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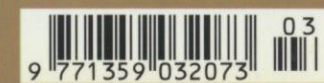
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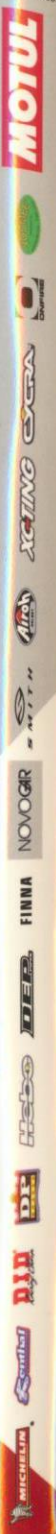
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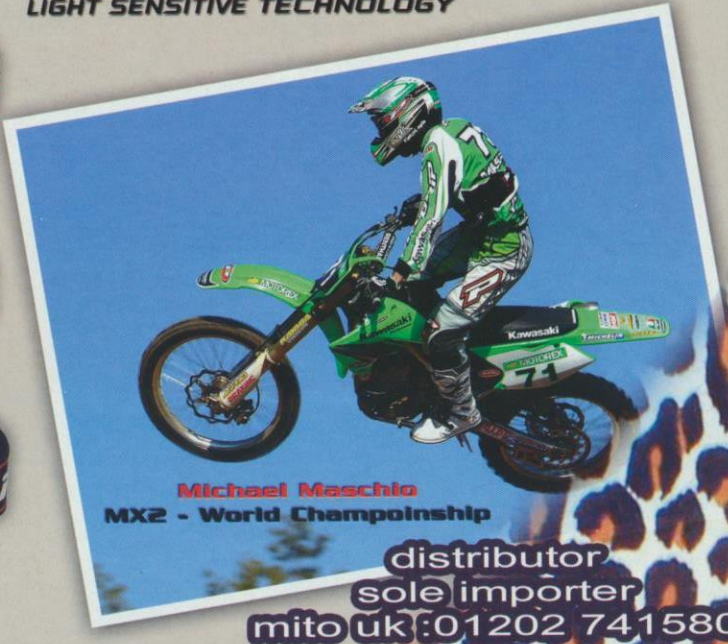
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EDITORIAL

Oldies But Goodies...

You may or may not be in the fortunate position of being able to afford a brand new dirt bike every once in a while.

But if you are (or if you've ever borrowed one from a trusting mate), you'll know that feeling of getting on a bike which feels all crisp and new... but ever so slightly alien to the touch.

Get back on your old machine however, and it feels as familiar as an old sock. All the levers are in the right place, the seat has exactly the correct amount of sag to accommodate your

buttocks... and well, the familiarity of it all just makes you want to smile.

Old bikes have an appeal all of their own. Whether it be a saggy old CRM, or something much more ancient. No matter how many new test bikes I get to ride, my eyes go all misty when I spy the pile of bits in the TBM shed which used to be my beloved Yam WR250Z.

In my case, familiarity breeds content. In fact I now know exactly how the love-struck Prince of Wales feels... **SI MELBER**



Team TBM gets a bit of bike advice from this year's Dakar Rallye Champ, Cyril Despres. His advice? '...leave zis pile of sheet at ome...'

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Nestling in the foothills of the Tuscan Apennines, this small Italian hillside town was about to play host to the 2005 Hell's Gate Enduro...

IT'S A SHOCKER

KTM to build DOHC 250 & 450EXCs with air shocks

Future KTM enduro models could feature some ground-breaking changes designed to put the orange bikes ahead of the off-road pack.

In an interview with an Italian off-road magazine KTM's managing director Stefan Pierer revealed that the PDS shock of the future was likely to be an air-shock, without a steel spring, not unlike the French-made Fornaes shock as used by Brits Si Pavey and Nick Plumb on their Dakar BMWs.

Even more surprising was his comment that the air shock is being developed by Ohlins - the Yamaha-owned shock manufacturer. However, production of shocks would still be entrusted to KTM-owned WP.

KTM has also been developing double overhead camshaft technology in the motocross arena for the past two seasons, a programme that culminated in New Zealander Ben Townley winning the 2004 MX2 world championship on a gear-driven DOHC 250.

In the meantime Ivan Cervantes and Petteri Silvan will be competing on enduro versions of the DOHC 250 throughout the 2005 WEC season. If the 250 performs well, then the DOHC EXCs may well debut as customer models in 2006 with the 450 earmarked for '07. Watch this space.



R. HODGKINSON

HUSKY ARE SPORTS

UK Husqvarna importers Husky Sport are backing the Hafren Dirt Bike Club's round of the 2005 European Enduro Championship.

The event, taking place in Llanidloes, Mid Wales on 16-17 July will be known as the Husqvarna Hafren Forest Enduro and will follow a similar format to that used for the 2004 Hafren Enduro.

It will feature a challenging forest based course with two special tests - one close to the start and one at Glyn Hafren (Geraint Jones' farm), on the outskirts of the Hafren Forest.



TBM is alive and kicking on the Internet - check out trailbikemag.com. You can now submit your classified adverts, letters and technical queries for inclusion in the magazine. There's also a comprehensive events section to see what's coming up - and if you're organising an event that's not up there, you can send it in to us for consideration.

And for all you chatty types, the TBM forum is on its way, which means you can debate with other like-minded readers the meaning of dirt bike life. You might even find some of the TBM wrecking crew shooting the breeze too!

The site also features a fully secure online store where you can subscribe to the mag, order back issues or buy merchandise all at the click of a button. So go on, give it a whirl. You know it makes sense...

VIRTUAL REALITY



BRITS ON TOP



British enduro riders have twice showed themselves to be the best enduro riders in Europe over this last month of pre-WEC competition. They gave their Continental counterparts a beating first at Hell's Gate and then at the Genova Indoor Enduro.

The onslaught was of course led by that man from Mona's Isle, 'the burly Manxman' David Knight. He's been nothing short of a one-man invasion force, having captured the two Italian events, he has since returned to the English mainland to lift the honours at 'The Tough One' (all of which feature in TBM).

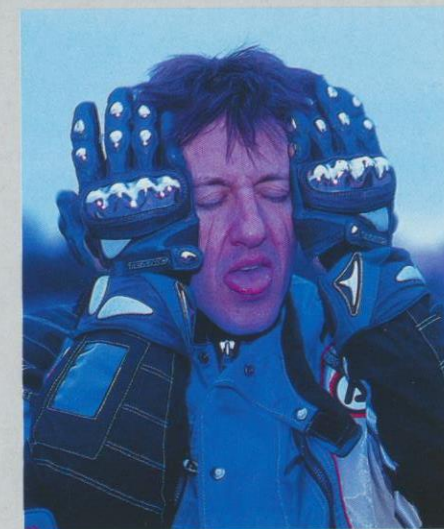
But Knighter wasn't fighting alone. At Hell's Gate brother Juan and BEC 250F champ Wayne Braybrook took the two runners-up spots on the podium, creating a British trifecta that had the Italian crowd stunned.

