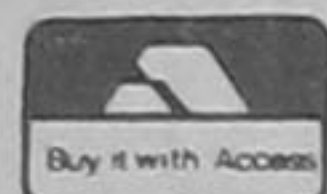
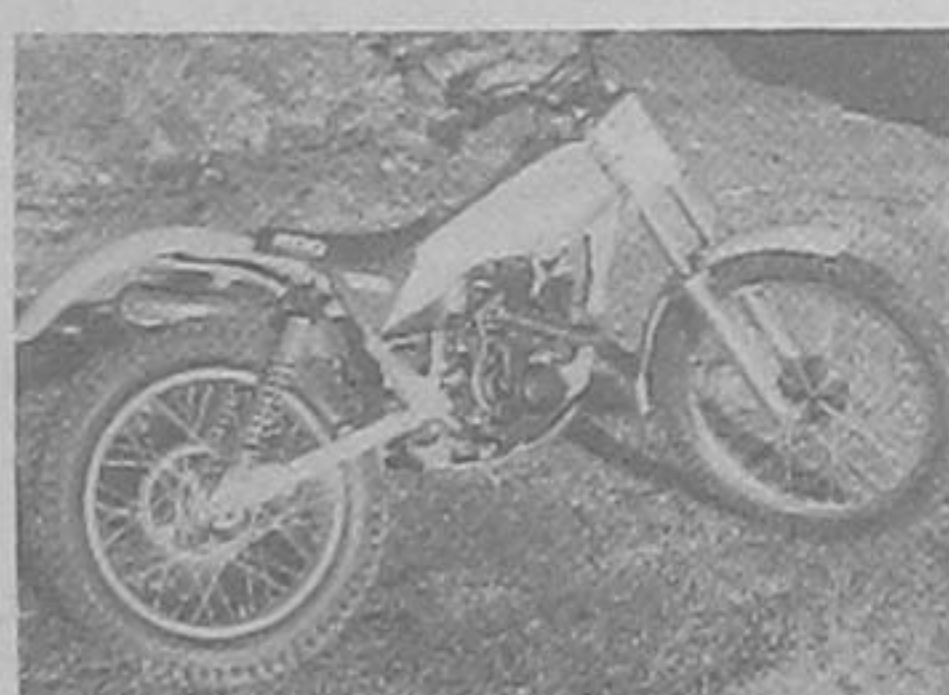


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I suppose it's Honda's fault in the first place for never matching their virtuosity in building four-stroke trials bikes with a similarly effective production and sales policy, but rumours concerning the new TLR model abound.

It is widely claimed that the bike is more of a sporting trail/road lightweight and that the amount of money an owner must spend on his standard model to make it fully competitive in the sections lifts it into the Yam monoshock price range.

Well, right and wrong. Certainly the bog-standard TLR 200 is a superb trail bike with excellent ride-to-work potential, and this will certainly be its biggest market.

But it is also a little cracker for the trials-riding clubman and requires very little in the way of extras. All you really need, in fact, is a set of decent tyres and a nine-tooth gearbox sprocket.

The official list of extras has complicated the position. You can if you wish lash out several hundred greenbacks and purchase official goodies such as the 225cc Power-Up kit, a close-ratio gear cluster and a sexy little alloy swinging arm. No doubt some lads will do this, but the point is you don't HAVE to.

The problem with Honda advertising the availability of these extras is, of course, that people immediately think that they are essential to good trials performance.

But really, Honda have got it right. We have to accept that the sales potential of the TLR as a dual-purpose machine is huge, while the actual trials market is more than somewhat constricted and wouldn't occupy the factory's production lines for more than a few minutes a year.

Remember, the entire UK market last year only absorbed some 1,400 new bikes — an insignificant hiccup by Honda standards. It makes far more sense to build a trail bike with trials potential than offer a fully competitive trials bike with a trail conversion kit.

Having said that, it is a measure of the bike's brilliance that it is so well suited to both functions.

The first job for any self-



Derrick Edmondson proves the agility of the TLR 200.

**Forget the rumours,
the TLR 200 is OK...**

respecting trials man is to remove the trail Bridgestones and fit a pair of Michelin or Pirelli tyres. Then you must acquire a nine-tooth gearbox sprocket and fit it in place of the standard 13-tooth cog. These special sprockets should be available now from various sources, including Honda, Talon and Supersprox.

The problem with such a relatively toothless gear-

box sprocket is that chain life will be much reduced. And there are a couple of awkward gaps in the gearbag, particularly between second and third ratios. So the bike would benefit from Honda's close-ratio cluster, although most clubmen will, I suspect, be quite happy to stay in first or second gears, notably assisted by the plonkability of the beautiful little motor.

I am not trying to

sweeten the pill. The standard gearing is set up for roadwork and gives the bike a top whack of more than 70 mph with ideal gearbox ratios for this function. But most people will be able to manage perfectly well through the sections.

