usual engine set-up - it's got a slightly heavier crank to mellow it a little - was at the final round in Sweden. With one of the special being in deep, deep sand, I decided to use a standard motocross engine with a longer silencer. Although it made riding on the other tests harder due to the motor being a bit lively, it certainly helped in the power sapping sand.

As for this year, I'm staying in the 250cc class with, surprise surprise, one definite goal - to win the 250cc World Championship. Having ridden a 250 for so many years, last year I decided to ride a 400 four-stroke in the Italian championship as I fancied trying something different.

This year however, I'll be sticking with the 250 stroker all year as I can't afford to be chopping and changing between classes. When the first round of the championship comes around I want to be dialled into my Yamaha 250 and only my 250.

In terms of competition 2002 looks like being just as tough, if not tougher, than last year. With Juha Salminen moving to the 400cc class my job, you'd have thought, would be easier. But with Frenchman David Fretigne joining the class it's going to be another year long fight. I still see Samuli Aro as my closest championship rival as he's extremely fast in Scandinavia and becoming increasingly consistent in all other conditions. I guess we'll just have to wait and see how fast Fretigne is outside of France. One thing's for sure - it's going to be an exciting year...

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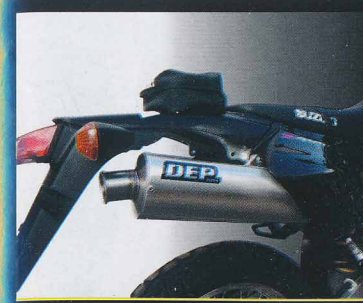
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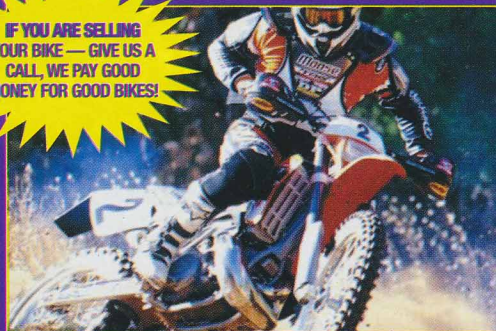
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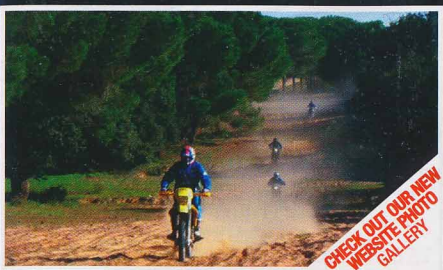
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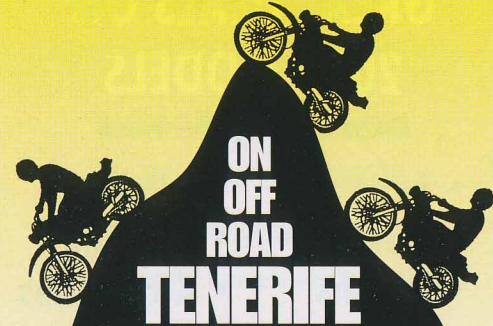
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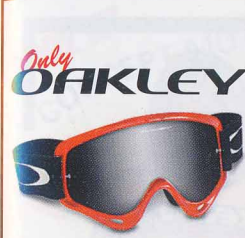
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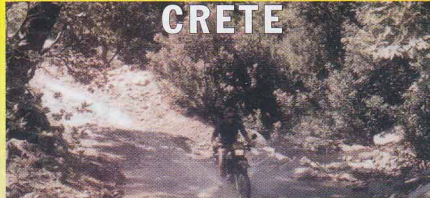
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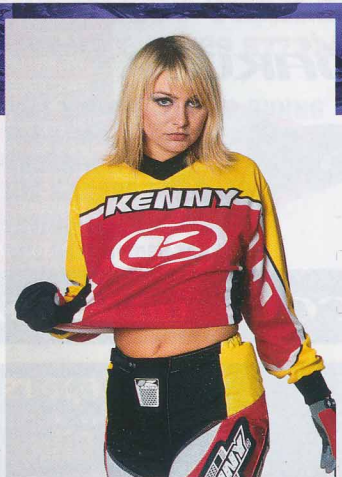
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French clothing manufacturer Kenny's 2002 range includes this colourful combo. Called the Performance model, the cordura and kevlar riding pants feature front ventilation, hip padding and an aertex lining. Race shirts are constructed from a semi-ventilated nylon. With six colours available, the jeans are a modest £58.95 while the jersey costs £27. Matching gloves range from £18-£24 (depending on spec). For those with deeper pockets Kenny's new range of 'Titanium' gear is slightly dearer but looks the biz. Contact Ontime Racing on 01937 580524 for stockists and more details.



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Sinisalo Gloves

Just occasionally a piece of kit or equipment arrives at the TBM office which stands out as particularly stylish and well designed. These pre-production prototype Sinisalo gloves are a great example. A blend of woven nylon, mesh and neoprene are matched to a silver-grey clarino palm featuring gripper 'spots' on the palm and fingers. Although these gloves offer minimal protection for your hands (there's no additional padding as such), they do offer an incredible amount of feel at the levers - something which we know some riders prefer. This makes them extremely comfortable, and offers you the ultimate amount of 'control'. We love the style, the design and the finish - though we'd prefer a bit of padding on the back of the hand and fingers. The only drawback? They're not yet currently available. Nevertheless they are the most stylish riding gloves we've ever come across. If you want to get hold of a pair, pester Sinisalo dealers and they may well bring them into the UK. Contact Vesty UK on 01483 459560.



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I was on Gold until...



It's 1983 and Si Pavey is not only down under... but down and out!

Anywhere else in the world, the word 'fink' means a ratbag, but Aussies tend to think laterally; so for them Finke seemed like a good name for a big dry river and a tiny mining town. Things being what they are, Finke's claim to fame wasn't its enormous reserves of anything worth mining - instead it's become known Australia-wide as home to one of the wickedest desert races going.