At Genova it was Paul Edmondson who was second to Knighter, riding his HRFE Honda CRF250, sending out a clear warning to the other WEC E1 competitors that Fast Ed seriously wants a fifth world title in 2005. And who'd bet against Knighter lifting his first world title this year. We can't wait for the season to begin...

THE HEX FROM X

The team at TBM has grown again - Jonathan Bentman aka JB, who you may (or may not) know as the former editor of MotoX Magazine, has joined the squad.

Ostensibly charged with the launch of Trials Magazine, we're filling his quieter moments with the occasional TBM mission, as you'll see within this very issue. JB was also former editor of Kiwi Motorcycle Rider in New Zealand and in fact has a fair history of adventure, trail and enduro riding to add to many a year spent road racing, so he vaguely competent. He's a bit of an overly verbose clown but we think you'll grow to like him...



AMAZONIAN ADVENTURE



Dirt bike trail holidays specialist Space-On-Earth is planning a new adventure riding holiday set in South America.

Beginning in May 2005 the new venture takes riders through the heart of Ecuador. The route will climb more than 13,000 feet into the Andes Mountains then descend through the Amazon basin onto the Pacific Coast, covering around 2000 miles in seven days.

It costs £2500, which includes everything from flights, bikes, accommodation, mechanical and medical support. There's also an option to visit the spectacular Galapagos Islands at the end of the ride given sufficient demand.

More info including route details is on their web site space-on-earth.com or contact Charlie via charlie@space-on-earth.com or on 07092 045 949.

OUT FOR THE COUNT

The Army-run Natterjack Enduro has been downgraded from a full BEC championship event to an expert and clubman-only points scoring round. The championship for the 'championship' class now only comprises four rounds: Breckland, Brechfa, Crychan and the John Banks.

Although unconfirmed, it is believed that the championship points scoring has been dropped as the date clashes with a round of the World Enduro Championship.

With David Knight, Paul Edmondson and potentially the likes of Daryl Bolter and Si Wakely at the WEC round, the thinking seems to be that the championship shouldn't proceed without them.

Unfortunately this will also now probably leave the Army MCA without a championship entry for their event, a sad omission.



their Rev 3 trials bikes blitzing its way up to third in the chart.

Beta UK told us that the winter months are the busy ones in the trials trade, with new-year models coming on stream from October, but the push for new bike sales extends right through to the start of the Scottish Six Days Trial in May. Of course only a fraction of trials bikes get road registered (most being used solely off-road) so this figure is just the tip of trials sales' iceberg.

Complete figures are as follows:



ADVENTURE SPORT

1	BMW R1200GS	62
2	Honda XL125V	42
3	BMW R1150GS	26
4	Triumph 955 Tiger	26
5	Yamaha DT125X	26

TRAIL/ENDURO

1	Honda XR125L	46
2	Honda CRF250X	38
3	Beta Rev 3	32
4	KTM 450EXC	30
5	Yamaha DT125	30

SOLD, AS SEEN

Getting the new 'registration year' off to a flying start is the Adventure Sport category, headed by the mighty 1200 Beemer and backed up by its burly older brother the R1150GS in third position. Perhaps due to the success of 'The Long Way Round' there have been 1400 1150s and 1200s sold over the past 13 months - and it'll be interesting to see if any find their way through onto the big bike rally scene.

In fact, the Adventure Sports market showed a staggering 42-percent hike on registrations against the same time last year, well ahead of the overall trend for the bike market, which saw a two-percent increase.

Honda's 125cc mini-Varadero continues to pick up sales, but the arrival of Yamaha's funky DT125 supermoto got an immediate response from buyers, one that's likely to continue through the year.

Meanwhile, the Trail/Enduro model numbers continue to creep back up another two percent on last month to minus three-percent. Honda's commuter-trailie the XR125L is still the big seller but the CRF250X also continues to sell well, maintaining its position as the best selling pukka enduro bike in the British market.

That said, the orange team's 450EXC had a strong month to claim fourth spot. Beta are a surprise entry in this sector with

SNIPPETS

SAT NAV SAVVY?

Are you a trail rider who regularly uses one of those natty GPS gizmos to guide yourself around the back lanes and byways of this fair land? If so, we'd like to hear from you about how great (or otherwise) your kit is for an upcoming feature we're compiling on the whys, wherefores and whatnots of navigating sans-map. Contact us via our website trailbikemag.com or email info@trailbikemag.com.

HARING AROUND

Brand new on the events calendar is the Cwmcynydd Forest hare 'n' hounds series, with round one taking place on Sunday 20 March. The nine-mile lap features forestry tracks and road sections.

Contact Anna Humphries for details on 01597 810592 or check the club's website on rdmcc.co.uk.

ON TRIAL

The latest addition to the TBM stable is Trials Magazine. Due to launch at the end of April, you can subscribe online by following the prompts on our website trailbikemag.com.

WAYNE'S WORLD

Off-road trials and enduro ace Wayne Braybrook (second to David Knight at the Hell's Gate Extreme Enduro) is running a series of one and two-day enduro schools at his own venue in Blackburn. Prices start from £150 per day (using your own bike) or for an extra £19.95 you can use one of Wayne's CRF250Xs (subject to availability). That includes lunch, insurance and kit. Dates are 8/9 April, 25/26 May, 15/16 June, 6/7 July, 27/28 July and 9/10 Sept. Call 0870 7742600 for details.

MY FIRST BIKE

FROM SCHOOLBOY MOTOCROSSER TO VETERAN ISDE COMPETITOR, JONY EDMUNDS REMEMBERS THE BIKE THAT KICK-STARTED IT ALL...

I'll never forget the day my dad walked into the garage and asked me if I was 'serious about wanting a motocross bike'. I'd never been more serious about anything in my life.

'If we do get you a bike you have to promise us one thing,' my dad said. 'You must promise that you won't get a road bike when you're older.' I nodded and that's how, at ten years old I got my first off-road motorbike, a secondhand 1984 Honda CR80.

Not coming from a motorcycling family and with dad having never owned a 'proper' motorbike, knowing what to look out for when buying a used crosser wasn't something either of us knew anything about. As we soon found out, not all bikes (and particularly MXers) receive as much TLC as they should.

Within the first 12 months of ownership, we'd spent more than the bike's value repairing, fixing and putting right the butchery caused by its previous owners.

Nevertheless, it was my first motorcycle and I was a motocross rider with a big smile on my face.

Geography had much to do with how I came to switch from motocross to enduro, as growing up in mid Wales it was easy to get drawn into the 'enduro tradition'.

Surrounded by forestry hosting many of Britain's biggest and best events, and with seemingly every town having at least one resident that was a top BEC or ISDE rider, my transition from 20 minutes plus two laps to anything between six hours and six days aboard a bike with lights was complete by the age of 16.