And forget rumours that the bike needs the alternative swinging arm. The dimensions of the standard swingarm and the alloy

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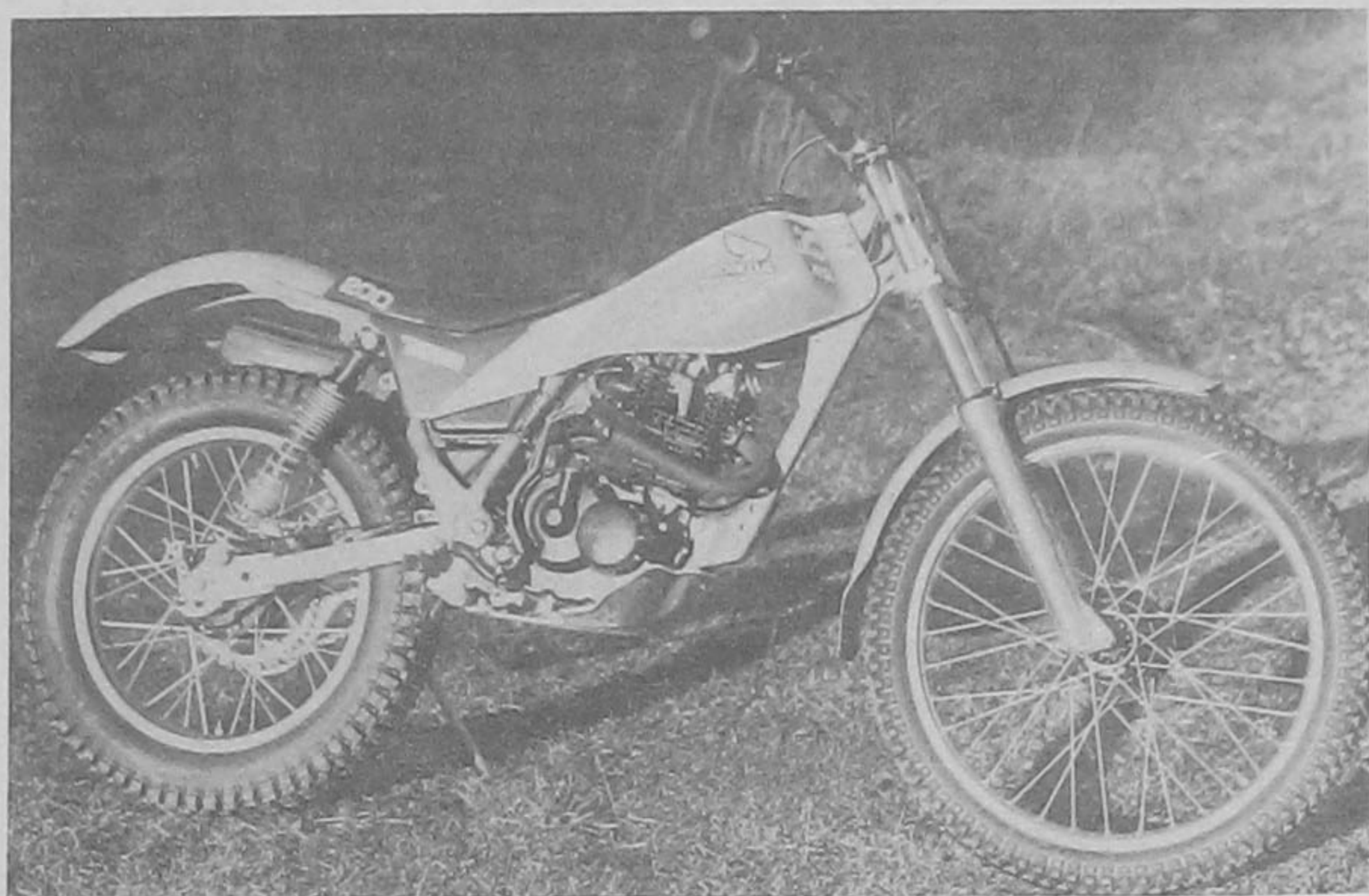
Honda's thumper has been worth the wait

IT'S HERE at last. Honda's much talked about and long awaited competitive four stroke trials iron has arrived. But has it been worth the wait? I hear you say. Read on.

Twelve months ago I had the privilege to have a thrash on Kiyo Hattori's works 250. The bike was superb, handling with the best and containing a really poky motor. Later I had a brief ride on his 200cc version and although handling was identical it lacked punch in the engine room.

So, I arrived at the Honda test with a preconceived notion that the big bore model would be the best of the two production bikes.

We were provided with three bikes for our appraisal at our testing ground for the day, which Nigel Eirkett obtained for



No, not an Eddy Lejeune replica, but it's as close as you are going to get. Honda's lovely TLR 200.

us but unfortunately could not make it for the test. His

observations could have been interesting. The bikes were Derrick Edmondson's standard 200 model, a 200 fitted with the optional ally swinging arm and a 225 Power Up model which was also kitted out with the close ratio gear cluster.

First lesson is that four strokes are different to ride after a life time on strokers. Close the throttle and a four stroke stands on its nose instead of rolling along gently. This trait takes a while to master especially on rock steps where power has to be kept on all the way through the manoeuvre to maintain forward motion. Yes, its easy to thrash at a rock and sail

over the top, but if precision is required then a little practice is necessary.

REPLICAS

While on the rock step theme, it was obvious that the action of the front forks is nigh on perfect. These units are replicas of the Hattori bike and rate ten out of ten.

