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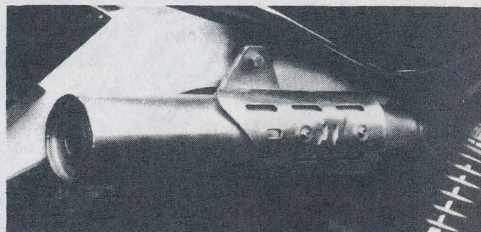
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XT 500

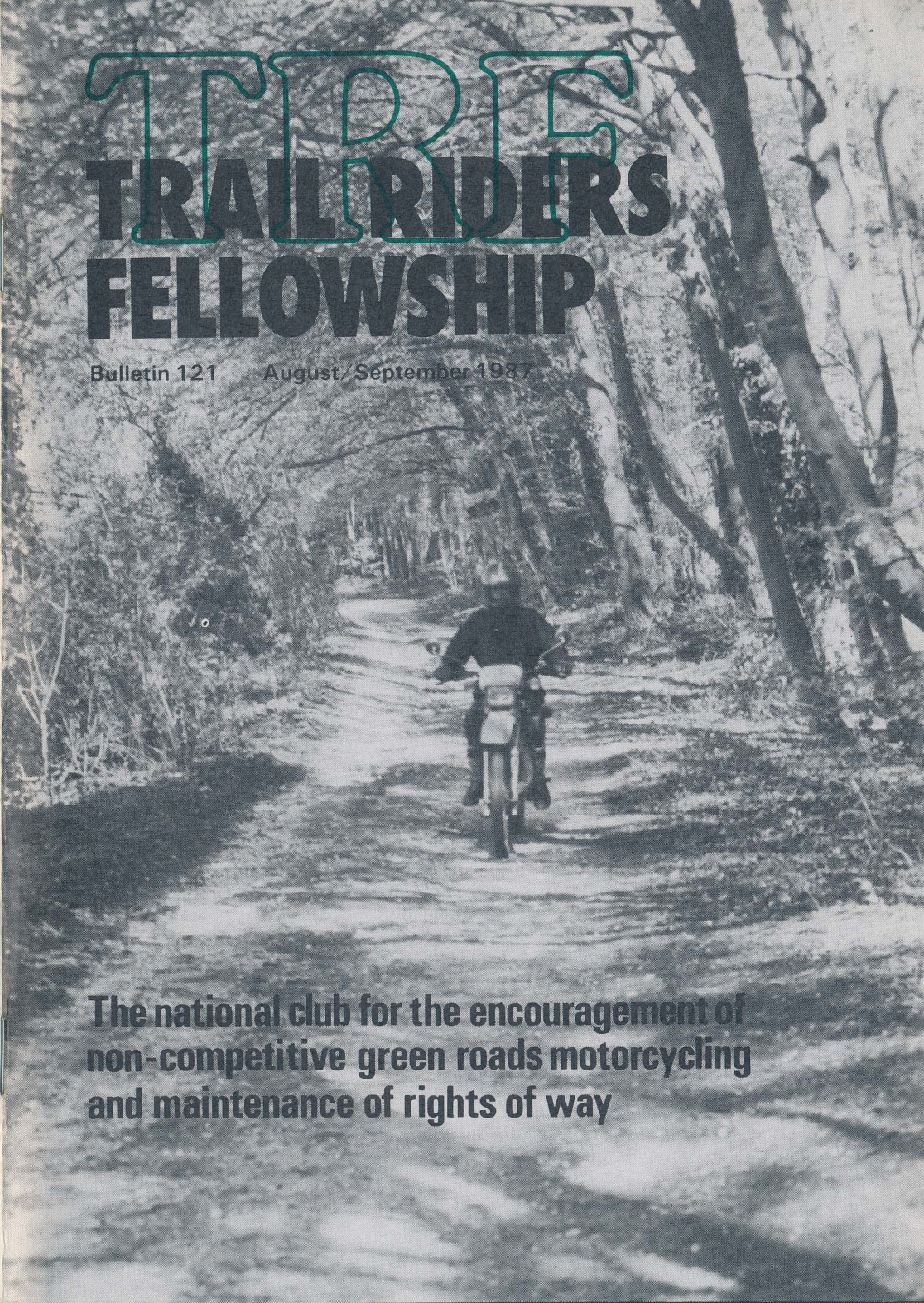
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TREE TRAIL RIDERS FELLOWSHIP

Bulletin 121 August/September 1987



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HONDA MTX200RWD

owners test report by Pete Marston

SALESMAN: Secondhand trail bikes? We've got five 125 learner legal bikes or three 600cc "mans" trail bikes.