Collecting as many trophies as I did injuries during my teens I was never too far away from hospital food as my inability to bounce save me clock up a long list of broken bones. Despite the injuries, enduro was what I always wanted to do.

It was never my aim to try and represent my country, be a British champion or do anything other



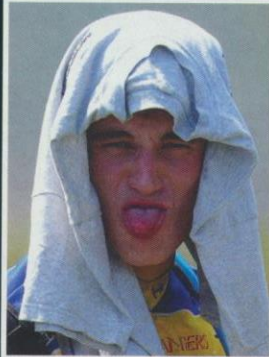
than get my head around the secret of posting fast special test times without crashing. When I did start getting results it brought with it sponsorship and my first journeys into Europe.

The challenge of racing abroad, being a part of an international paddock and having to fight for every second on every special test is what makes international competition great. I still miss that, seven years after my last European Enduro Championship event in Portugal. I rode in three ISDEs and hated pretty much every minute of them, but thrived on EEC and WEC events.

But you can't chase dreams all of your life and as two steps forward was more often that not closely followed by one step backwards in the form of a broken femur, hyper-extended knee or fractured scaphoid, I called time on my racing before my 21st birthday.

I then decided to revert back to my other love - photography. Having put it on the back burner while pursuing my sporting interests I combined my love of enduro with my love of motorsport photography. It's kind of a best of both worlds thing.

I still manage to race in one or two events a year now time permitting but find it hard riding in competitions 'just for fun'. Oh, and true to my promise, I still don't own a road bike...



5 MINUTES WITH...

SCOTTISH RIDER AND THREE TIMES ISDE COMPETITOR EUAN MCCONNELL WON HIS FIRST EVER NATIONAL ENDURO THIS YEAR AND IS DETERMINED TO STAY ON HIS WINNING STREAK...

WHAT WAS THE FIRST ENDURO BIKE YOU OWNED?

My first bike was a 1985 Honda CR80 that my dad bought me for my 10th birthday in October 1991 after me nagging him for years beforehand. It was £300, was in mint condition and came with a full set of riding kit. Bargain! My best mate got an RM80 for Christmas that year and we rode every weekend, racing each other on the farm.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST ENDURO?

The Melville in 1995 on a KTM 125SX in the Clubman class. I had been riding as a travelling marshal at Scottish enduros prior to turning 16. I was first equal in my class as the event was timed by a stopwatch. I remember it was six laps and I was absolutely knackered by the end.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE HARDEST ENDURO YOU HAVE EVER RACED?

The 1997 Harwood event was a bog from start to finish. They cut it from six laps to four but only three riders finished in my class. I won because the other lads got stuck on the test.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ENDURO?

Shiplaw, Avon Valley or Kielder, or at least they used to be. I love fast

open going with bogs, ditches and hills. Most enduros are whooped out or rutted now but these events weren't when I last rode them. They were a blast - somewhere where you could open the bike up and have fun.

WHAT RIDER HAS HAD THE BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON YOUR CAREER?

My dad. He schooled me well in the basics and didn't spoil me with special bikes or too many races. From a racing point of view I have looked up to Dougie Kerr and Richard Hay. When I started competing in the British Enduro Championship I looked up to Rob Sartin and Wyn Hughes - they are real professionals. Now David Knight and Paul Eddy have raised the bar again.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR BEST EVER PERFORMANCE?

That was in Sweden in 2003 at the last round of the World Enduro Championship. Paul Eddy gave me a pep talk the week before in Finland and it must have been good 'cause I beat him both days in Sweden.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MOST DISAPPOINTING RESULT?

That would have to be the 2002 ISDE when I broke my hand. I was riding really well and starting to get some encouraging test times (top five in class) when I hit my hand on a post. I didn't even fall off, which was really hard to take.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST CRASH?

It was in the Melville two-day enduro last year aboard the pre-production Sherco 450. The bike was seriously fast and I was riding beyond my capabilities, having a great time, when it spat me off going down a hill at 60mph. I went over the handlebars and rag-dolled down the hill knocking myself out. Needless to say I didn't finish.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST TREASURED ENDURO MEMORY?

I have loads of good memories but I guess winning the John Banks enduro last year was a good one as I had had no practise, was not fit and nobody was expecting me to win. I had never won a national enduro before it was a bit of a surprise.

WHICH BIKE HAVE YOU ENJOYED OWNING/RIDING THE MOST?

I suppose that would have to be my CR80, for the sheer fun-factor every weekend, or my 1999 KTM250EXC. The KTM was the first bike I started to go fast on.

WHAT IS YOUR PREFERRED TERRAIN?

Bogs, because you can have flat-out enjoyment without fear of hurting yourself.

WHAT DOES ENDURO SPORT NEED MORE OF?

Fun, less fuss and more action. What would be wrong with taping off a section of the course on the day of the event and calling it a special test? It would mean less walking, which would mean not having to be there two days before the event.

WHAT DOES ENDURO SPORT NEED LESS OF?

Red tape and rules. For instance, it needs to be made easier for organisers to run a British Championship event. And it needs to be easier for young motocross or trials riders to start riding in enduros. Registering bikes and having to use enduro tyres are a real ball-ache if you're not used to it.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE SPORT OF ENDURO WILL BE LIKE IN FIVE YEARS TIME?

Alive and well I hope, as there is an ever-increasing leisure market with the 30-somethings buying bikes. However, I also think that the big events such as the Beacons and the Melville may fall victim to land use restrictions. Maybe we'll see a resurgence of classic type enduros with tight checks and snotty bits as people get tired of riding six hours at a 'relaxed' pace for only 20 minutes of special tests to decide the winners.

WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE IN ENDUROS?

I'd like to win something big as I've always been second and that doesn't bode well with my competitive personality.



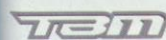
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WRITES of Way

STORY: MARK WILLIAMS

Continuing the 'Right to Ride' campaign, Mark Williams takes a closer look at the Government's response to its RoW consultation document...