Back in my golden youth (that means more hair on my head, and less on my chest, okay),

the siren song of this race lured me into its dusty grip. Intent on fame and glory, I set off for what Aussies call 'The Red Centre' (the heart of the continent) with my mate Snowy and our trusty steeds - in my case a standard Yamaha YZ250. I was born innocent.

The Finke Desert Race is a true classic; remote, exotic and fast. Bloody fast in fact. This is one of the few races still dominated by big bore dirt bikes and in a place where top speed really does count. Basically, it's a flat out blast from the

world famous town of Alice, following the old Ghan railway to the small disused mining town of Finke. Once in Finke the whole race camps out overnight and races back the next day.

The total race distance is just over 300 miles and the record time (there and back) is three hours 50 minutes (including fuel stops), making an average winning speed of around 80mph! What makes these speeds so scary, then? Well, this is a desert so old that the sand has been ground into dust as fine as talcum powder. It hangs in the air for hours, blinding and choking everyone. With luck, the leader can see where they're going, but everyone else is riding on courage and balls. Like I said: fast,

fun and frightening!

In Alice this race is absolutely huge. Just like in France with the Dakar Rallye, the entire town and surrounding locals are 'en fete' for the whole of the race (and for some time before and after, as well). Whilst it may be a famous Aussie 'city', Alice is barely much bigger than a small town, perhaps the size of somewhere like Chelmsford, and of course it's planted in the middle of MMBD (Miles 'n' Miles of Bloody Desert, okay). To find yourself another night-club you'll be racking up a 16 hour drive to Adelaide or Darwin.

The locals are well known for enjoying themselves, so when the bike racing comes to town the whole population goes on the razzle. If you are from interstate (out of town) you suddenly become a bit of a celeb - everyone wants to be part of your race and make sure you have a good time - Aussie outback style. Naturally, minor infractions of the law such as riding your unlicensed motocross bike down the high street are all but encouraged.

Actually the police provide an absolutely invaluable service to the competitors. For the week leading up to the start of the race the local constabulary set up their radar equipment on the first stretch of dirt road out of Alice. Not to book you, but to assist the riders to get their gearing and jetting right. What a brilliant way to maintain good order during race week - it could only happen in the outback!

This help is absolutely essential because there are stretches of the course where it is possible to hold a 500cc two-stroke absolutely full song for 40km at a time. Tiny rear sprockets and huge main jets are in order and with careful set-up it is possible to get a CR500 to run at 190kmh without seizing.

Considering there are actually quite a few corners and the course has been seriously whooped out, in order to go as fast as that, you need to have a seriously quick dirt bike. Fortunately, I was only on a Yamaha YZ250, so my speeds weren't quite as scary, but after grinding the sprocket bolt-heads down and fitting a 40 tooth rear, the kindly officer reported me for doing 165kmh. Instead of giving me a ticket, he gave me some jetting tips - eventually resulting in a main jet some eight sizes up from the one I had been running in enduros back on the east coast. Wow.

After mastering the intricacies of desert jetting, in a burst of misplaced self-confidence, me and Snowy decided to set off on our own to lay out our fuel dumps in the desert. We borrowed a knackered old ute (pick-up) from the local Yamaha dealer and pioneered off. With no maps, no compass, no water, no idea and a ute that



needed to be bump-started, I now realise we were complete idiots, but of course back then there was nothing that we couldn't deal with, so no worries, mate.

After circumnavigating the desert and having several enlightening episodes of geographic embarrassment, followed in spectacular fashion by crashing into a buffalo, we eventually found our way back to town, and home. Home in this case, meant the local family who had adopted us for as long as we wanted to be around.

There were howls of laughter when we rolled

back in and we were castigated for our foolishness and a suitable punishment meted out. This meant being forced to go out with 'our family' that evening to practice shooting with their home-made guns - ah yes, much safer than being lost in the trackless wastes - I can tell you!

Having survived our crime and punishment still bright eyed and waggy-tailed, we were ready to tackle absolutely anything, and next on the agenda was gaining some familiarity with the route and associated dangers. Alan Roe, the race winner the year before had reportedly pre-ridden

I was on Gold until...



off the throttle. The entire opening stretch was scary but fun.

Sliding into berms at 160kmh without shutting off was certainly a new experience for me. The top boys on their 500s were actually leaving blue lines on the ground on some of the hard packed corners! Our pace notes read something like this: Off the start gate, accelerate to full speed in top gear at 165kmh and hold it. At 4kms, look for the huge hazard signs then shut off, brake lightly into a dry river bed and still in top gear, back on the gas to jump out of the river, duck under the overhanging tree branches, land and hold full gas for the next 20km'. Dead easy.

The night before the start the locals held a riotous party whilst drawing the start order in each class. There were four riders in each wave and I drew the first gate in the 250 class. Yesssss!!!

Race day dawned and tanked up with plenty of pre-riding, the bravado of youth and my starting position, I was convinced that the 250 class would be mine. You know the symptoms.

This race is such a big event in Alice that they've constructed a permanent start gate, just out of town beside the airport, complete with a raised concrete dais and a drop down motocross style start gate. The starting atmosphere is absolutely brilliant.

With the crowd shouting a hero's send-off, the gate dropped, I dumped the clutch and spun the Metzeler tyre down the concrete, accelerated to top gear and full speed and hurtled into the first kink in the track. This was not a corner, but a flat out kink taken at full gas, which funnels the riders into some sort of race order.

It was at this point I realised that I couldn't see the track in the billowing dust. I didn't panic, I'd practised this section enough to be confident that it was safe to go flat out. And I thought my bike was fast enough that I should pretty quickly be back in front of the other riders and in clean air. I had four clear kilometres before the first major hazard, and things were going smoothly.

the course 40 times, and destroyed 25 rear tyres in the process. Serious stuff.