ME: Haven't you got anything between 125 and 350?

SALESMAN: Oh of course not!

This conversation was one which I had nearly every time I asked at a bike shop for a secondhand trail bike. Unfortunately nearly all the XL185s etc. I had a look at were all clearly beginning to show their age and I wanted a bike a year or two old, which hopefully would not need constant work to keep up to a good standard.

So after the good luck of riding two learner legal bikes - a Honda MTX125 and a Suzuki TS125X I found that these were both very good trail bikes but lacked real power to cope on the trail when the going got tough. So when I saw a Honda MTX200 for a price I could just afford I bought it.

The Honda MTX200RWD was first introduced into this country in late 1983. The Honda 200 is in fact a water cooled two-stroke of 193cc, the engine is fed by a 26mm Keihin slide carb through reed valves. The engine produces between 20bhp and 25.5bhp depending on which bike magazine you read! though Honda state a figure of 26bhp.

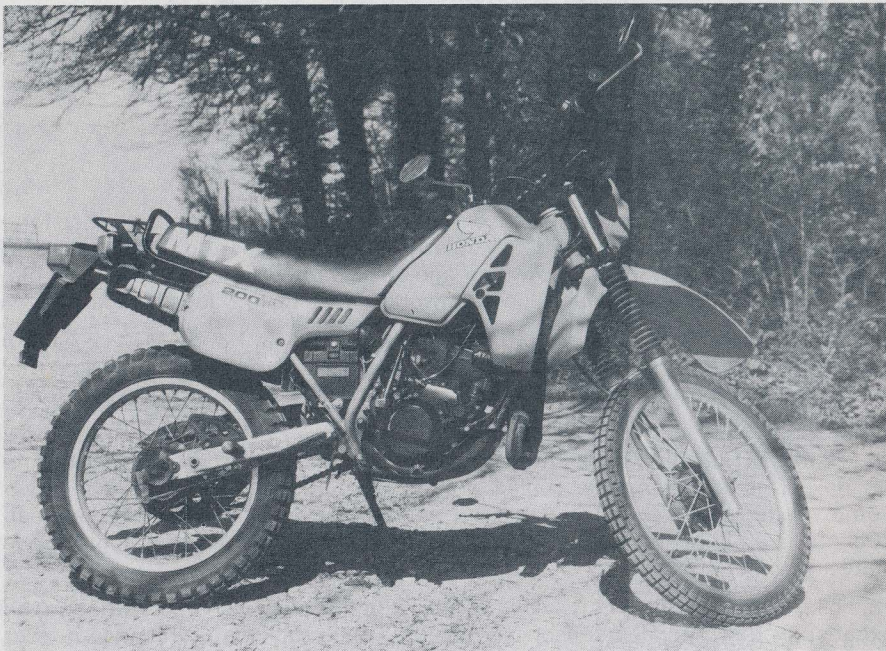
This bike uses Honda's ATAC system. This system involves a chamber fitted to the exhaust system. A speed sensor is worked off the crankshaft which via a lever shuts the extra chamber at 6500rpm leaving the engine to run on just the exhaust itself. The idea of this extra chamber is to try and help low down power without cutting off top end power.

The rear suspension is by Honda's PRO-LINK system, an arrangement of the suspension strut to be compressed by linked levers as well as the usual shock absorber. This arrangement of levers and shock absorber means the suspension gets harder the more it is compressed, i.e. over smaller bumps the suspension travels quite softly, where as landing on the rear wheel etc., as the wheel travels towards its full travel the suspension hardens up but without any sudden jarring. The front forks are Showa units comprising of 35mm tubes with air valves, which can be run with a pressure up to 6psi.

The styling of this bike, in common with most of the later trail bikes from Japan is a pure Moto-cross replica. I find on the 200 it is not too much over done but unfortunately for some reason Honda have only put a 2 gallon tank on the bike which with the fuel consumption (more of which later) is not really big enough.