A quick spin on the 200 seemed to confirm my idea that it was maybe a bit lacking in the power department so a thrash on the 225 was called for. Yes, definitely a lot more oomph is provided by this

TMX News BIKE TEST

special are identical and all you get is a weight-saving of a few lbs.

Much the same picture emerges if you want the 225cc version. You start off with a standard 200 TLR and buy the Power-Up kit formulated by HRC (Honda Race Corporation). This comprises crank, piston, barrel, higher-capacity oil pump and appropriate gaskets, and will cost in the region of £10 per extra cc.

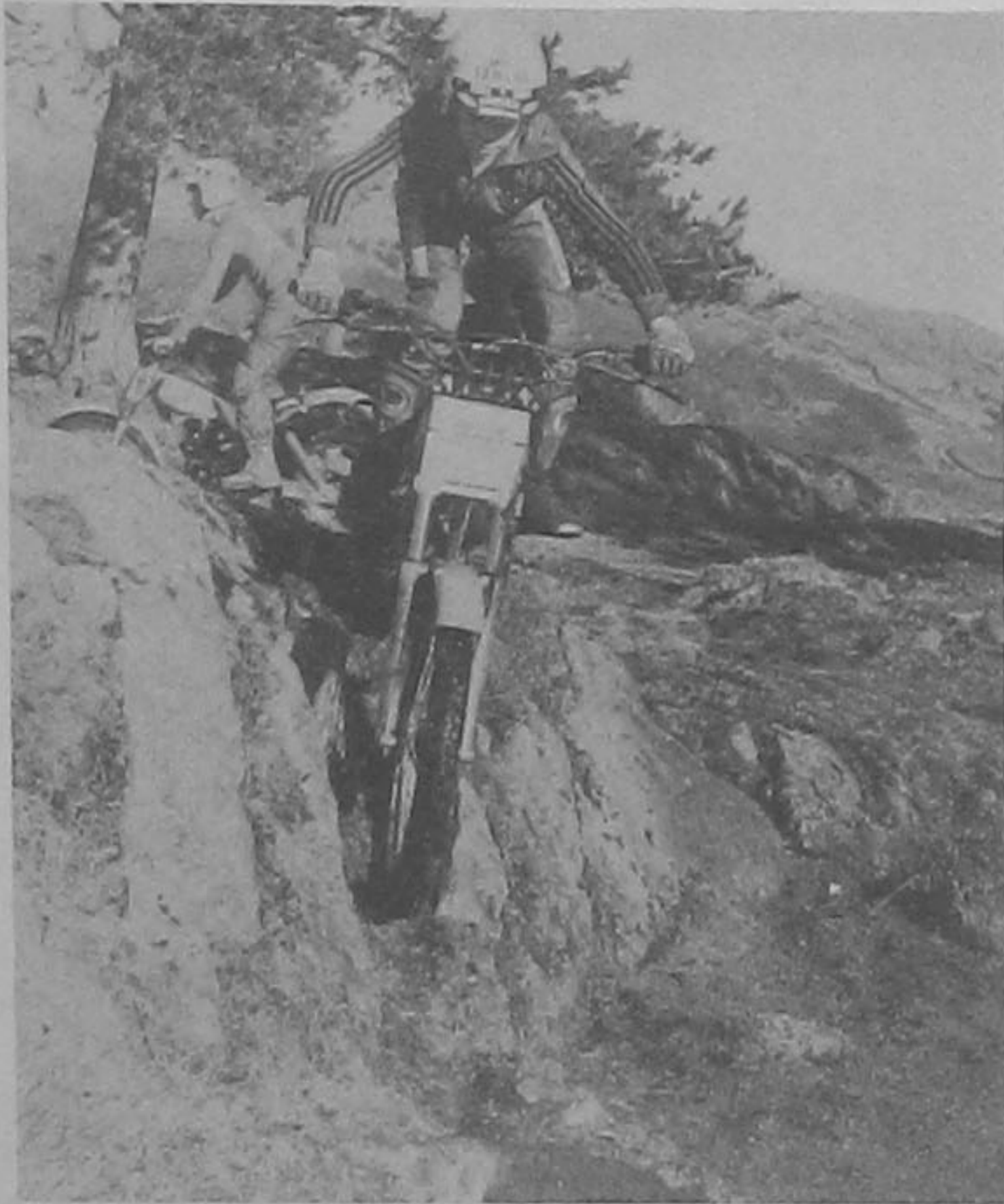
It's all there, but Honda naturally advise that only people who know what they're doing should be encouraged to screw it all on. Four-strokes, young feller-me-lad, contain things called valves which are rather dissimilar to those items on each inner tube although the principal remains the

same. And if you don't know what an oil-pump is, it's there to stop things seizing up when you run on neat petrol...

