

Trialst Motocross News



1980

OFF-ROAD REVIEW

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By the staff, correspondents and photographers of T + MX

This book is dedicated to the organisers, observers, marshals, course-layers, stake-bashers, scrutineers, lap-scorers, odd-job bods and amiable landowners who endure much for love of the sport.



Trials and Motocross News — or T + MX to more than 100,000 faithful readers — was the first UK newspaper to identify the strength and needs of the off-road market.

This book is a logical follow-on. The team which gave you your first off-road newspaper now presents your first off-road review. We hope you have as much pleasure reading it as we did producing it.

Many people have contributed to this book — so many, in fact, that a full credit list would be well-nigh impossible. Many of our usual outside photographers and correspondents have been involved, together with the editorial and advertisement staff of T + MX — either directly, or by undertaking extra work while their colleagues got on with the book.

And although it is probably fairer to mention no-one, we will take a risk and single out four lads for special thanks.

T + MX motocross boffin Alex

Hodgkinson made a huge contribution, while foreman compositor Keith Simpson's assistance with production was invaluable. Freelance photographers Eric Kitchen (trials) and Jack Burnicle (motocross) confirmed their reputations as the best in the business.

Having said that, I would like collectively to thank every single person whose contribution appears in these pages.

It has been a huge task to produce this book, and we hope that your interest confirms that the effort was worthwhile.

BILL LAWLESS,
Editor, January, 1980.

Bill Lawless



Like many another competitor, I have watched the progress of Trials and Motocross News with interest during the last couple of years.

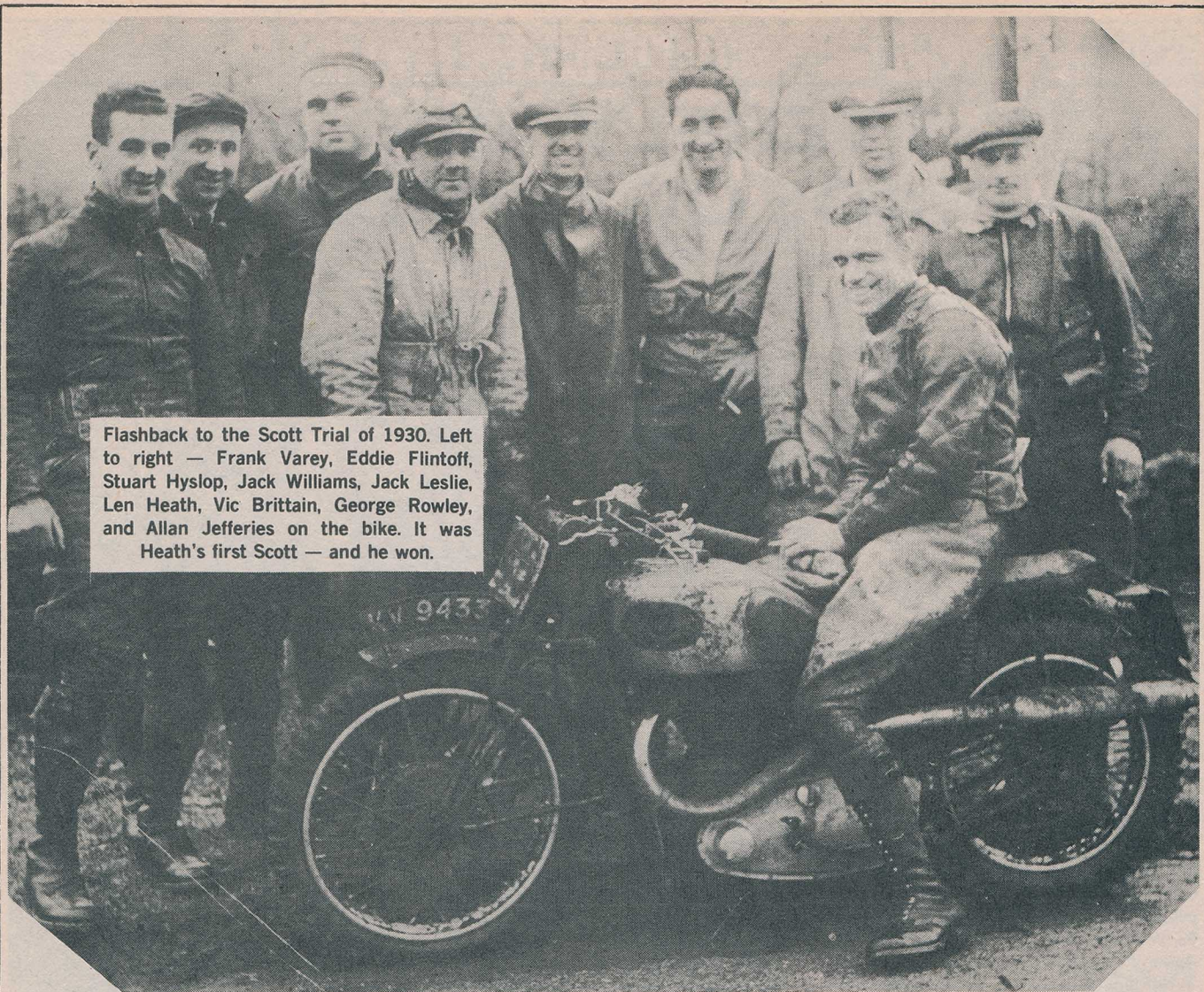
No-one had ever attempted to run an off-road newspaper before, presumably because they thought there wouldn't be enough people to read it.