Being that it was completely acceptable to pre-ride the course to our heart's content, depending on how much time and money we had available, we made our cunning plan. Due to our limited time and resources and our desire to get in some quality quaffing in the excellent bars, we rode the whole course just once, preferring to concentrate on that all-important first stretch of 60km. We pre-rode this section half a dozen times, discovering several vital points where you needed to shut

I was on Gold until...

I was having a quick mental check of my pace notes as I hurtled along: '...at 4kms, look for the huge hazard signs then shut off, brake lightly into dry river bed...' No problemo.

Trouble was I never saw the hazard sign. The thick choking dust completely obscured it and I ripped dust-blind into the dry river bed, and blasted into the face of the climb out of the river at 165kmh (I kid you not). Instead of ducking under the branches of the surrounding bushes I found myself up above them and for the first time in clear air.

In a whirlwind of sand/sky/ foliage, and still clinging to the handlebars for grim death I had a nano-second to think 'Sh*t, what happened to those bloody hazard signs...', just before touch-down.

Considering the height I'd achieved, the landing was surprisingly easy and as I was still on the bike my shocked brain told my right hand to twist that throttle and haul ass. But as I wobbled all over the track and collapsed into a heap, I realised both arms didn't feel quite right. The spectators were screaming at me to get up off the track but I didn't seem to be able to push myself up. In a bustle of sympathy they helped me to the side of the track, offered me a drink and sat me down next to the guy with the broken arm. By now I was thinking, 'uh-oh I reckon I've damaged something'.

As I sat in a haze of pain waiting for the helicopter to arrive, we watched in awe as two more riders joined us in the hospital queue. You could tell from the approaching engine noise who was going to be your next room-mate, as the river bed

and jump were completely concealed in the dust.

So us four broken ones sat with the spectators at a safe distance and listened in awe-struck horror as the unmistakable sound of a 500cc two-stroke approached, full song.

With no shutting off, the rider smacked into the river bed and erupted out like a ricocheting bullet, cartwheeling madly in an explosion of dust and bike bits.

Apparently unhurt, the madman jumped straight to his feet, running around in circles shouting 'I'm okay, I'm okay - I'm going on'. Eventually the shock of the crash wore off and he went to get on his bike, which a spectator had kindly shoved to the side of the track. With one despairing look at his mangled KX500, he quietly came and sat down next to us and now we were five.

The helicopter clattered up in a minor dust storm and ferried us one by one back to the ambulance at the start. They took me first as

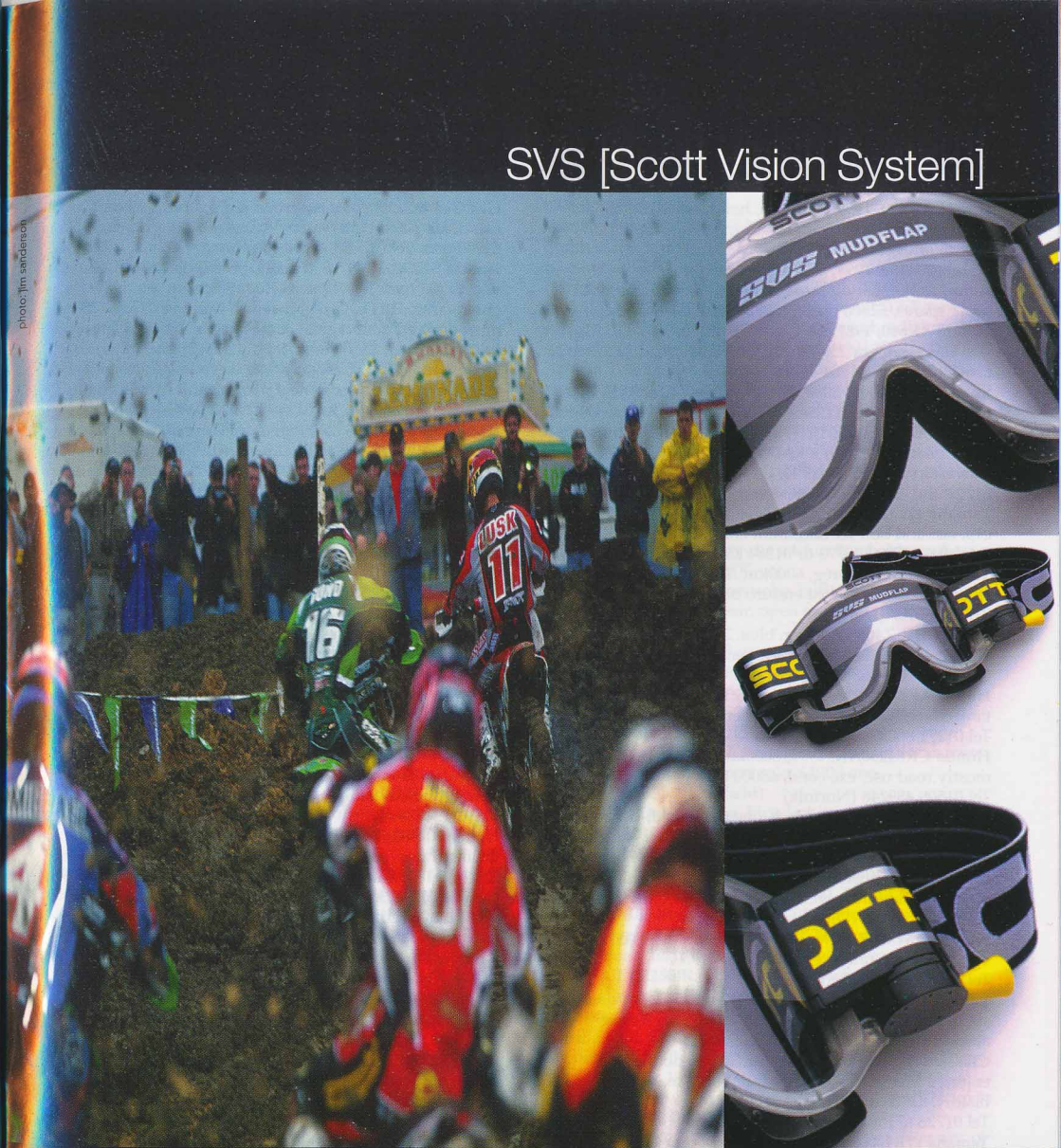
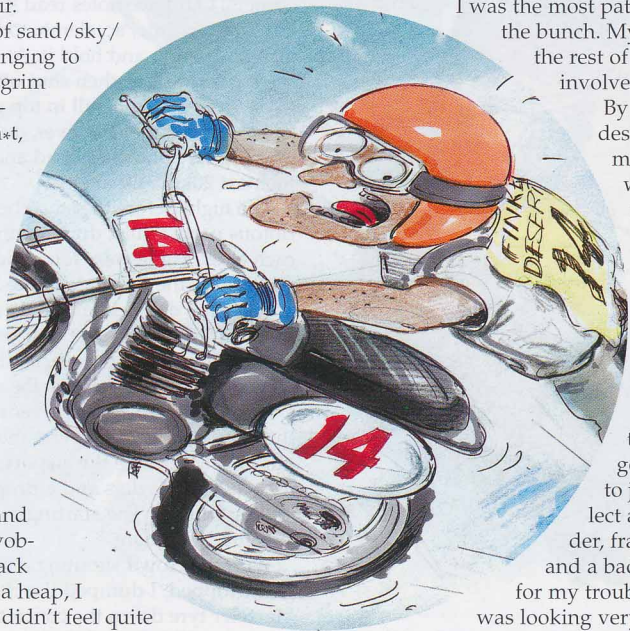
I was the most pathetic looking of the bunch. My memories of the rest of the day mostly involve Pethidine.