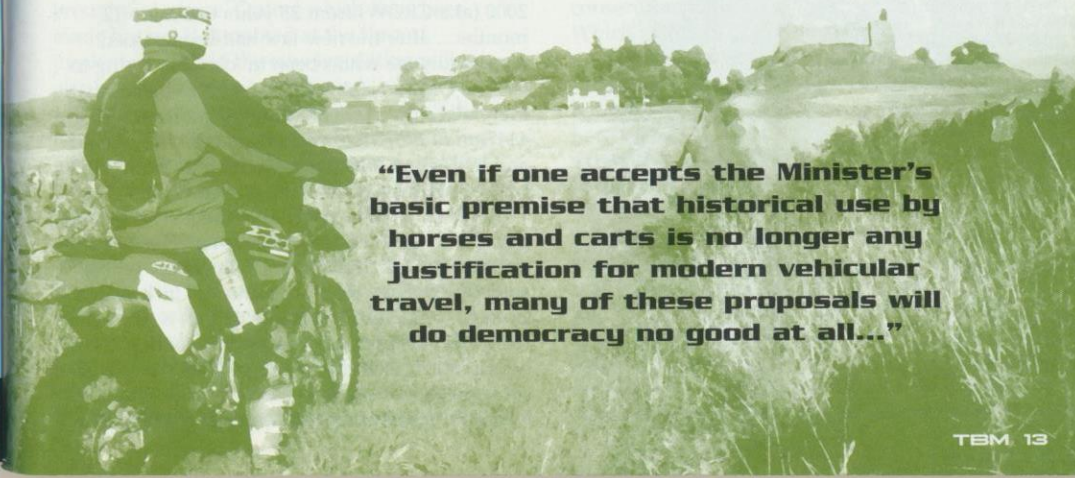
Michael RoWs the BOATs

In last month's TBM we published a brief appraisal of the government's official response to DEFRA's year-old consultation document, 'The Use of Mechanically Propelled Vehicles on Rights of Way' - or MPVs on RoW to use a more convenient shorthand - which appeared just before we went to press.

The fuller analysis of this somewhat fearfully awaited text (promised by us in the last issue) is slightly less optimistic - a state of affairs that was as much down to the clever, sometimes glib composition of the Minister's introduction, as it

was to our quick scanning of its 104 pages.

As has been noted before, the extent and even the scope of the response to DEFRA's original consultation paper took both civil servants and the minister by surprise. A total of 98 organisations responded formally, of which by far the largest percentage were 34 MPV user groups buttressed by nine more related business associations... which sounds encouraging until you learn that there were 23 non-MPV groups, 14 parish and town councils and seven environmental and residents groups all of whom were in favour of DEFRA's original proposals. In fact the



"Even if one accepts the Minister's basic premise that historical use by horses and carts is no longer any justification for modern vehicular travel, many of these proposals will do democracy no good at all..."

final outcome was evenly split, 50/50 between the pros and the antis.

On top of these organisations were formal responses from 4662 individuals, 905 from TRF members and a further 739 from non-affiliated bikers (which we'd like to think included many TBM readers) all but one of whom were, unsurprisingly, against the proposals. And interestingly, even the 147 Walkers and 67 Landowners who responded didn't all endorse the government's proposals.

Continuing the numbers game - if only because it makes salutary reading - there were apparently 9045 individual letters to the minister, 1643 of them from motorcyclists which was over a hundred more than the total number of walkers. Unfortunately in terms of predictable anti-MPV user opinion they were aided by 4233 'form' postcards which had been inserted into every copy of the Country Land & Business Owners Association's magazine.

Devil in the Detail

Nevertheless 'The Government's Framework for Action' purports to be even-handed towards all

WRITES of Way

users of these precious rural resources, and to this end it takes note of the weight of opinion on each of the major proposals made in the original consultation paper which, for brevity's sake, this feature largely excludes. But on careful reading an undeniable bias against recreational MPV activities emerges and it is, I think, fair to say that on this evidence, anyone who thinks trailriding can continue in its current form is kidding themselves.

Firstly, Alun Michael's intention to impose a new category of 'Restricted Byway' once the appropriate legislation has been enacted, remains undiminished (indeed this was an original provision of the CROW Act). Restricted byways will, at the very least, prohibit MPVs and may - depending on local bylaws - even prevent use by mountain bikers and horse riders. Restricted byway status will inevitably apply to Roads Used as Public Paths (RuPPs) which have not yet been accorded the higher status of a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) by the time consuming and often mysterious mechanism of applying for a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO).

The proposal is 'to introduce legislation to provide that any future use of a footpath or bridleway that would (immediately before the commencement of the relevant new legislation) have given rise to a public right of way for vehicles shall be treated as giving rise to restricted byway rights, but no other public rights of way. This will prevent any future usage giving rise to claims for public rights of way for mechanically propelled vehicles.'

The Cruellest Cut

You may recall that in the next breath DEFRA planned to reduce the window of opportunity to make the necessary claims for DMMOs on RuPPs (or indeed bridleways and even footpaths) as set out in The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (aka CROW) from 25 years to a mere 12 months... after the new law had been passed. And as anyone who's been involved in trying to make a DMMO claim will know, this meant that there was little hope of adding significantly to the 4147km of BOATS already registered in England and Wales and effectively banning us from the huge number of RuPPs that currently exist.

However as also reported in the last issue, and as the consequence of expensive legal research mounted by the Trail Riders Fellowship, where such RuPPs have the dual status of Unclassified Council (or County) Roads (UCRs) it is more than likely that Restricted Byway status could NOT be applied. The higher status of UCRs may well prove to be a saving grace, but in cases where it is not, the government still intends to bring in a

12 month cut-off date.

Mitigating against this it notes that 'We believe that it is fair to provide a reasonable period of notice before implementing the legislation that will recognise only restricted byway rights and extinguish any higher rights... (But) we also recognise local authorities' concerns about the likely surge in applications which will be made before the new legislation curtails byway open to all traffic claims. While this will have an impact in the short term, in the longer term authorities will be faced with less contentious claims for restricted byways.'

The report goes on: 'We consider that the best approach is to seek to put the new legislation on to the statute book, and bring it into force through a separate commencement order. This means the relevant legislation would be in the public domain but would not come into force until the commencement order is made. (The National Assembly for Wales would be responsible for making the commencement order in Wales.) This will provide room for flexibility in determining when we implement the legislation.'

Which to you and me means a new act of parliament which could take several years to bring onto the statute book, or 'as soon as Parliamentary time allows'. Moreover in an ambiguous sop to the differing views on the contentious one year cut-off date - respondents argued for anything between instant clamp-down and a ten year window - the separate commencement order could in theory be held back for some years after the law is passed. Or not, as the case may be.

Some Small Comfort

More definite is the statement that 'It is our intention that the register (of DMMOs) will include all claims that have not been determined at the time new legislation is brought into force. Orders which have been made but not determined at the time of implementation of the new legislation will also be processed to a conclusion.'

Which is moderately good news for all the local TRF members who are currently slaving away preparing DMMO applications, not that this should give rise to any complacency on our part. There are some 7000km of RuPPs that could and in many cases *must* be turned into BOATs (of which, incidentally, there are about 4000km worth) if we want to continue riding them. But at least Alun Michael's men are prepared to allow claims made on the basis of historical 'evidence of lawful use by mechanically propelled vehicles' to continue to the original CROW cut off date of 2025. Which may well prove an important,

practical concession.