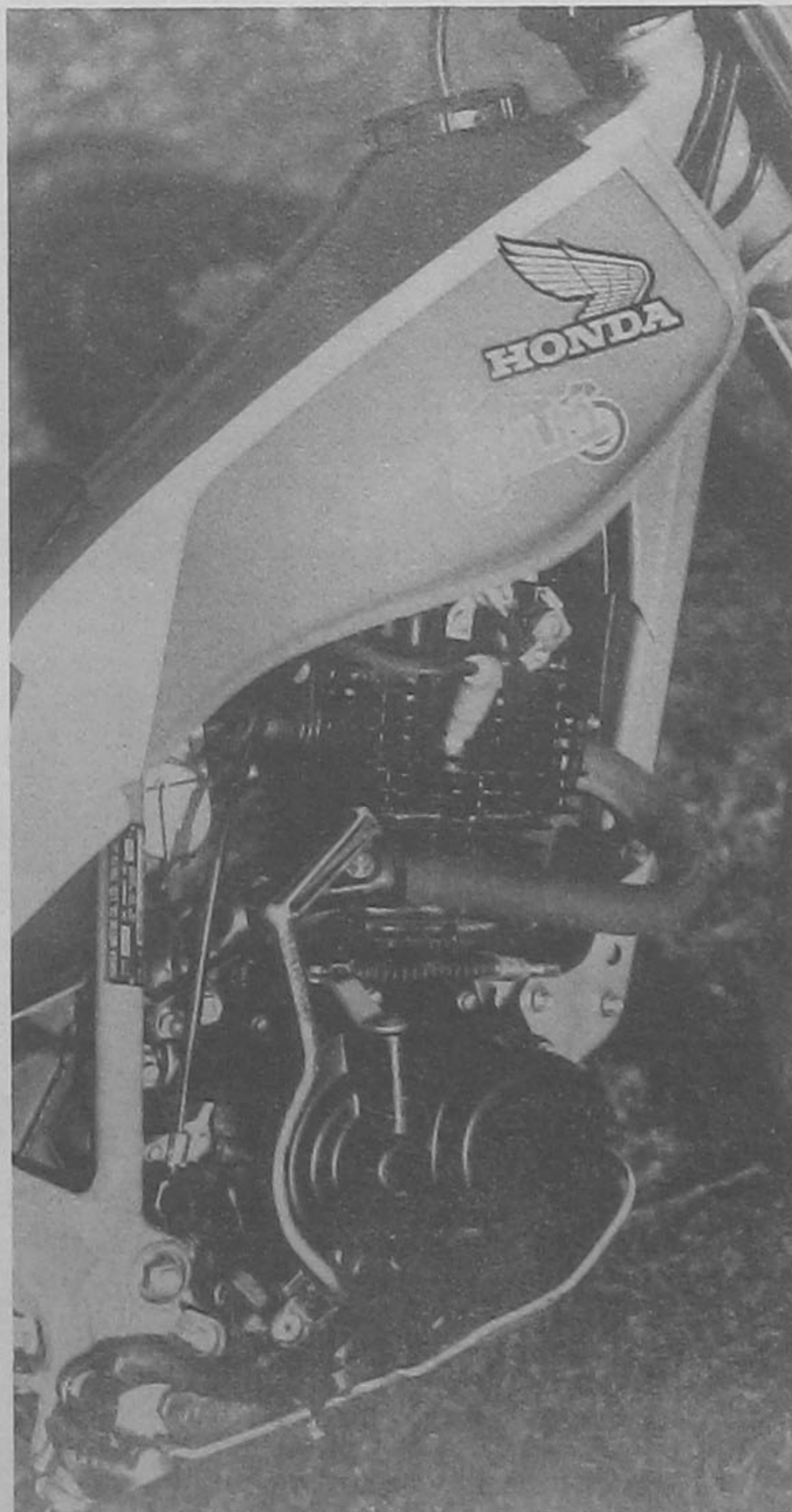
The close ratio gear cluster is also likely to cost a fair bit — probably around £200. It's quite an extensive package and includes both gearbox and final drive sprockets and clutch housing, as well as the gears and shafts.

My own impressions of the TLR 200 as a trials bike will mean nothing, but when it comes to prating about off-road and along the highways and byways I am a world authority.

The bike is superb. It's nippy, handles superbly and if I hadn't just bought a BMW 100/7 I'd be down the road to Bill Head's like a stiff dose of salts...



Julian Ingham and Sean Lawless assessed the schoolboy potential of the TLR — and found it great for the kids. Here Sean drops off a ledge on the 200cc version.