But T + MX proved them wrong by quickly getting established and then going from strength to strength. This Off-Road Review is further evidence that our sport is big enough and virile enough to support its own voice — and who better to speak for us than T + MX?

I hope the annual enjoys as much success as the weekly.

MALCOLM RATHMELL
British Solo Trials Champion

Malcolm Rathmell

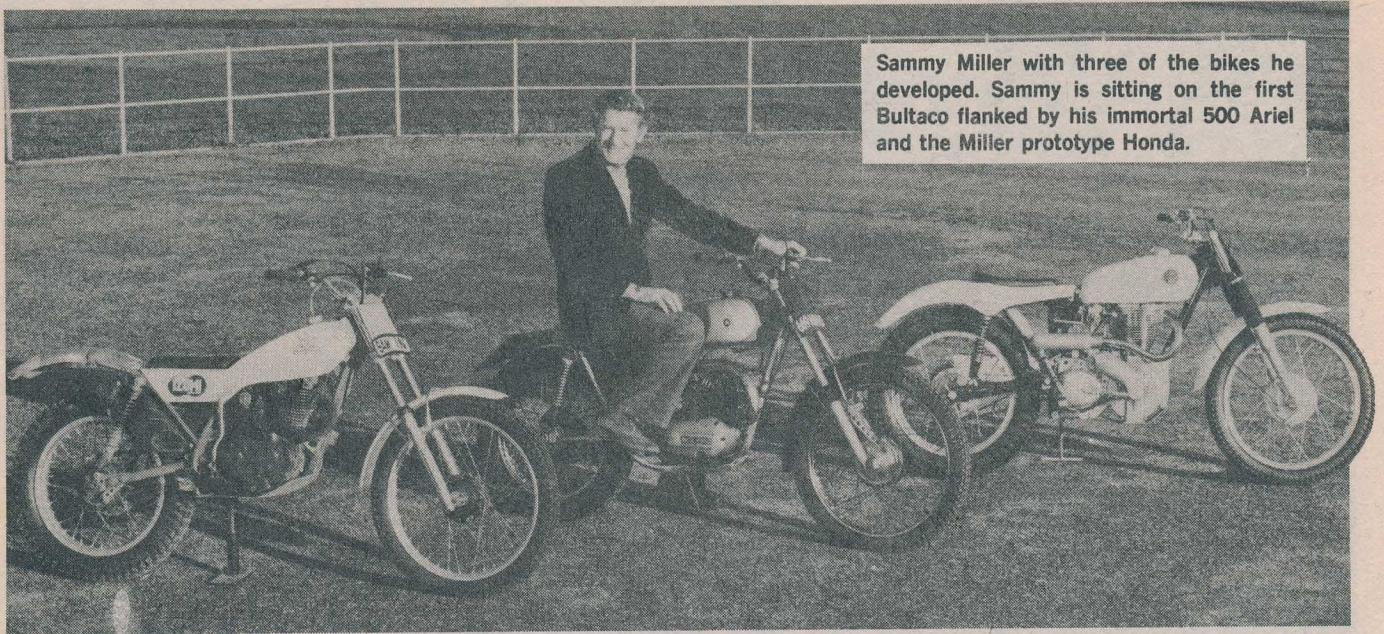


Flashback to the Scott Trial of 1930. Left to right — Frank Varey, Eddie Flintoff, Stuart Hyslop, Jack Williams, Jack Leslie, Len Heath, Vic Brittain, George Rowley, and Allan Jefferies on the bike. It was Heath's first Scott — and he won.