By the next morning desert riders filled more than one whole ward in the Alice Springs Hospital and all five of us were barely reunited having been through various bits of medical intervention; surgery; plaster etc. I did pass go, and I didn't go to jail, but I did collect a dislocated shoulder, fractured humerus and a badly sprained wrist for my trouble. Plus my bike was looking very secondhand!

Bizarrely, all five of us were very upbeat and on the edge of our beds as we sat and listened intently to the race unfolding live on local radio the next day.

I was still in Alice for another week after the race and despite my injuries had a fantastic time due entirely to the Red Centre's hospitality and sense of humour.

Finke is truly one of the greatest dirt bike events I have ever ridden and even if I didn't win fame and glory that year, I certainly won the award for first rider to the local hospital...!



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Gas Gas EC250, 2001, red, road reg'd, taxed, never raced, fast/clean bike, many extras, no time wasters, £2900 ono. Tel 01803 845064 (Devon)

Honda XL230, 1998, 2800 miles, brushguards, MT21s, vgc, £1700 ono. Tel 01226 297108 (S.Yorks)

Husqvarna 510TE, G-reg, Swedish built, very low mileage, well maintained, some spares, exc light/powerful green laner, £1000 ono. Tel 01420 562899 (Hants)

Husqvarna TE610E, 1999, W-reg, very low miles, not used for one year, spare new plastics and carbon cans, superb cond, £2800. Tel 01249 721518 (Wilts)

Honda XR600, 1996, 2000 miles, new tyres/c+s, DEP and standard pipe, Renthals, frameguards, immaculate cond, £2600. Tel (Mobile) 07787 522078 or 01732 762464 (Kent)

KTM LC4 LSE, R-reg, 4500 miles, FSH, JD power kit, perfect cond, £2500. Tel 01244 537346 (Flintshire)

Suzuki TS125, 1976, 6000 miles, totally original, exc cond to look at but engine needs attention, £250. Tel (Mobile) 07765 897304 or 01252 721063 (Surrey)

Kawasaki KLR250, 1998, 1800km, long MoT, Royal Artillery maintained, light show/trail use, spare exhaust/plastics/tyres, beautiful trail bike, £2000 ono. Tel 01458 259197 (Somerset)

Yamaha WR400F, 2000, V-reg, perfectly maintained/faultless example, dirt and road plastics, more oil changes than miles, you won't find better, £3000. Tel 01530 271027 (Derbys)

Suzuki DR-Z400S K1, blue, reg'd 28/09/01, UK bike, 300 miles, brushguards, full warranty, £3950 ono. Also new Windham helmet, Tech 8 boots, and armour. Tel 01793 721539 (Wilts)

Honda XR400, 2000, red, road reg'd/taxed, Renthals, Ohlins, frame/sump/discguards, Acerbis, vgc, some spares, £2850. Tel (Mobile) 07941 450809 or 01733 211425 (Lincs)

Honda CRM250R MkIII, Prospect Enduro model, - bought it, overhauled it, don't like it, went elec start four-stroke, sell/exchange £2200. Tel 01926 856129 (Warks)

Yamaha Serow, K-reg, used as road bike, unmarked, £1200. Also Yamaha TTR250, L-reg, road use only, many extras, £1500. Would accept £2500 the pair. Tel 01298 872677 (Derbys)

Honda XLR125, 1999, low miles, exc cond, owned from new, £1295 ono. Tel 01323 761566 (Sussex)

Bultaco Sherco, 2000, 250 trials bike, very little use, almost like new, £1895 ono. Tel 01323 761566 (Sussex)

Fantic 240 trials bike, 1986, twin shock, exc cond, great trials bike, £725. Tel 01189 404921 (Berks)

Yamaha WR400, 2000 model, low mileage, frame guards, graphics, legal lighting kit, light green lane use only, £3295 ono. Tel 01892 654603 (E.Sussex)

Suzuki DR350 SEX, 1999, trail model, new tyres/c+s, green lane use only, £2500. Tel 01522 797709 (Lincs)

Honda XR600R, P-reg, 7800km, T&T, with supermoto wheels only, good cond, £1895 ono. Tel 01484 311012