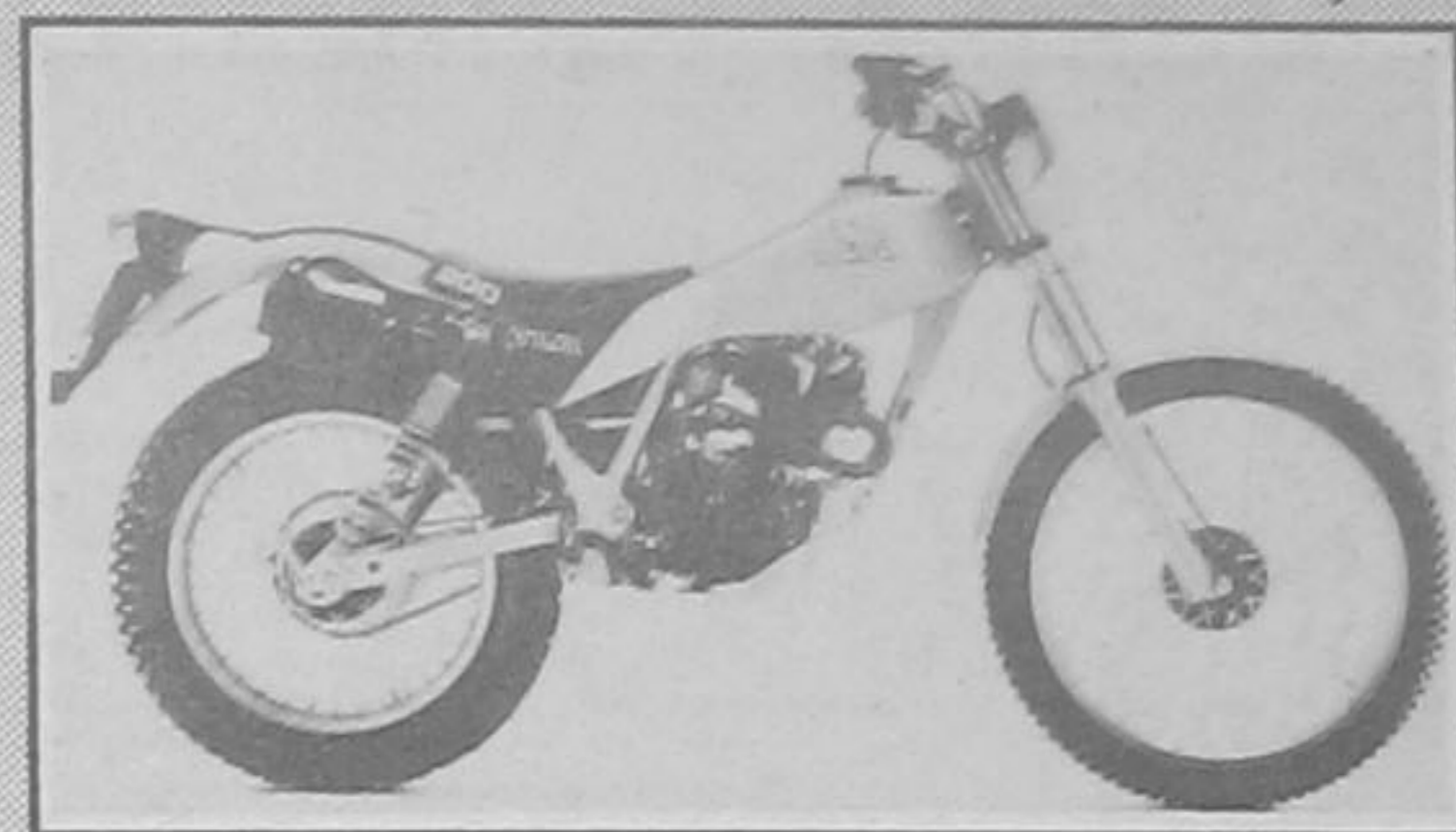
The four stroke power unit is very compact sitting under the slimline tank-seat unit.

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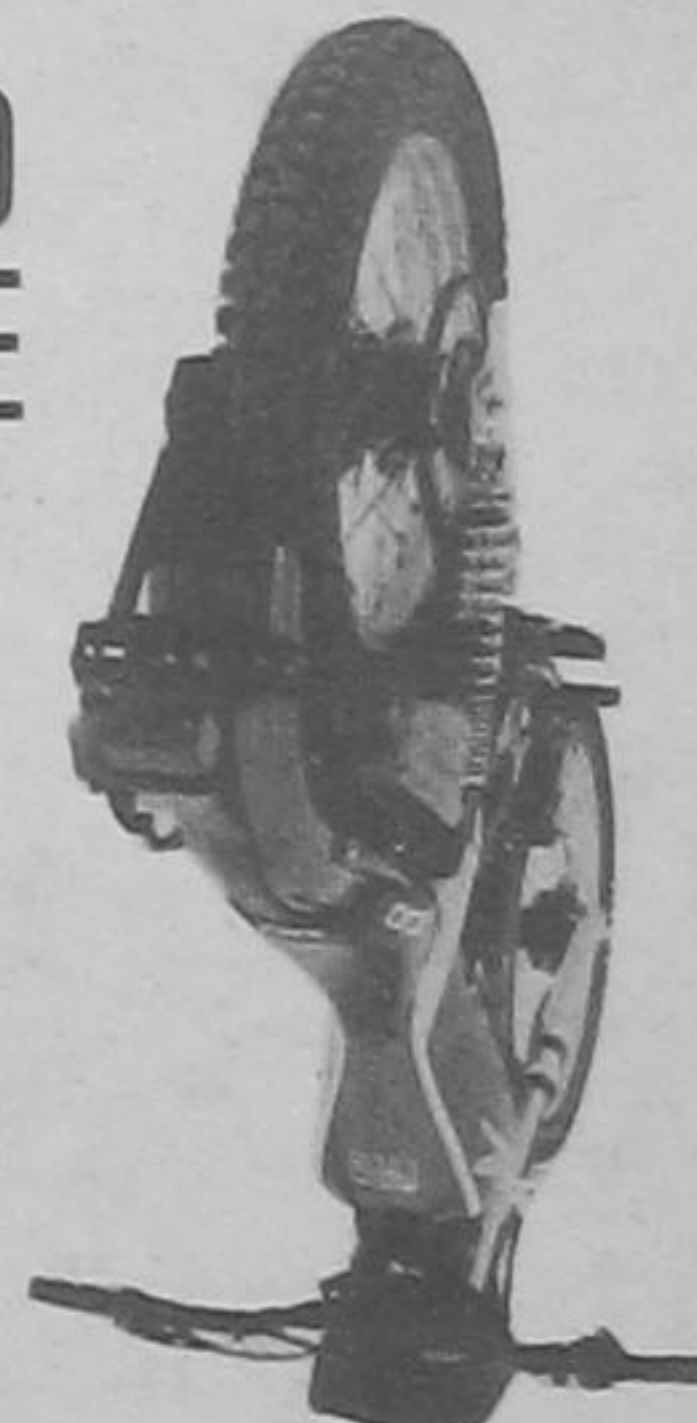
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version but this is where things got a little complicated.