The instruments are neatly housed behind the small plastic "screen" which also covers the headlight. The speeds and tacho themselves do look a bit flimsy and not up to Honda's current standard but I have had no problem from either and the speedo seems to be as accurate as anybody can ask for.

The handlebar switches are up to the standard you would expect from Honda. The dip/main headlight switch is easy to use and is attached to a very powerful 55/60w headlight giving good amount of light just where you want it. The electrical system itself is of 12 volts which now seems standard on modern trail bikes (thank God the days of awful 6 volt electrics on trail bikes have now finished).



Honda MTX200



The 200 does in fact spend most of its time on the road (travelling 3 miles to and from work each day) and being use off road whenever I have to time (which unfortunately is not all that often at the moment).

Starting the bike is usually a case of 2 or 3 kicks to bring the engine into life. Soon after this the red oil warning light housed between the speedo and tacho will go out (as long as you've got some oil in the tank). Travelling about 100 yards is all that is needed with the choke on, after which it can be switched off and the engine will rev quite freely. The bike is very low geared as standard (flat out in top only 75-80 mph) which makes it ideal for around town, though first is only for a short distance before changing up to 2nd, though it will pull from a stand still in 2nd, without too much problem. The engine has enough power to have the front wheel "going light" if you are not too careful in any of the first 3 gears (which I found out one morning when crossing a road into a stream of traffic when only half awake). The engine has a quite pronounced power step at 5000rpm which continues to about 7500rpm after which the power dies off a bit. The engine will willingly pull through this power band easily though if you ride the bike at 5000rpm the engine is quite rough running. Below 5000rpm the power is not very noticeable but using all the power available from 2000rpm through the gears you find yourself travelling at about 55-60mph very quickly.

The suspension is very good on the road with the rear suspension coping well with all road surfaces that Hampshire County Council makes us travel on. The front forks with 9" of travel are soft but I disagree with the comments made in the bike mags about them being too soft and leading to "hairy moments".

When I first got round to taking the bike out on some green lanes I was interested to see if the 200 was that much better than the 125MTX I had previously ridden. As with the 125 the 200 on the road does not seem to have too much power below 5000rpm but I soon found that the 200 had easily enough power to be able to travel along most of the lanes down here in Hampshire in 3rd gear most of the time, having only to change down to 2nd or 1st when the going got tough.

Having decided to fit a rear T61 before going green laning I found the 200 can easily handle the very muddy sections on the lanes I have been on (especially compared to the 125 which still had standard Honda tyres). If the suspension was good on the road off road it is very difficult to fault it. The front forks and rear suspension coping very well in all conditions. The only problem with the rear suspension is the lack of grease nipples fitted on this model, not even having the ones fitted as standard to the XL250. After taking the bike trail riding the suspension is now starting to squeak (due to the previous owner not taking the suspension out greasing it as the manual says once a year), nipples fitted to ease maintenance, the brakes on the 200RWD are standard drum brake front and rear. These work well enough on the road, though the front needs a lot of pull to make it pull up the bike quickly. Off road the brakes work perfectly well coping with all conditions, the rear is very able to hold the bike going down hill with the front making a good back up if you need it. The lacking of real bite on the front brake was more noticeable after riding the 125MTX which fitted with a front disc brake was very powerful, giving instant stopping, though perhaps a little too sharp off road. The later MTX200RWF is fitted with a disc brake as standard, which would give the 200 that little bit more stopping power.

The 200 has some nice touches to it, such as the folding brake and gear lever so that if you hit something or fall off (what me? – no never!!) they should in theory fold back rather than get broken. They would appear to work as I believe the 200 was trailed by its previous owner and has not come to any harm yet.

The general finish on the bike is very good with the paint work still in good order and none of the plastic (radiator and water level tank covers etc.) show no sign of damage.

My main problem with the bike is top end running. When used for short distances at 6500rpm+ the bike runs perfectly, but when I rode it from Southampton to Birmingham for the AGM the bike would not happily run for any length of time above 6000rpm but would misfire and on two occasions lose all power in top gear. Having read some tests in mags this could be put down to the running temperature of the bike. In *Motorcycle Mechanics* they ran it at high speeds with cardboard covering the radiator to increase the temperature when it would run properly. The only problem with this is if you get caught in a traffic jam when the bike might over-heat. I have noticed that while trail riding the temperature gauge went up a lot more than when using the bike on the road (when it did seem to rev higher more cleanly), but it soon fell back to normal when back on the road between green lanes and in fact never went above half way up the gauge.