Honda XR600WR, 1998, 13000km, overland prepared, custom rear rack, Acerbis tank, alloy bashplate, brushguards, headlight rack/protector, good cond £2400 ono. Tel 01494 436227 (Bucks)

Honda XR250R, reg'd Sept '01, red/black, carefully run in/serviced, genuine sale, like new cond, cost £3850 new, bargain at £2900. Tel 07946 684261 (Derbys)

Yamaha XT600 Tenere, 1991, MoT, good cond, smaller

bike + room needed, £1150 ono. Tel 01908 507149 (Bucks)

Honda XR250, 1999, X-reg, red/black, Renthals, brushguards, new c+s/tyre, regularly serviced, exc cond, green lane use only, £2600. Tel 01706 821792 (Lancs)

Kawasaki KLV650, 1995, M-reg, black/green, recent pads/clutch/cable/tyres, reliable everyday bike, £1600 ovno. Tel (Eves/Wkends only) 01637 873709 (Cornwall)

Honda XR400R, 1998, T&T, 14000km, one owner from new, FSH, exc cond, light trail/commuting only, £2300. Tel 01329 842611 (Hants)

Kawasaki KLR650, 1990, G-reg, MoT, new tyre/c+s/brakes/elect etc, no off-road use, only £895 ono. Tel Adrian on (Mobile) 07715 444522 or 01723 354222 (N.Yorks)

Yamaha XT225 Serow MkIII, 1995, white/green, elec start, no off-road use, as new, £1650. Tel 01600 860002 (Monmouthshire)

KTM 520EXC, 2001, X-reg, 6000km, elec start, very little use, mint cond, £3995 ono. Tel Gary on (Days) 07876 578209 or (Eves) 01254 871110 (Lancs)

Honda MTX200, 1984, T&T, low mileage, three owners, recent c+s, good cond, £675 ono. Tel 01598 753638 (Devon)

Suzuki DR650SE engine CR125, new 1997 chassis, only 400 miles since professional conversion, selling to fund next project, £1500 ovno. Tel 01625 429805 (Cheshire)

Kawasaki KDX220, mint/original cond, hardly used last two years, spares kit, documents, £2250. Tel Dave on (Days) 07974 368174 or (Eves) 01844 352677 (Oxon)

Honda CRM250 MkII, 1993, purple/white, 12000km, T&T, Renthals, handguards, good cond, reluctant sale, £1795 ono. Tel 01843 601864 (Kent)

Honda CRM250AR, black/purple, imported 01-10-00, 5300km, T&T, w/s manual, exc original cond. Tel Dave on (Mobile) 07974 368174 or 01844 352677 (Oxon)

Honda XR250R, 1991, 280cc conversion, White Bros exhaust, revalved shock, stainless bolts, coated frame, last owner six years, £1400 ono. Tel (Mobile) 07720 140773 or 01384 232255 (Birmingham)

Honda CRM250AR, S-reg, 8000km, MoT, chrome DEP pipe, good cond, £3200. Tel 01332 720423 (Derbys)

KTM LC4, 1999, 6000 miles, T&T, elec start, heated grips, bashplate, not been off-road, exc cond, £2400. Tel (Mobile) 07971 933303 or 0116 231 2501 (Leics)

Honda XR400, V-reg, red, 5000km, road legal, UK lighting, Acerbis, hand/sump/frame/forks/discguards, exc cond, £2700. Tel 01865 882893 (Oxon)

Yamaha XT350, 1985, MoT, new piston/rings, braided front hose, front brake overhauled, Renthals, fair cond, £600. Tel 01252 655221 (Hants)

KTM 640 LC4E, 2001, Y-reg, 6000km, standard, road use only, mint cond, £4300. Tel Paul on (Mobile) 07799 798612 or 01270 750631 (Cheshire)

KTM 400 EXC, 2000, W-reg, 3600 miles, elec start, exc cond, £4100. Tel Paul on (Mobile) 07799 798612 or 01270 750631 (Cheshire)

Yamaha TT600R, 2000, 6900 miles, MT70 tyres, road use only, one owner from new, immaculate cond, £2800. Tel 01386 553249 (Worcs)

Yamaha XT600 Tenere, 1986, MoT, elec start, blue with gold rims, vgc, £1150 ono. Tel 01732 866165 (Kent)

Honda XLR250R Baja, reg'd 1996, T&T, new c+s/tyres, serviced, good cond, ideal first enduro bike, offers around £1450. Tel 028703 51335 (Londonderry)

Kawasaki KLV250, K-reg, T&T, Supertrapp exhaust, bashplate, frameguards, vgc, £2150 ono. Tel 07980 803261 (Derbys)

Yamaha TTR250, K-reg, dual start, MoT, low miles,

Renthals, fender brace, brushguards, tool bag, very clean, exc bike, £1500. Tel 0208 505 6971 (Essex)

Honda XR250R, 1998, S-reg, new c+s/tyres, well maintained, trail use only, mint cond, first to see will buy. Tel 07769 700580 (Berks)

Yamaha WR400F, 1998, T&T, twin lights, '01 Werx graphics, high power coil, exc cond, very fast, injury forces sale, £2500 or would rather swap for KDX220. Tel (Mobile) 07980 480757 or 01327 872196 (Northants)

Honda XLR250 RH, D-reg, Japanese import, T&T, new exhaust/valves/guides and rings, halogen headlamp, redundancy forces sale, £900 ono. Tel 01403 823924 (Surrey)

Aprilia Tuareg 600, G-reg, MoT, dual start, low miles, not off-road, good overlander, exc original cond, mature owner, £1200 ovno. Tel 01664 823957 (Leics)

Kawasaki KDX200, F-reg, new top end, handguards, standard and FMF exhaust system, ideal bike to start on, £800 ono. Tel 01539 720420 (Cumbria)

Kawasaki KMX200, G-reg, good cond, £600 for quick sale. Tel 01908 584340 (Bucks)