On the face of it this seemed to be the best bike with its extra power, but when a few set-hazards were tried on both bikes, the 200 proved by far the easiest to ride.

This was on greasy grass bankings laced with rock steps and the 200 with its soft, even power delivery was a delight to ride. The 225 in comparison proved more prone to spinning the rear wheel because of its more fiery power delivery.

Derrick Edmondson confirmed this as did Chris Myers who also turned out for a spin on the Hondas.

Of the three bikes, 'Eddie's' personal machine was the best set up, as you would expect. All the bikes started easily but took a fair time to warm up and need to be kept running on a cold day as they soon cool off.

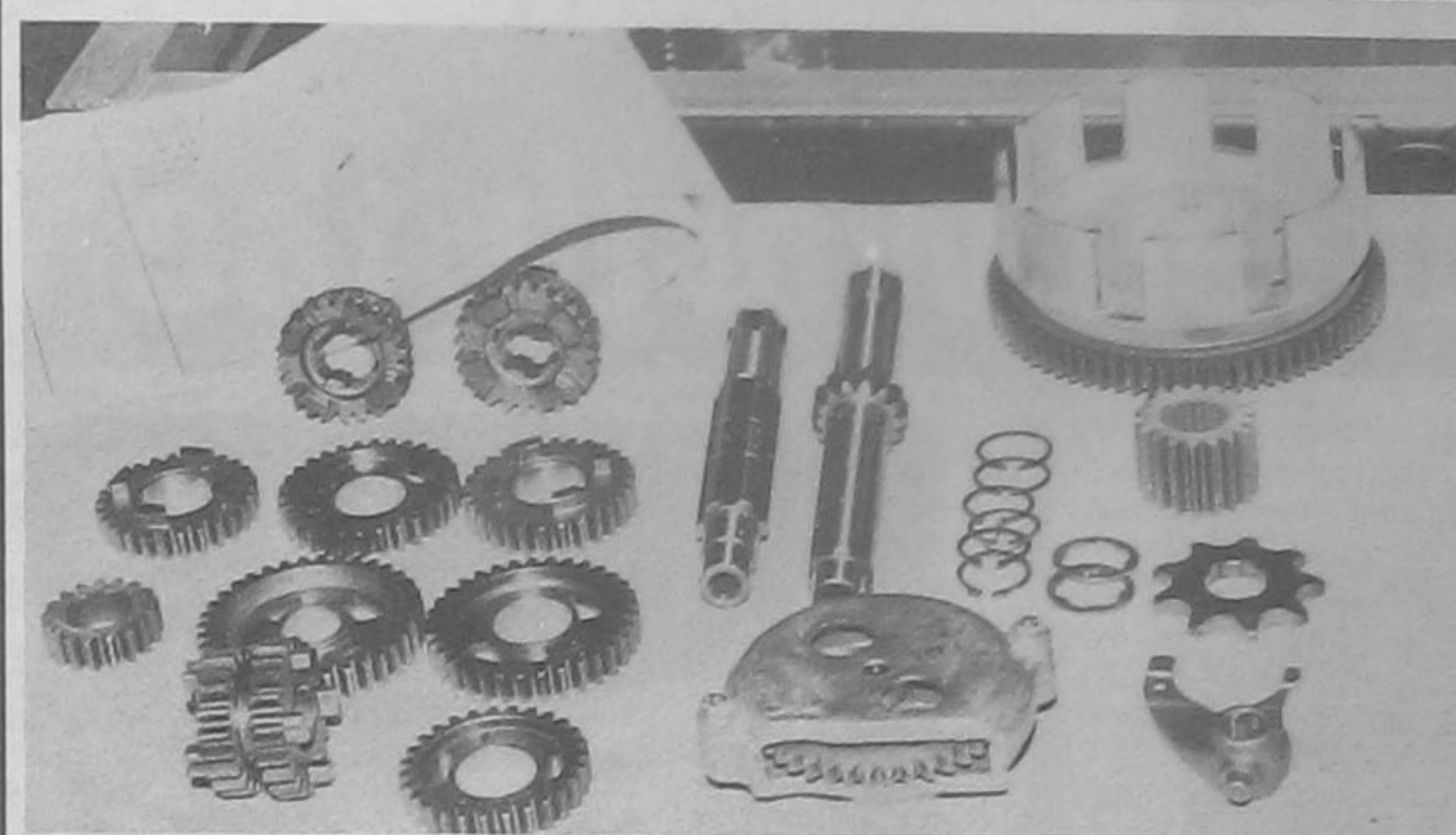
However, we do appreciate that not all Centres in the country have the same terrain as we do 'oop North' and the 225 would definitely have the advantage through loose sand and power sapping climbs.