Moreover 'restricted byways which are shown to carry mechanically propelled vehicular rights and which meet the criteria of byways open to all traffic can still be upgraded by means of a definitive map modification order.'

Dirty Tricks Dept

Counterbalancing that and one or two other rays of sunlight is the assertion that 'we intend to issue advice on the use of traffic regulation orders (TROs) pre-emptively,' which means that local authorities who 'are concerned that future use by mechanically propelled vehicles may damage rights of way... may use their traffic regulation order powers pre-emptively.'

In other words if some local RoW or Highways officer thinks that MPVs may cause damage to a BOAT, they can slap a six-month TRO on it, consecutively for up to 18 months if necessary. Which would of course give them ample time to apply for restricted byway status.

That, to this writer, is the most insidious item hidden away in this weighty tome but following hard on its heels is the intention 'to legislate to extinguish general public prescriptive rights based on illegal use of rights of way by mechanically propelled vehicles since 1930.'

What this refers to is a High Court case where it was judged that 'there may well be instances where illegal vehicular use under what is now the Road Traffic Act 1988 may give rise to vehicular rights' if such rights once existed. Michael's intention is to change the law so that such judgements could not henceforth be made, which is more bad news.

Broadly speaking, that just about covers the legislative aspects of the original consultation document and the responses it has produced and I think it's fair to say that the original proposals, whilst still mainly intact, now contain some caveats, qualifications and revisions. These may lessen the immediate negative impact on trailriding, whilst nonetheless ensuring that within a few years there will certainly be fewer opportunities for us to legally enjoy the nation's network of byways.

And the word 'legally' is particularly appropriate, because you will recall that much of the impetus for DEFRA's proposals was based on the illegal use of existing RoW and the use of illegal MPVs. As has been noted in TBM and indeed the original consultation paper, the police already have powers to arrest and prosecute those who ride or drive on byways that aren't vehicular, and confiscate their vehicles, too. But providing the resources to do this effectively is altogether another matter when both police budgets and manpower are already sorely stretched coping with what some would consider more pressing criminal activities...

Local authorities who responded to the consultation paper apparently 'suggested that part of the problem in dealing with illegal use was that the police lacked the commitment to take action,' so the government is suggesting that 'local authorities and police authorities should

be encouraged to develop and publicise policies on dealing with illegal use of rights of way. We believe that police authorities will more readily engage where an integrated partnership approach is in place.'

And it goes on 'an inherent difficulty in rural crime is catching the perpetrators in the act. Targeting 'hotspots' has proved successful in areas where an integrated approach is in place. Rights of way officers, National Park and other local authority rangers and park wardens all have a role in assisting the police in information gathering. Similarly, the public also has a role to inform the police where illegal activity is taking place, especially where there is recurrent illegal activity.'

Snitch on a Trailrider?

Which is all very well and may, at least in the latter respect, benefit from the 'Snitch on Your Neighbour' culture that's slowly emerging in Britain... Although noting the registration on a muddy numberplate when you're cold, wet and miles from anywhere and haven't got a biro in your kagoule is another matter altogether.

But although DEFRA says that 'proper signposting and the appropriate use of physical barriers are two means by which rights can be clearly indicated' and that 'well maintained routes also tend to encourage responsible use', there is no mention of the extra Treasury funding that might encourage them. A pretty glaring discrepancy considering that many if not most county councils can't even afford to finance their existing maintenance obligations. DEFRA's final word on this is therefore the rather glib assertion that 'We will be working closely with the police, local authorities, other government departments, landowners, rights of way user groups and other stakeholders to deliver a comprehensive enforcement guidance document.'

In this context, it's also salutary to note that Michael and his men 'are working towards an updated and revised edition of Making the Best of Byways. This guidance document, commissioned by the outgoing Tory government but published under Labour in 1997, made many sensible and constructive recommendations, many of which were directed at local authorities. Had they been fully implemented there might perhaps be more harmony between the various interest groups who work and play in the countryside. But, once again crucially, they relied on the good intentions and adequate funding of those self-same local authorities.

Unsurprisingly, although many local authorities signed up to it, many did not and those that did, failed to do what was required

of them, eg improve signage, conduct proper consultation on DMMOs and TROs etc. Michael in his intro to the response document doesn't hint at how he thinks Making the Best of Byways should change, but 'invites views' on its revision.

What might give us some comfort, however, are the conclusions of the government-funded Faber Maunsell report into Motor Vehicles on Byways Open to All Traffic, published at the same time as the DEFRA response document (which in fact draws extensively from it) and briefly referred to in last month's TBM.

Faber-Maunsell carefully monitored just 20 English BOATs to compile their report and despite the tiny sample, the results make interesting reading. Whilst finding - surprise, surprise - that 60-percent of vehicles using these BOATs had four or more wheels (ie were agricultural) and that use by such vehicles was more or less the same on weekdays as weekends, motorcycle use was predominately at weekend.

The report also concluded that 'Deterioration in surface condition is most likely where ground conditions are weak (47-percent by length, of the byways surveyed were classed as weak); drainage is poor (70-percent by length, of byways were without either natural or man-made drainage); traffic flows are high; and axle loadings are high.' So no great revelations there then, nor when it added that 'Motor vehicles can have a beneficial effect. They prevent byways becoming overgrown. The Cambridgeshire site with an average daily flow of 0.1 motor vehicles was close to becoming overgrown. Part of the Suffolk byway was completely overgrown.'

Equally predictable was the conclusion, under the heading Impacts of the Passage of Motor Vehicles on Others, that 'Noise from motorcycles causes most concern and, during surveying in Cornwall, a group of motorcyclists operating over a network of byways within a confined geographical area resulted in perceptible noise for much of the day.' Referring to residents with dwellings adjoining byways, Faber-Maunsell noted that 'Their major concerns are motorcyclists, the speed of vehicles, lack of respect for other users and both larger vehicles and recreational vehicles causing rutting.'

Easy Options are the Worst Options

Unfortunately whilst acknowledging that damage to BOATs by vehicles in general and motorcyclists in particular is limited, especially when byways have been properly maintained by the authorities whose duty it is to do so, Faber-Maunsell's major conclusion is 'that measures to control or restrict traffic on byways open to all

traffic would best be applied on a case by case basis', whilst acknowledging that TROs may be the best means of doing so, and despite noting that TROs 'have greatest impact on recreational users of byways.'

It will be interesting to see whether any re-writing of Making the Best of Byways absolves from local authorities the responsibility for consulting with interested parties (eg MPV user groups) before they reach for the TROs and Restricted Byways solutions that the government appears to see as the quickest, easiest and arguably dirtiest means of criminalising off-road bikers. Otherwise we might be in for even more rude, crude shocks to our RoW systems than we currently have to endure. And even if one accepts the Minister's basic premise that historical use by horses and carts is no longer any justification for modern vehicular travel, many of these proposals will do democracy no good at all...