That great Scottish rider Bob MacGregor takes his 499 Rudge through Linton Splash during the Scott Trial in 1930.

TRIALS — THE EARLY DAYS



Sammy Miller with three of the bikes he developed. Sammy is sitting on the first Bultaco flanked by his immortal 500 Ariel and the Miller prototype Honda.

When reliability was a doubtful virtue . . .

AT the turn of the century, not long after the first motorcyclist had wobbled his uncertain way along a rough and dusty road, a handful of riders with an adventurous spirit decided that this new mode of transport could well be the basis for competition.

A day's ride without mechanical trouble was rare 80 years ago, so the earliest motorcycle contests were no more than tests of reliability. Indeed the term "reliability trials" persists even to this day.

Back in the eighteen-nineties, a motorcycle was officially classed not as a motor vehicle but as a cycle. For that reason, motorcyclists' interests were championed by the National Cyclists Union.

Truth to tell, machines of that era were merely pedal cycles with minuscule motors mounted on the front down-tubes. In effect, they were the crude forerunners of today's mopeds—and progress was achieved as much by pedal power as by engine power.

However, it was not long before the Automobile Club of Great Britain (later to become the RAC) decided to establish a special department devoted to the welfare of motorcyclists — whose interests were none-too-well served by the NCU.

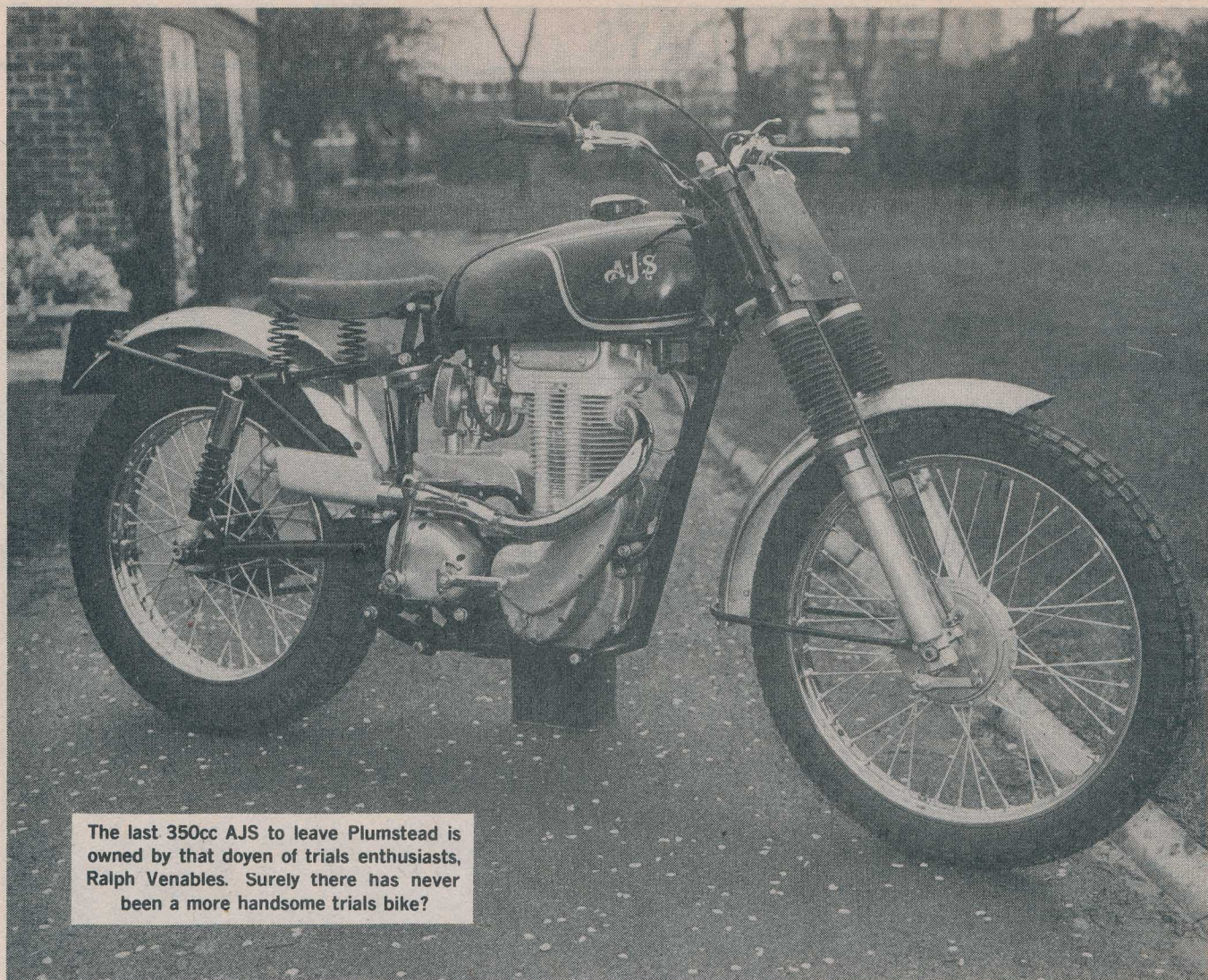
It was in 1903 that this administration was set up, and "Auto-Cycle Club" was chosen as appropriate terminology for the new venture. But soon, so many local motorcycle clubs were formed that in 1907 a union of all these clubs was proposed.