One of the bikes was fitted with the ally swinging arm, though to be honest it does not affect the performance in the least, but it does look good.

The close ratio box, though, does affect performance. The first three gears are all brought into play although this was cocked-up slightly on the test bike by the overall gearing being far too low on the sprockets.

So, general consensus of opinion was that on the day the best combination would have been a 200 with the close ratio box with the correct overall gearing tuned on the chain sprockets. The combinations are never ending and it has to be said mostly unnecessary.

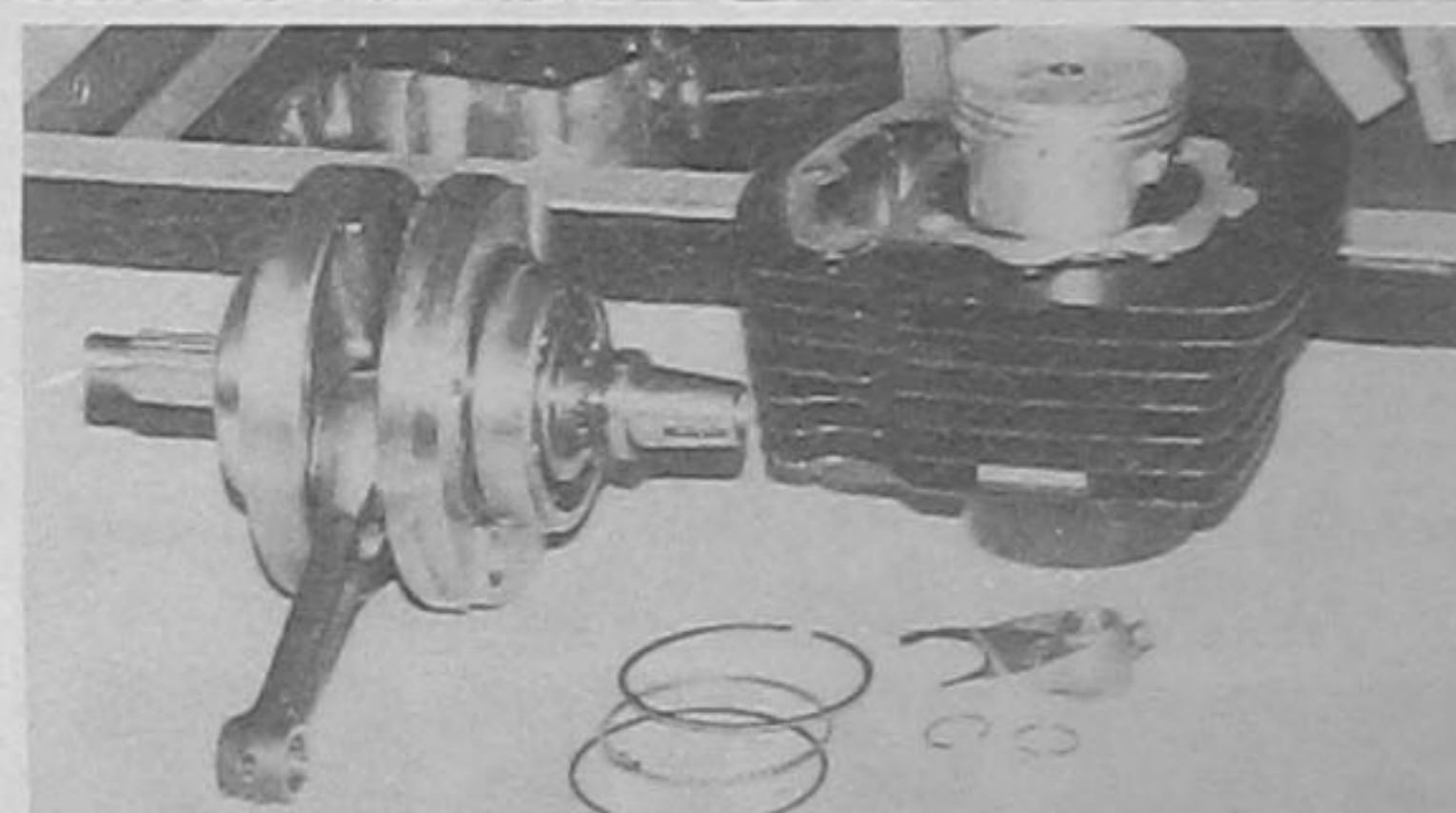
To sum up, the Honda is one of the most rideable bikes that has come our



TOP: The optional close ratio gear cluster certainly contains plenty of parts. In fact it is virtually a brand new transmission system.

MIDDLE: The aluminium swinging arm is available as an extra and is of exactly the same dimensions as the original steel version. It does look better though and is lighter, reducing unsprung weight.

BOTTOM: This is what you get in the Honda Power-Up kit. A complete new crank, barrel, piston plus a narrower gear selector fork which clears the crankshaft throw.



way for quite a while. It is very well constructed and gives the impression that you could ride and practice on it for months without it requiring a rebuild every other week.