Main Points

- 1 Downgrading of RuPPs to Restricted Byway status will go ahead
- 2 Existing BOATs will be preserved
- 3 Claims for further BOATs will be processed to the conclusion after the new, truncated cut-off date
- 4 Determination of cut-off date for BOAT claims date still unclear
- 5 Police and local authorities to be given clearer guidance on enforcement and management, but no extra funds

WRITES of Way



Forget skiing or bobsled this year for your winter kicks - ice racing's where it's at. Our Canadian cousins show TBM exactly how to keep it cool...

If you think British winters are a bit on the nippy side, try Canada. Well known for its harsh climate, snow, ice and extreme cold temperatures which abound from December through to late March.

These ultra-cold conditions produce ice, and lots of it! Most ponds and lakes freeze solid, providing a virtual freeway for cross country skiers, snowmobile riders, ice skaters and... motorcycle ice-racers.

A Good Screw

Prepping the bikes to race starts with sorting out ice tyres. These are made by driving 500 screws into a (preferably new) knobbly tyre. The screws have a regular wood screw-type thread with a hex head, but true ice screws use a much taller head profile, with very sharp ridges and are made from hardened steel. The length used varies somewhat, but the best tyres use one-inch screws front and rear, meaning they protrude right through the tyre and into the tube area. To solve the problem of punctures, liners are made, often from old street bike tyres cut to fit.

The reason for using long screws is twofold. Shorter screws can be torn out of the tyre and the length adds rigidity to the knobs preventing traction-robbing flex. Screw patterns and angles



Covers on the tyres help keep the 'spikes' good and sharp...

are a bit of a grey area; it's more a case of seeing what works and what doesn't.

Next comes the delicate task of fitting the tyres without cutting your hands to ribbons wrestling a double-stiff tyre carcass with 500 screws onto each rim. To make the ice tyres effective, hard ground needs to be avoided as the sharpness is

ICY Cold PLAY

WORDS AND PICS: JOE TREEN



Over in Canada they don't put their enduro bikes away for the winter... They fit some studded tyres and then go race against their mates...



WINTER

critical - covers are fitted to the tyres to permit loading the bike onto pick-ups and the like.

Icing On The Lake

Then there's the track itself. Minimum ice thickness is usually 30cm, and the course is typically an oval shape run in a counterclockwise direction, although some incorporate a full road racing-type affair. If oval-only circuits are run, then normally only one side of the tyres are studded as they'll never see a right-hand turn.

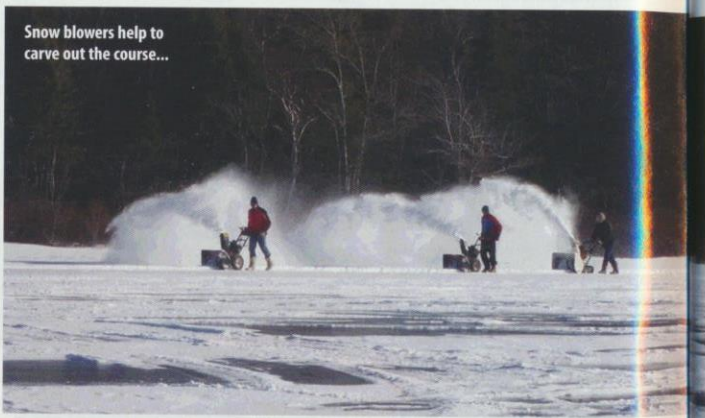
Normally the track is marked out using a length of rope allowing about an 18-20m radius for the turns. In most cases the ice is partially or totally snow covered, so it's not hard to pace off the radius with somebody holding the rope stationary at one end. Once one corner is marked the rope is used again to measure off the straight section. Again this length varies, but typically it's 60-80m for the straights. Once paced off, snow-blowers and plows are used to clear any standing snow. Snow on the lake is a mixed blessing - it's a pain to get rid of but provides clear track boundaries. Snow banks also make nice barriers as falling down on smooth, clear ice means you slide a long way.

A track of this size will permit speeds often exceeding 80kmh (approx 50mph).

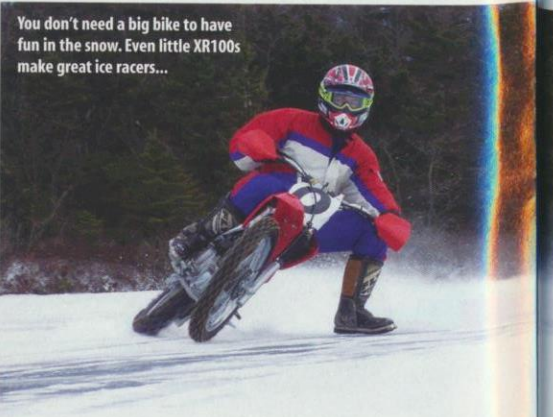
You're As Cold As Ice

Going that fast and with air temperatures anywhere from -5C to -25C, frostbite is a big concern. Decent thermals and a rugged wind-proof outer shell will do the job, although it's quite easy to overheat due to the physical exertion of riding on ice. A balaclava is normally worn under an off-road helmet and goggles - you won't need your vents, so tape 'em up.

When the thermometer says it's minus ten degrees, it's time to dig out the enduro bike and go 'lakeside'...



Snow blowers help to carve out the course...



You don't need a big bike to have fun in the snow. Even little XR100s make great ice racers...



Thanks to Joe Treen for writing this story at short notice... And to his buddy Heath at r2wtrials.com for letting us in on a great sport...



Motocross boots are pretty much a prerequisite as the protection is critical with buzz-saw tyres all around you, but they don't provide much insulation. Chemical hand warmers are heavenly when placed on the insoles of your boots. Cold hands are also a problem, but handguards work well to deflect the cutting wind - the larger the better. Another answer is heated grips - but the best solution is a combination of both.

Skating On Thin Ice

Nearly any motorcycle can be ice raced, but motocross and enduro bikes are the most popular, although some of the best fun to be had is actually on mini-bikes! Honda XR100s are very popular too although work best on smaller track layouts.

But what is it really like? At first it feels like you're riding on loose shingle but you soon realise the tyres grip better the harder you push them. Simply tear down the straight and throw the bike into the turn and don't use any brakes! Just back off the throttle and fling it down in the most aggressive way possible.

Good ice tyres stick like fresh slicks on clean asphalt and lean angles are almost limitless - dragging the left peg is a common occurrence. As you pick up the throttle, the bike settles, the rear tyre bites and you roll the throttle to the stop. The drive out of turns is similar to railing a perfect berm, only the entrance is much more dramatic.

