

# Thoughts on a one day ride



Well, here you are, point B, end of the line for the transporters where they are left for the duration of the trail ride. Some of the considerations that ought to be taken into account in the selection of the parking spots are:— Is parking permitted there? The cars and trailers must not obstruct property access, roads or tracks. Can the cars be turned around? In case of rain, will the ground be firm, stable and easy to get out of the parking area and back onto the main road? Do not park near a fireplace. What are the conditions overhead and surrounding? Trees can topple and branches can break off. Do not park in logging areas, close to bends, corners, or intersections . . . . The safety of the transporters and trailers is number one priority of the day.

Next, unloading the bikes should pose no problems. However, I have seen cases where, selfishly or otherwise, everyone is looking after No. 1 leaving others to struggle by themselves unloading their bikes. Remember this is a group activity; lend a hand.

With bikes on terra firma, each rider should give their mount a quick once over to ensure everything is still OK, check fuel and oil levels. Before loading up with provisions test run the bike and ensure it's functioning satisfactorily. How's the tyre pressures, suitable for the terrain? Not sure? Then ask around, and get some idea of what's ahead. The trail boss usually gives a briefing of the planned ride and track conditions which can be beneficial.

Cars locked, provisions loaded, start engines, riders mount, all set. Hit the trail.

Within a few miles, what was one group of riders is sorted into various groups depending on trail ability. Let's say three groups: the good and experienced, the average, and last, the "so so" inexperienced and rear guard . . . . Whether this should happen is questionable. After all, the overall progress is only as fast as the slowest rider. Anyhow, experience has proven that this graded grouping does happen, and invariably creates time lags and delays between the first and last rider. It is important that when planning a trail ride the organisers should take into consideration any possible time delays (based on the knowledge of who, what, where and how) so as to return back at the transporters well before sunset . . . .

Other practical aspects that need a bit of thought is that the leading riders should appreciate that the tail enders are always in a hectic state because by the time the last ones turn up, the leading bunch have had a spell, done their thing, set and eager to go on. What's more, the waiting riders have the opportunity to check their equipment (and ought to), the stragglers don't get a chance and are always on the go maybe until lunch break. Leading riders should always delegate someone to wait at turn-offs to direct the followers. This responsibility



*Bush huts must be respected.*



*Maps use is vital.*



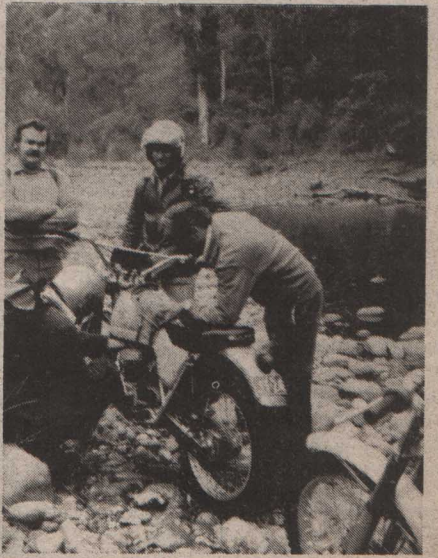
*Yet more trail finds.*



*Remnants of an old crashed aircraft.*



*Have a good lunch break.*



*Repairs are inevitable.*

The first stop will be a "breather" where all riders get the chance to re-group. At this point the trail boss should fathom out the overall situation. An assessment of progress, whether the pace is satisfactory, track condition so far and what to expect, any change in plans or condition of riders and machinery.

Somewhere along the way is a difficult section. At any such situation a couple of experienced riders should wait for the lesser ones before the section with other leaders across the finish. The lesser riders will need guidance and help. If the inexperienced riders were out of sight, they would not have had the opportunity of seeing how the section was tackled. Some may not be able nor game to negotiate the section, it therefore rests on the experienced to get their bikes across, over, down or whatever the section demands. For example, underpowered and suitably geared bikes will need manhandling up a steep hill or difficult obstacle. The more the help, the easier it is all round and the less time wasted.

After lunch let the tailenders go first. Give them a head start and let the rear guard lead the way. In dusty conditions the swapping around of positions of groups and riders within the groups should be exercised often. Everyone should get his share of dust and fumes, don't be selfish.

So far so good, everything's going great, no problems . . . but, wouldn't you know it, Murphy rears up with his No. 1 law and further on down the trail something goes wrong. Let's sincerely hope that if and when it does, it does not involve serious physical injuries. Nothing ruins a ride more than a disabled rider. Unless there is a first-aider in the group who can assess injuries, it is best to try and comfort the injured as best one can and send for help. However, trail riders are a hardy lot, so much so that in most cases as soon as the fallen rider regains consciousness and provided that no part drops off, he's rearin' to go. Abrasions, bruises and sprains should not stop any rider from making it back, eventually.

Mechanical problems are a nuisance. It wouldn't be the first time that a bike had to be left behind some bushes to be retrieved at a later date. Tow ropes are OK provided that enough energy is available to do the towing.

Experience has proved that the return ride develops into a more pacey affair. The reason for this is maybe due to eagerness to get back, increased confidence, less weight, riders get familiar with each other, tend to take more liberties in passing and general carefree behaviour. Not surprising that most problems and mishaps occur on the return leg of a trail run. A pity to spoil an event after the intermission.

The riders should exercise more care on the last leg of the run because although it may not be apparent, FATIGUE mounts up as trail miles go

by, physically, mechanically and, worst of all, mentally. No matter what one is doing, CONCENTRATION is the name of the game. A rider who develops a nagging feeling or doubt about anything to do with himself, bike or whatever gear is carried, should stop. Don't just slow and start fiddling about, STOP. Check whatever is bothering you, rectify then carry on. For those who appreciate nature the scenery is beautiful along the trail. Here again is another distracting element. If a glimpse does not satisfy the mind's eye a rider should call for a brief halt and enjoy the moment. Backtracking is frowned upon by many, and often overlooked in preference for a round trip . . . Some cases may prove that no one is willing to go back to that horrid section or willing to drown or having to manhandle the machine over obstacles, no one likes repeating unpleasant things. Granted a return may be impossible trying to climb up an impossibly slippery hill, but other than that backtracking should be as interesting and challenging as the forward journey.

Many people are heading for the bush. Hiking, four wheels, horses, trail riding, naturalists, hunters, fishermen, even families on pushbikes. The bush has its attractions and beauty which can be shared by everyone, without animosity, jealousy or dogma. Whoever or whatever any trail rider meets along the tracks, he or she should exercise courtesy. Walker take priority (right of way), then horse and pushbike riders, lastly, it's a toss up between the two and four wheeled vehicles. Don't be dismayed by the rebukes you get in reply to your greeting (unfortunately this happens), keep a happy face, extend further greetings and if anyone is stopped along the trail, check and see if any help is needed.

Finally back to the transporters, end of the trail riding for the day. Somehow or other, being back in one piece after a ride is not enough satisfaction for some. Before you know it there's a drag on, a mono contest, someone tearing up the side of a hill or some other devilment. Cool it. The trail leaders should exercise a bit of authority and simmer things down. If there's enough daylight left by all means organise a short excursion down the trail to prevent any mucking about by keeping the riders on trail.

When finally the bike riding comes to an end, the next immediate step is to load the machinery back onto the transporters. If a barbeque is planned, proceed with the sacrifices and burnt offerings, ease off on the malt (drivers especially), relax, have a good feast, chat, reminisce, tell tales or plan the next ride. If everything went well most of the crew (if not all) will be looking forward to the next trail ride, and the next, and the next . . .