Kawasaki KDX220SR, autolube, L-reg, 94, T&T, regularly maintained, superb cond, fast fun & reliable trailie, £1950. Tel 01732 847781 (Kent)

SWM, 500cc single, two-stroke, built 1983, Rotax engine, Bing carb, spares or repair, open to offers. Tel Paul on 07769 661049 (Essex)

Honda CRM250 AR, 15 months old, extras, little use by careful TRF member, £3500. Tel 01785 243805 (Staffs)

Suzuki DR-Z400S, March '01, UK bike, yellow/white, 1500 miles, Datatag, £3500 ono. Full CRD exhaust system also available. Tel 01527 61633 (Worcs)

Honda CRM250R MkII, M-reg, T&T, low mileage, new tyres, vgc, mortgage forces sale, £1900 ono. Tel 0114 246 3353 (Sheffield)

BMW F650 Dakar, Y-reg, blue/white, mint cond, £4750. Tel 01264 323578 (Hants)

Honda XR650 supermoto, 2000, gold rims, 320mm disc, barkbusters, Arrow pipe, K+N, modded airbox sidepanel, dyno'd, spare wheels/plastics, £4500. Tel 01425 616738

Suzuki DR650R supermoto, 12000 miles, new wheels/tyres, can email photo, £2200 ono or swap for fishing boat. Tel 0191 454 1775 (Tyne & Wear)

Yamaha TTR250 Raid, '94 model, T&T, new chain/clutch, Renthals, stainless silencer, speedo needs attention, fair cond, £1450 ono. Tel 01865 437116 (Oxon)

Aprilia ETX, 125cc trail bike, V-reg, learner legal, nice looking bike, £1650. Tel (after 6pm) 07787 306930 (West Mids)

Honda CR250, 1999, Renthals, sump/frame guards, graphics kit, new c+s, exc cond, £1800 or p/x CRM up to same value. Tel 01785 245922 (Staffs)

Honda XLR250, 280cc conversion, MoT, two new sets of tyres, middle-aged owner too old and fat (giving up), £1175. Tel 01934 512440 (Somerset)

Honda XR600, Y2K, red, 800 miles only, full CRD exhaust, never been off-road, mint cond, £3200. Tel 01959 573332 (Kent)

Suzuki DR-Z400S, W-reg, 2000 miles, never used off-road, many sensible mods, USD forks, Renthals, DHH headlamp, brushguards, White Bros filter, mint cond, £2995. Tel 01159 262481 (Notts)

Kawasaki KLV300 D-Tracker, 1997, P-reg, White Bros exhaust, over £1000 spent, polished bits, exc cond, quick sale, £1600. Tel 07748 213147 (Hants)

Honda RTL250, four-stroke, mono-shock trials, HRC colours, workshop manual, exchange for enduro KTM200 or Gas Gas 200. Tel 01454 311428 (Gloucs)

CCM 604E, Nov '99, mechanically exc but not much to look at, must sell quick hence, £2350 no offers. Tel 01908 673454 (Bucks)

Yamaha DT125R, 1993, unfinished project, forks serviced, frame and tank re-sprayed, needs loving home now, £749 ovno. Tel 01480 471919 (Camps)

Yamaha XT600E, H-reg, white/red, recent front disc/pads, tidy bike, £1200. Tel 01993 778019 (Oxon)
CCM 604E, W-reg, white/purple, 6600 miles, FSH, many extras, green lanes only £3600. Tel 01844 214075 (Oxon)
CCM 604E, March '01, still under warranty, 1400 miles, pillion pegs, brushguards, fender bag, road use only, pristine, £3950 ono. Tel 01772 672116 (Lancs)

Honda XR400 supermoto, 2000, Talons, cut slicks, 320mm wavy disc, all Acerbis plastics, includes original parts, immaculate cond, must see, £3995. Tel 07812 165010 (Herts)

Gas Gas EC250, '98/'99 model, road reg'd, many extras, exc cond, maintained regardless of cost, £1995. Tel (Mobile) 07932 112065 or 01494 524568 (Bucks)

Kawasaki KDX220, 1998, T&T, standard and race pipes, twin headlight, loads of spares, v reliable, trail use only, £2350 ovno or swap KTM 200/250. Tel 01913 883326

Suzuki DR350SEX, one owner, loved bike, very nice cond, any 'trail', £2550. Tel 01386 833210 (Worcs)

Honda XL250RC, A-reg, T&T, rebuilt, mint cond, looks like a new bike, any test, must be seen, £1500. Tel 01386 833210 (Worcs)

Kawasaki KX100, 1996, never raced, exc cond, £950. Tel Andrew on 01386 430094 (Gloucs)

Honda CRM250 MkIII M-reg, 8000km, alloy bashplate, DEP tailpipe, Boyesen reeds, barkbusters, vgc, £2000 or swap/ p/x trials bike. Tel 01539 738986 (Cumbria)

Honda CRM250 MkII, 1993, T&T, down geared, bashplate, brushguards, exc cond, green lane use only, £1650. Tel (Mobile) 07973 197607 or 01634 245595 (Kent)

Honda XR650R, 1300 miles, tarmac use only, exc cond, £3500. Tel Mick on 020 8462 6065 (Kent)

Yamaha XT600 Tenere, 1989, twin headlamp model, fully prepared for overlanding inc ally panniers, £1500. Tel 01225 760415 (Wilts)

Suzuki TS200R, road legal, good cond, £995 ono. Tel (Mobile) 07771 790011 or 01306 876270 (Surrey)

Suzuki DR350, 1999, T-reg, black, elec start, Renthals, CRD exhaust, well maintained, £2350 ono. Tel 01229 861539 (After 6pm) (Cumbria)

EML sidacar rolling chassis, 1999, takes 2 or 4 stroke, spare wheels, lights, little use, £1995 or poss p/x for small enduro solo. Tel 01594 832691 (Gloucs)