Addictive doesn't cover it - it's only one of two activities I can think of that make whiling away a long cold winter so pleasurable...



HAVING A SPOT OF TECHNICAL TROUBLE WITH YOUR DIRTBIKE? WELL MAYBE TBM CAN HELP. OUR RESIDENT TECHNICAL GURU, STEVE PLAIN, IS ON HAND TO HELP WITH YOUR MECHANICAL MALADIES. SIMPLY SEND IN YOUR QUERY TO US VIA: tech@trailbikemag.com ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN SUBMIT A QUESTION VIA OUR WEBSITE, TRAILBIKEMAG.COM. ENCLOSE YOUR FULL NAME AND ADDRESS BECAUSE THE BEST SUBMISSION WINS A PAIR OF MICHELIN ACIO ROAD-LEGAL MX TYRES.!

Slow Starter

Hi Steve

I hope you can help. I own a 1993 kick-start DR350S and find it very tricky to start, hot or cold. The engine also has a flat-spot when you blip the throttle just off idle. From one-eighth throttle onwards it's fine but after riding on, say, half-throttle for a while it will not idle very well and will often stall and be a pain to restart. The bike has covered about 15000 miles and the engine seems to be okay with loads of compression. I've had one guy take a look at it and he fitted a new pilot jet and a new spark plug, but this has made no difference. Any ideas would be a great help. Thanks for your time.

Chris
Via email

Chris, it sounds to me like you need to give the carb a good cleanout. Make sure that there's no dirt in the jets and use an aerosol of carb cleaner to blow through all of the drillings in the carb body and ensure that they're clear. Once you've done this, I'd only increase the size of the pilot jet if the problem persists.

Get Packing

Dear Steve

What's the best way to re-pack a two-stroke silencer? Can you over pack it? What's the best material to use? Can you use loft insulation?

And associated with this, what's the best way to clean/de-gunk the exhaust pipe, particularly if it's got a chrome finish? Are there any modern day chemicals that make it an easy job?

Gerald Andrews
Via email



Repacking your bike's end-can is vital to keeping it running sweet and quiet, and is something that many riders overlook. Once you've disassembled the silencer, throw away the old packing. You'll need to burn all of the carbon deposits off the perforated metal core using a blow-torch, and after leaving it to cool give it a clean with a wire brush.

Don't use loft insulation as packing material, get down your local dealer and buy the proper stuff - it's pretty cheap. Wrap the material firmly around the core, but not TOO tightly. Then rebuild.

When it comes to cleaning, you don't want to use anything too abrasive or caustic on a chrome finish, and whatever you use should be cleaned off before it dries. Try a degreaser such as Gunk (the stuff in the orange packaging), paraffin, or perhaps carb cleaner and test it out on a small section before splashing it all over the pipe.

As this month's winner, Gerald, once you've sorted your exhaust you'll have to fit your new Michelin AC10 tyres.

Put the Mochas On It

Dear Steve

I'm in desperate need of help. I have a 2003 YZ450F which I've put a lighting kit on to make it road legal. I've been using it as a winter hack to get to work, which proved great fun until the bloody thing



STEVE PLAIN IS BOTH AN EX-CHAMPIONSHIP CLASS ENDURO RIDER AND EX-WEC MECHANIC, HAVING SPANNED FOR FOUR-TIME WORLD CHAMPION PAUL EDMONDSON AMONGST OTHERS. NOW RETIRED FROM TOP-LEVEL COMPETITION, HE RUNS STEVE PLAIN MOTORCYCLES (01597 82587) IN LLANDRINDOD WELLS AND IS A RESPECTED AUTHORITY ON DIRTBIKE MAINTENANCE.

became a pain to start and had signs of 'white stuff' around the coil and stator.

Anyway, I took the engine out and gave it to a specialist to look at. He found nothing too major, a loose head bolt, a couple of valves in need of shims and a rusty water-pump shaft. So, with it all tested, I put the engine back in the bike and had about 30 fun-filled miles until it left me high and dry again.

The cause appears to be the white 'cappuccino' residue around the ignition coil. Now once again there is no sign of cross-contamination in either the water or the oil, and there was absolutely no spark at all until I pulled the stator off and drenched the coil in WD40.

I've had the engine re-checked and even pressure tested the cooling system so we know there's no water leak. It's only the magnesium case that gets the froth, the block side is clean. What we currently think is that either the oil is emulsifying and shorting the coil, or the air around the crank is condensing. Have you got any ideas?

Piers
Via email

The first thing I'd try, Piers, is change the brand of oil you're using. It needs to be 10W-40 and I would use semi-synthetic. This may just make the difference...

Diesel Donk

Dear Steve

I hope you can shed some light on the problem I'm having with my 2002 Honda CRF450R. I initially borrowed the bike to ride the 2004 Weston Beach Race and it finished the race okay. But when I got the bike home to clean and prep it for its return to a friend's shop it sounded like a Fordson Major tractor. So my mechanic friend and I removed various parts to find that there was no coolant and the balance shaft bearings (and housing) were shot.

I took the cases apart and a visit to my local engineers fixed the bearing housing. We put the engine back together with a new balance shaft and bearings, waterpump bearings and seals, main bearings, con rod, piston, rings, clutch

and clutch basket. Job done... or so we thought.

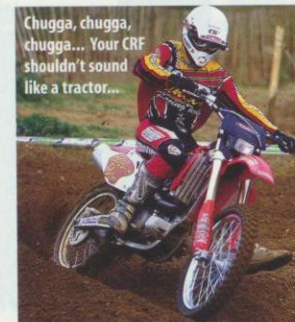
With the engine back in the frame we fired it up and it still sounded like a tractor. So out it came again! This time it received new gearbox bearings and we checked all of the tolerances from the manual. The motor was then given to a specialist engine builder to put back together, so that he could check every moving part.

When I received the engine back this time (along with a bill for £230), I thought it must be fixed but it still sounds as rough as ever. In the end I had to buy the bike from my friend and so far I've spent over £1000 on the motor alone. Please help, as I want to sell the bike and am wondering if I'm going to have to resort to breaking it for spares.

Billy Woods
Via email

This is a tricky one, Billy, as it's particularly hard to diagnose a problem without actually hearing the noise. You've obviously been through most of the options, however, I do have a couple of suggestions. First off, have you replaced the cam-chain tensioner? If not, this could be failing under load. Alternatively, it could be that the primary drive gears have been damaged. Either way, it just goes to reinforce Weston's reputation as a bit of a wrecker. Good luck...

TBM reserve the right to edit any technical query submitted to the magazine. Submission of a query will not guarantee inclusion within the magazine or a response. TBM do not take any responsibility for (and will NOT be held liable for) the accuracy of technical advice provided, nor will we be held liable for any consequence or expense arising from following such advice. All technical advice is acted upon at the sole risk of the person(s) carrying out such advice. Don't say we didn't warn you..!