SWISS WATCH

The motor ticked over like the proverbial well-oiled Swiss watch (predigital of course) and the six speed box caused no hassle nor did the clutch on any of the bikes, and they suffered some considerable abuse during our prolonged session.

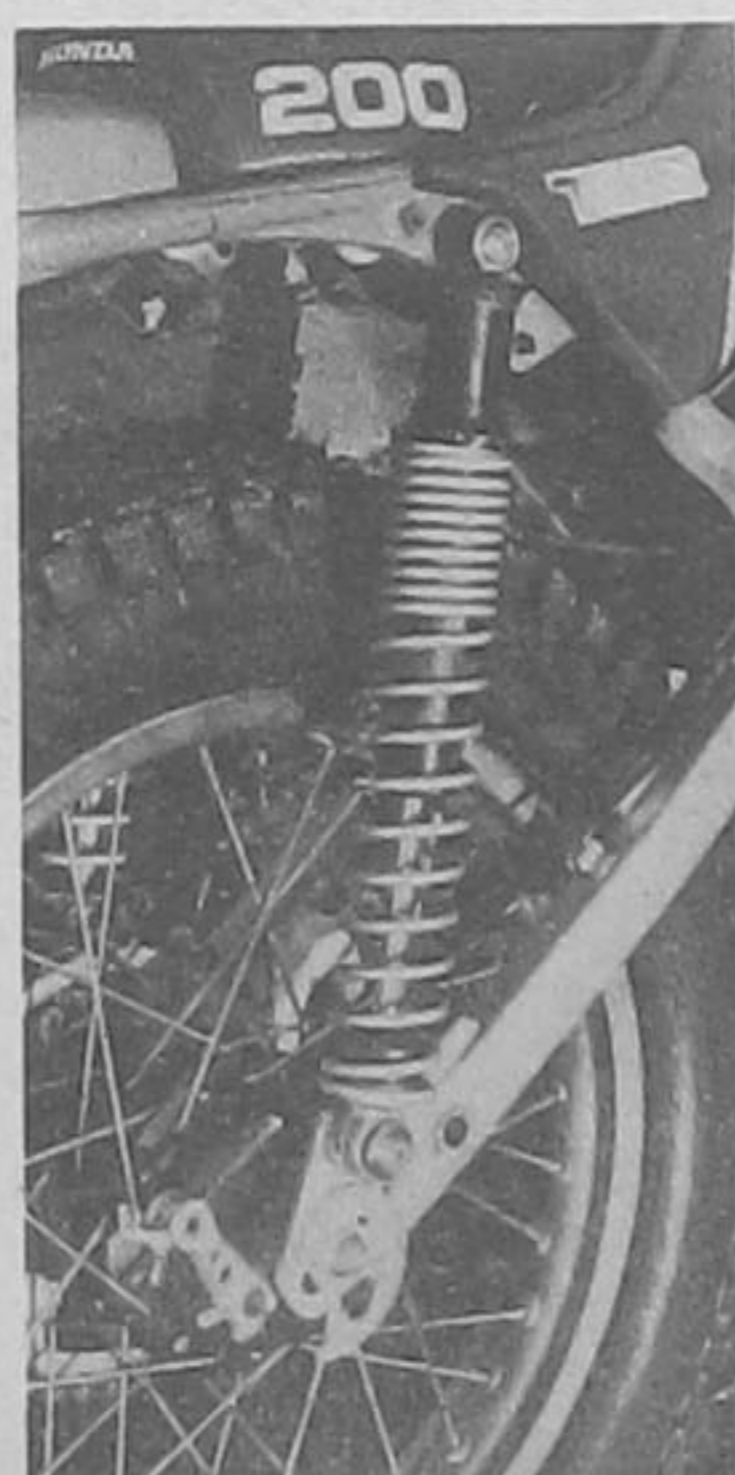
If you have been thinking of trying one of these little plonkers then do not hesitate. But if you are not already a four stroke fiend give yourself time to acclimatise.

As to the optional extras, these are purely personal preferences and not in the least necessary. The TLR 200 has proved more than competitive in bog standard out of the crate form.

Please form an orderly queue outside your local stockist...



J.D. about to test the Honda's excellent Showa front forks.



The upside down rear shocks caused no problems, nor did we expect them to.

HONDA TLR200—E TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Engine: 195cc, four stroke, air cooled, single cylinder (optional 225cc conversion).

Bore and Stroke: 65.5mm x 57.8mm.

Compression Ratio: 8.2:1.

Valve Operation: Single overhead camshaft.

Carburation: 22mm piston valve carburettor.

Ignition: Capacitor discharge.

Transmission: Six speed (optional close-ratio).

Final Drive: Chain.

Suspension: Front — 35mm, air-assisted leading axle forks, 160mm travel.

Rear — Swing arm, 150mm axle travel.

Brakes: Front — Drum.

Rear — Drum.

Tyres: Front — 2.75—21.

Rear — 4.00—18.

Wheelbase: 1,315mm.

Seat Height: 780mm.

Ground Clearance: 300mm.

Dry Weight: 90kg (198lbs).

Fuel Capacity: 6.5 litres (1.43 gallons).

Max Power: 13PS @ 6,500rpm (DIN).

Max Torque: 1.7 kg/m @ 4,000 rpm (DIN).