Kawasaki KDX250SR, 1992, T&T, low miles, vgc, £1150. Tel 01872 560138 (Cornwall)

Honda XR400, 1998, requires little work for MoT, hence £1850. Tel 07759 187500 (Essex)

Yamaha WR250Z, 1999, complete overhaul, new piston kit, c+s, headstock bearings, kickstart, Renthals, f/guards, bashplate, One Ind graphics and seat, exc cond, £2650. Tel Andy on 01529 306970 (Lincs)

Yamaha XT500, 1976, rebuilt as Dakar replica, readvertised so no sensible offer refused. (Photo available) For full details tel Cliff on 02920 300055 (Cardiff)

KTM 300EXC, 2000, W-reg, Renthals, disc/sump/brushguards, good cond, trail or race ready, £2800 ono. Tel 01302 787176 (Yorks)

Kawasaki KDX200, 1992, MoT, v reliable, maintained regardless of cost, £1200 ono. Also KMX complete rear wheel, new tyre/disc/sprocket. Tel 01946 861135 (Cumbria)

Kawasaki KX250 enduro, road legal, MoT, good cond, £750 ono. Tel 01923 465655 (Herts)

Yamaha DT200WR, 5000km, auto lube, DEP tailpipe, good cond, £1250 ono. Tel (Work) 01204 848887 or (Home) 01565 650757 (Cheshire)

Honda XR350, 1985, WP USD forks, engine just rebuilt, new c+s/bearings/plastics and seat cover, Renthals, handguards, powder coated frame, immaculate cond, £1150 ono. Tel 01327 312993 (Northants)

Honda XR600s, pair of 1987 bikes, both recently serviced, MoT, £1250 each no offers. Tel 07768 007070 (London)

Yamaha WR400, S-reg, now 426cc, MoT, FMF pipe, Talon wheels, large capacity tank, loads of bolt-on goodies, £2650. Tel 07774 990098 (Berks)

Honda XR650R, X-reg, 2000 miles, mainly road use, sold as standard, £3500. Or with supermoto wheels, FMF pipe, CRD sumpguard, £4500. Tel 0161 303 9812 (Cheshire)

Honda CRM250, 1993, MoT, new graphics, green lane use only, good cond, £1650 ono. Tel 01884 256369 (Devon)

Yamaha DT200WR, 1991, 18000 miles, suspension mods, bore plated, special power valve, new seat, Renthals, minimal smoke, quiet, easy starter, £1500. Tel Ted on 01829 733519 (Cheshire)

BMW R1150GS, 2001, blue and white, 800 miles, immaculate cond, £7100. Tel 07736 622624 (Surrey)

Kawasaki KMX200, 1989, G-reg, T&T, new tyres/brakes, vgc, £950 ono. Tel 01726 890075 (Cornwall)

WANTED

Wanted Kawasaki KLR250 workshop manual, cash waiting. Tel 01353 649527 (Camps)

Wanted Honda XR250 standard silencer. Tel 01274 593344 (W.Yorks)

Wanted Honda XR250 rear wheel, must be in good cond, good price paid. Tel 01845 578389 (N.Yorks)

Wanted Yamaha TY175 parts, OE rear silencer, OE rear mudguard, L/H light switch, rear brake arm, any other parts, must be vgc. Tel 01845 578389 (N.Yorks)

Wanted rev counter for Yamaha XT600 (B-reg, 1984/5), must be in good working order. Tel Peter on (Mobile) 07718 114501 or 01493 659571 (Norfolk)

Wanted full performance exhaust system for Honda XR600R (1996). Tel (Mobile) 07810 126644 or 01782 619246 (Stoke-on-Trent)

Wanted Honda XR650 for supermoto, preferably in exchange for my Aprilia 1000 V-twin (only eight months old). Also wanted XR650 SM wheels. Tel 07971 177424

Wanted Akront wheels to fit KLR, 17" front, road tyres if poss, WHY. Tel 01753 520806 (Berks)

Wanted Honda XR250R complete cylinder head, any top end parts considered or full engine, must be in good cond. Tel 01484 329503 (W.Yorks)

Wanted CCM Dakar fuel tank to fit 604 (1999), will travel. Tel Pete on 01844 214075 anytime. (Oxon)

Wanted Honda TLR200 reflex white fuel tank, must be in vgc. Also plastics or any parts, WHY. Tel 01845 578389 (Oxon)

Wanted Kawasaki KMX200 sales brochure or colour photocopy. Tel Doug on 01932 829451 (Surrey)

Wanted Micron exhaust for Yamaha XT350, must be in good cond. Tel Nick on 01827 708740 (Staffs)

Wanted 400cc (Approx) enduro bike, any make, exc cond, in exchange for Honda CB400R, black, 13700

miles, exc cond, will travel for honest exchange. Tel 01604 845693 (Northants)

Wanted Supermoto wheels (Talon/Excel) for '99 CCM 604E, reasonable price paid. Tel Jim on 0208 287 7949 (Surrey)

Wanted Yamaha WR/YZF wheels, supermoto and off-road, cash waiting. Tel 020 7462 2856 (London)

Wanted Bulltaco Matador, any cond or spares, will travel to view. Tel 01206 330631 (Essex)

Wanted Africa Twin 750 ('97) front end parts, forks, yoke, plastics, tyres, workshop manual etc, can collect within reasonable distance and price. Tel 07990 527016 (Gwynedd)

Wanted Honda XR250, in very good cond, Tel 01747 838323 (Dorset)

Wanted XR200, DR200, DR250 etc, any small capacity trail bike in reasonable cond, don't mind some work/repairs or project in big lumps. Tel 01527 876364 (Worcs)

Wanted XR400 rear wheel, whatever will fit, with/without disc/sprocket, must be sensibly priced, any cond. Tel 01920 830107 (Herts)

Wanted old motorcycle to restore, the older the better, cash waiting. Tel 01909 550749 (S Yorks)