The MTX200 I have found to be a very comfortable bike using it off road when I found not noticeable ache or pains after coving 50+ miles and on the road I found my bum only a little numb after 130 miles coming home after the AGM. Though this can be due to the bike's other major problem, fuel consumption. With an average of 51mpg going to and from the AGM this meant stopping for petrol every 76 miles for petrol. I must admit to feeling a bit fed up with seeing so many petrol stations on a 308 miles round trip!

All in all I have found the MTX200 a very good bike for the uses it was brought for, the 2 mile trip to and from work and green laning. Once the rear suspension has it's grease nipples fitted it should be easy to keep the rear suspension well lubricated. It goes and handles very well on and off road, in fact the trip to and from work is now so much fun I can take the Ducati off the road for the winter. I would recommend anybody who is looking for a good mid-range trail bike to take a good look at the Honda MTX200.

GOOD START IN MID WALES

A turn out of 50 TRF members and potential members at an isolated pub in Builth Wells on Wed 17th July got the first TRF group in Mid Wales off to a cracking start. John Morley, 'Bronhallt' Sennybridge, Brecon, Powys (tel: 087 482 8126) is group representative and Brecon area rights of way officer. Jerem Atkinson, 44 Duke St, Kington, Hereford, is Radnor area rights of way officer, and Miss Sally Vickerson, Room 146, West Wales General Hospital, Carmarthen, Dyfed, is Press Officer. Huw Lloyd from Brecon and Barry Strong from Port ??? will organise trail runs.

GROUP NEWS

DORSET GROUP

We are not into full swing as a fully fledged group. Norman Howard as Chairman; Candy Gibson as Secretary; Nicholas Crocker R.o.W. Also on our committee are Bruce Thompson getting deeply involved with R.o.W. research and Barry Smith in what may be the first group position nationally – computer officer. Barry has a main line computer and is currently feeding in all sorts of informaton that we ca get printed out at the touch of a button. We hope to eventually finish up with all Dorset R.o.W. matters on the computer, from Inclosure Award details, review and inquiry results to the suitability of each and every R.o.W. rideable in the county with annual updates of the conditions.

Bruce Thompson and myself have already spent many days researching at County Records Office and come up with some interesting results. Several footpaths that have widths of up to 40 feet on inclosure awards as Public Carriageroads & Highways. We find the staff in the CRO very helpful and it has been decided that we fill have a special run where all the fees collected will be donated to the CRO's collection box for funding further purchases of documents, maps, etc. This fund does not go to County Council purses. Mike Cooke and myself, while researching got sidetracked on one inclosure award and other papers connected to the particular stretch we were interested in that day when we uncovered a court battle over a wall alongside a drove road. The court case lasted over 20 YEARS!! It appears that the land either side of the track had different owners and both wanted the wall on the other man's side. They were both convicted of knocking down the wall on the several occasions and rebuilding it across the track. The final outcome in the high court was that who ever died first would have the wall built on their land! We rode the track the next day – yes, you're right, there is no sign of the wall now.

Apart from the regular runs planned we intend to run some specials which will include some two day ones. Bruce has recently been to France on his road bike and will return there agan with a view to a Trailing in France holiday and possible exchange visit with members of 'Les Motards' – our French equivalent group.

We have given life membership of Dorset Group to Brian Thompson, Ruth Colyer and Bill & Ann Riley. All their help and support in setting up the group and their continued interest and assistance is much appreciated. Candy, Bruce and myself are at present getting a Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme under way for Trail Riding for local youngsters. Candy being a school teacher is in the ideal occupation to promote this.

We will try to get a run write-up for the next bulletin, to give you all an insight into our group and the fun we have.

Norman S. Howard

DEVON & CORNWALL

The TRF Devon & Cornwall Group go from strength to strength. With a regular runs programme and first class group newsletter to keep everyone informed, the group has emerged as one of the best in the TRF. Group rep Oliver Cook, Simon Padley and group Secretary Lyn Jacobson came along to the inaugural meeting of the new Dorset group and we had a useful chat. I shall be visiting the group