And so there was created the Auto-Cycle Union which still fosters and controls all aspects of motorcycle sport in this country (apart from events staged by the Amateur Motor Cycle Association and several "non-conformist" schoolboy clubs).

Coinciding with the formation of the



Isle of Wight farmer Aubrey Attrill, a regular winner in the 50s, still scores on an immaculate AJS.



The last 350cc AJS to leave Plumstead is owned by that doyen of trials enthusiasts, Ralph Venables. Surely there has never been a more handsome trials bike?

Auto-Cycle Club in 1903 came the first experimental laying of tarmac on a road just outside the town of Staines, in Middlesex. Until this new mode of surfacing became commonplace, few roads in Britain were better than cart-tracks.

Pot-holes, ruts, loose stones, deep tuts and mud were the norm. In short, the roads were akin to observed sections in a trial, and machines took a real hammering.

In dry weather, dust was appalling. In wet weather, belt-slip was inevitable. Efficient brakes were unknown at that time, and no early motorcycle boasted such luxuries as clutch or gearbox or spring-frame.

So merely to ride one of these machines 80 years ago was an adventure. Yet the competitive spirit soon asserted itself — and riders vied with one another in tests of time-keeping and the reliability of their single-gear steeds.

Thus was born the first motorcycle trial. There were no observed sections in those far-off days, but secret time checks added spice to the contest and kept competitors on their toes. Even the earliest trials were seldom less than 100 miles in length.

With improvement in roads and machines, mere time-keeping became an insufficient test of skill. So non-stop sections were introduced (usually hill-climbs on rough surfaces), and from these there evolved the observed sections as we know them today.

At first there was no penalty for footing,

and competitors used to indulge in some strenuous footwork to keep their machines on the move. After a while, as motorcycles became more powerful, footing was penalised (to a lesser degree than stopping).

The observed sections grew steeper and rougher, and a rider was compelled to put his feet to the ground in order to maintain balance as well as forward movement. Later, three different degrees of penalty for footing were laid down (one mark for one touch, two marks for two, three for three or more).

Make no mistake, the world's first sporting trial was staged in England. And despite the immense popularity of road racing, scrambling and grass-track racing, there are still more trials than any other form of motorcycle sport.

Despite this fact, few folk know anything about trials. Speed is the only aspect of motorcycle competition easily understood by the general public, and the finer points of trials riding appear to be beyond their comprehension. It is largely a non-spectator sport.



The trials Dot had a great run of success in the 50s and early 60s. This is the latest version of the bike produced as a "prototype" in 1978.