Wanted XR200/250R, 1982-'87 model, any condition, looking to restore/rebuild, will collect. Tel Clint on 01344 429101 (Berks)

Wanted Cagiva Elefant 650 sidepanels, willing to travel to collect, cash waiting. Tel 01908 261656 (Bucks)

Wanted Honda XR250/400, swap or p/x for Gas Gas EC250, 2000, V-reg, T&T, exc cond, or sell £2200 ono. Tel 01992 442257 (Herts)

Wanted CRM MkII wheels/discs front and rear, will XR's fit? Also any tuning parts, pipes etc. Tel 07976 688051 (Essex)

Wanted DR350 (1990) sidepanels and kickstart lever. Tel Martin on 07713 749063 (W Yorks)

Wanted Aloop tank and seat for '95 XR600. Tel (Mobile) 07710 590083 or 01529 302711 (Lincs)

Wanted Honda XL250 air filter box. Also XL125R petrol tank and V5. Tel 01580 819377 (Sussex)

SPARES

Acerbis 20 litre tank, white, £95. Also CRD heavy duty bashplate, £30. Both good condition, to fit TTR250. Tel 0208 505 6971 (Essex)

Husqvarna TE610E parts, including full exhaust, carb, radiators, forks, rear subframe, seat, both brakes, wheels and many more. Tel 01249 721518 (Wilts)

KTM LC4 S'moto wheels, gold Talon hubs, Metzeler MEZ3 race tyres, as new, cost £950, bargain at £650. Tel 01244 537346 (Flintshire)

Suzuki DR350 exhaust rear section, bargain at £30. Tel John on 0208 968 3797 (London)

Supertrapp exhaust, complete, vgc, to fit DR/XR/KLX, £95 ono (can post). Tel 01992 572034 (Essex)

Kawasaki KX60 frame, swinging arm, yokes, engine (bottom end only), CDI, f+r brake reservoirs, air filter box, £50 the lot or will split. Tel 01580 819377 (Sussex)

Honda CRM MkII spares, including forks, wheels, suspension, plastics etc, too much to list. Also FMF Power pipe complete. Tel 07712 778558 (Bristol)

Kawasaki KLR600/250 parts, seat, plastics, subframe, airbox. Tel (Mobile) 07939 216572 or (Eves after eight) 01753 520806 (Berks)

Honda XL125 engine, good cond, missing camshaft + head cover (Due to being stolen with most of the bike), £100. Tel 01344 423208 (Berks)

Suzuki DR-Z400 alloy engine protectors, brand new, cost £45, will sell for £30. Tel Andrew on (Mobile) 07719 745399 or 01768 483182 (Cumbria)

White Bros E-Series silencer, good cond, just over one year old but little use, for KLR250/300 (possibly others), £140. Tel 01865 437116 (Oxon)

Remus Viper silencer for BMW 1100GS, as new, £250. Also Bagluc black tankcover and red tankbag, £90. Tel 01785 259777 (Staffs)

Dave Cooper bike rack, to fit 4x4, good cond, £35. Tel 01785 259777 (Staffs)

Sidi MX boots, size 10, seen a lot of action but well worth £25. (Buyer collects). Tel 07970 730896 (Lancs)

Suzuki DR-Z400S DEP silencer, £140. B'stone M25/26 19" rear tyre, £10. DR-ZS new f/r sprockets, front axle, wide pegs, supermoto front fender, other bits. Tel 01159 262481 (Notts)

DT125 LC parts, Fresco silencer, £10. Clocks and cable, £10. Indicators and fixings, £7.50. Some plastics, wheel and tyre. Tel David on 01279 731333

Honda XR250 UFO twin headlight kit £22. Wex seat cover £22. Alloy sumpguard £25. Tel 01865 730571 (Oxon)

Yamaha XT500E spares, seat, front wheel, barrel, yokes, carb, plus other bits. XT500C rack panniers. Into the skip if not sold. Tel 02920 300055 (Cardiff)

CRF450R new unused wheels, tyres, discs, sprockets, caliper, fender, 'bars. Sell as set or split, can deliver. Tel Rob on 01603 307500 (Norfolk)

Honda CRM MkII spares, forks, brakes, shock, ECU, electrics, etc. Too much to list. Tel 07712 778558 (Bristol)

KTM 200EXC/EGS 12 litre clear fuel tank, as new, £75 ovno. Tel 01903 744670 (Sussex)

XR600 standard exhaust, wheels, forks, yokes, seat, tank, all good cond. Tel (Mobile) 07710 590083 or 01529 302711 (Lincs)

XR400 supermoto wheels, complete with c+s, front disc, fitted with Pirelli Dragon Corsas, in exc cond, £650. Tel 01395 224736 (Devon)

Suzuki DR350 hubs, complete with discs/sprockets, but no rims, ideal for supermoto project. £75 no offers. Tel 01278 455634 (Somerset)

Yamaha TDR250 bottom end, barrels, radiator, carbs, rear shock, £50 the lot. Tel (Mobile) 07799 424171 or 01274 671829 (Yorks)

KMX200 tailpipe, original, as new, £30. KX125 '91 new DEP tailpipe, may fit others, £30. Tel 01943 875885 (W Yorks)

CCM 604 Sport rear pegs, sumpguard, oil/air filters, Rotax engine manual, speedo cable, all new, £120 the lot. Tel 07811 334317 (Lancs)

WR400F legal lighting kit (Pro Racing), including indicators, still in box, cost £180, sell £160. Gadget frame guards for WR400, £20. Tel 0161 881 7139. (Manchester)

Yamaha DT250MX hepolite piston, +1mm, complete, brand new, £20 plus postage. Tel 01580 819377 (Surrey)

STOLEN

Stolen, Husqvarna 610TC, 1995, frame No 8AE0507, engine No 30020329, fluoro yellow/blue, white frame, FP can, gold Renthals, gold wheels, MXA Tuffstuff graphics, stolen in London 12/11/01. Tel 0207 237 3102