TRIALS—THE EARLY DAYS

Yet fighting for wheelgrip on a slippery gradient, climbing great rock steps with the agility of a mountain goat, making a "feet-up" turn around a muddy hairpin bend — these accomplishments are the aim of literally thousands of enthusiastic competitors every weekend.

The severity of today's observed sections is almost frightening, typical obstacles being ultra-steep hills, big boulders, deep mud and swift-flowing water. But such hazards hold no terrors for the leading British riders on their foreign machines.

In the period between the two World Wars, sporting trials became established as the backbone of club activity throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. A classic trial such as the Colmore or the Victory seldom got less than eight pages in the weekly motorcycle press.

British machinery was unchallenged, with such makes as AJS, Ariel, BSA, Levis, Matchless, Norton, Raleigh, Royal Enfield, Rudge and Triumph fighting for supremacy—along with at least a dozen more.

Today, it is the Japanese and Spanish factories which hold a monopoly of machines manufactured for the use of trials riders bred and born in the country where trials had their origin. Will the pendulum ever swing back the other way?

The popularity of motorcycle trials is not easy to explain. Fifty years ago, a good bike could be bought for as little as £30—now the going price is around £1,000. And today's observed sections are of a severity well calculated to inflict very expensive damage.

It is the almost unbelievable efficiency of modern trials machines which has brought about the need for these freak hazards. A sheer rock step, three feet high, is insufficient to stop the latest Bultaco, Montesa, Ossa, Suzuki or Yamaha. Twenty years back, such obstacles would have been impossible to conquer.

The way in which British bikes have been ousted from their once proud position is nowhere better illustrated than in results of the Scottish Six Days Trial — surely the greatest contest of its kind.

First held as a five-day trial in 1909, it became a six-day event the following year and has remained so ever since. The list of winners over the past 50 years tells its own story...

1930 — Graham Goodman (Norton). 1931 — Jack Amott (AJS). 1932 — Bob MacGregor (Rudge). 1933 — Len Heath (Ariel). 1934 — Jack Williams (Norton). 1935

— Billy Tiffen (Velocette), 1937 — Jack Williams (Norton). 1938 — Fred Povey (Ariel). 1939 — Allan Jefferies (Triumph).

1947—Hugh Viney (AJS), 1948—Hugh Viney (AJS), 1949—Hugh Viney (AJS), 1950—Artie Ratcliffe (Matchless), 1951—John Draper (BSA), 1952—John Brittain (Royal Enfield), 1953—Hugh Viney (AJS), 1954—Artie Ratcliffe (Matchless), 1955—Jeff Smith (BSA), 1956—Gordon Jackson (AJS), 1957—John Brittain (Royal Enfield), 1958—Gordon Jackson (AJS), 1959—Roy Peplow (Triumph).



Taking a crafty line on Middle Cwm in a Wye Traders trial in the early 50s, John Giles remains in full control of his heavy 500cc Triumph Trophy twin.



Bob MacGregor, complete with tartan tammy motors up Buckland Hill in the Colmore Cup trial of 1926.

1960 — Gordon Jackson (AJS). 1961 — Gordon Jackson (AJS). 1962 — Sammy Miller (Ariel). 1963 — Arthur Lampkin (BSA). 1964 — Sammy Miller (Ariel). 1965 Sammy Miller (Ariel). 1966 — Alan Lampkin (BSA). 1967 — Sammy Miller (Bultaco). 1968 — Sammy Miller (Bultaco). 1969 — Bill Wilkinson (Greeves).

1970—Mick Andrews (Ossa), 1971—Mick Andrews (Ossa), 1972—Mick Andrews (Ossa), 1973—Malcolm Rathmell (Bultaco), 1974—Mick Andrews (Yamaha), 1975—Mick Andrews (Yamaha), 1976—Martin Lampkin

(Bultaco), 1977—Martin Lampkin (Bultaco), 1978—Martin Lampkin (Bultaco), 1979—Malcolm Rathmell (Montesa)...

It is 10 years since the last British victory was achieved on a British machine. Now, surely, we are on the threshold of the first Scottish Six Days win by a foreign rider — and then our ignominy will be complete!

Meanwhile, the annual British Trials Championships continue to be fought at a high level of enthusiasm and surely the flourishing schoolboy ranks are currently nurturing some champions of the future.