DIRTY

It was another one of those Editor / Contributor discussions that His Melbership and I love to indulge in. And he always wins.

Melber: 'Where's your column Evans, you miserable worm?'

Me: 'Err well, it's coming - there's just one problem - I haven't got anything to write about.'

Melber: 'What d'you mean, nothing

THE MIND IS WILLING BUT THE BODY IS WEAK, SAYS CHRIS EVANS...

to write about - there must be something - what have you been doing since you got back from the Dak?'

Me: 'Recovering.'

Melber: 'Well that's going to make for interesting reading isn't it?'

Me: 'I've got plenty more Dakar stories...'

Melber: 'Very topical - you know when the next issue comes out don't you?'

Me: 'Well yeah, I know - Perhaps I could do some Dakar related stuff (hopeful tone of voice)?'

Melber: 'Harrumph.' Brrrr (unhelpful tone of hung up telephone).

Me: (Speaking to hung up telephone) 'I'll take that as a 'maybe' then shall I?'

You see the problem with the Dakar, apart from the amount of time it takes for me to get over it, is that a lot of associated stuff happens after it. There's the official book to translate, a round of interviews to be arranged for the riders that I do the press for, lots of e-mails from potential entrants. And that's not to mention all the usual office bull that had built up while I was away. And added to that, this year,

I met a geezer on the rallye who has, without knowing it, had a considerable impact on my post-Dakar existence.

Now don't worry, I'm not about to 'come out' (though the way things are going at the moment in that department, it is an option I might have to start seriously considering). No the geezer in question had an impact because he was a doctor on the rallye who was taking care of the Red Bull KTM USA team. And one day as we were waiting for the riders to come in we got round to talking about a subject dear to my heart - me - and more specifically me and my body.

It turns out that this bloke, Jonathan I think his name was, had written a series of articles for an American magazine. These articles were entitled 'Moto-X for the over 30s'. On hearing this I had to ask him, 'and when are you going to do, Enduro for the over 40s?'

'Good idea,' he said, 'what in particular do you think I should cover?'

Well you can imagine - I was off. My list of bike-related ailments is a long and (for me) very fascinating one, and frankly I hardly knew where to begin - or end. Fallen arches from continuously standing up on the bike, dodgy left foot from a long ago broken bone, dicky ankle from years of kick starting XT500s, iffy wrists from years of WP front forks (only joking Mr KTM), tennis elbow, stiff right shoulder, bow-legs, sore back, stiff neck (too much viagra taken in a reclining position, perhaps? - Ed)... By the time I had finished I could tell that Dr Jonathan was impressed by my degree of decrepitude. So impressed in fact that he had drifted into deep thought and his eyes had begun to glaze over.

Barely pausing for breath, I then started to badger him for solutions. A bit more

'MY LIFE-LONG AMBITION OF BEING ABLE TO DO THE 'VIENNESE OYSTER' CAN NOW ONLY BE A FEW MONTHS AWAY...'

cycling maybe, regular gym visits perhaps? I was thinking cardio vascular and the other thing whose name I can't remember, but has to do with building up muscle. He, it turns out, was thinking about something a little less heroic. Physiotherapy.

'What!' I cried, 'but that's for girls, not ruffly tuffly off-roaders.'

'Well no actually Chris (don't you just hate it the way Americans put your name in every sentence), I think a good physio could help with a lot of your current problems and prevent future ones occurring.'

Which was how two weeks later I found myself dressed in just a pair of 1970s running-shorts being closely scrutinised by a somewhat humourless woman of antipodean origins. And apparently there's quite a lot to do.

For the first one-hour appointment we just concentrated on the lower half of my finely honed physique and I walked away with a thick file of stick-man diagrams of exercises that in total take me an hour a day. The second session focused on the rest of me and resulted in two files and another hour of Houdini-type contortions. The weirdest thing is that none of these exercises have anything to do with building up muscle - well not muscle in the sense of bulging biceps anyway - but with stretching. You see it turns out - and this might come as a complete surprise to you - that I'm very 'tight'.

More surprising still, just two weeks later, and despite me not always sticking to Miss Smiley's draconian stretching regime, I can actually feel a considerable difference. I have no idea why attaching my ankle to a flimsy bit of elastic should make any difference whatsoever but it has and frankly I'm very, very happy about it. My life-long ambition of being able to do the 'Viennese Oyster' can now only be a few months away. More importantly still, my bike riding life expectancy is now stretching (geddit?) far off over the horizon.

So to all you stiff over-40s out there, and to any slightly-rigid just-under-40yr-old motorcycle magazine editors who may be reading this, I say this - give it a try - you might be pleasantly surprised by the results...



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COMPLETELY RUTTED



Ploughing through DEFRA's response document (see Writes of Way this issue) on a 13 hour flight back from Malaysia a couple of weeks ago - hey, I know how to have fun - I was pleasantly surprised to note a recognition by DEFRA that not only do motorcycles represent a relatively small percentage of MPV usage of UK RoW, but they also do far less damage than other vehicles.

**FOUR WHEELS BAD,
TWO WHEELS GOOD
RECKONS MARK WILLIAMS...**

Well okay, it's a commonsense conclusion, but it was nice to see the government admitting as such.

And this same report also noted what many of us take for granted, namely that some MPV user groups deliberately seek out terrain which presents a challenge for them, all the better to overcome.

And of course overcoming it is where we sometimes start getting into trouble. Alun Michael in his forward to the DEFRA paper specifically refers to recreational MPV owners who abuse existing RoW in this way, and perhaps in some cases he's right. At least he's right if he means some of the less responsible 4x4 boys, because of course us lot consider ourselves far less irresponsible in such matters. (Or are we just kidding ourselves?)

But sidestepping such hypocrisy for a moment, I do think it's about time we recognised and loudly

complained about the tendency to lump all recreational off-road MPV users together and even, as has been the case in the recent past, to ally ourselves with them in opposing the DEFRA proposals. The widely held beliefs that there's strength in numbers, and that we're better off united in a common front against the government are in my opinion, quite frankly, naïve.

Why? Because at the end of the day I believe that many of these guys are not particularly interested in exercise, fresh air, enjoying the more remote rural vistas that ancient RoW facilitate, the physical and mental skills involved in negotiating tough terrain or even - as at least some of us still are - the cultural roots of the historic roads we ride. No, cooped up in their Land-Rovers and Fourtraks, they are mainly interested in ploughing through the deepest possible bogs and ascending the steepest rock inclines.

The only time they really get out and experience the great outdoors is when they become completely stuck and have to hitch their winches to a convenient tree, or another Landie. Such incidents are the acme of machismo, apparently.

I know this not only because I occasionally read the various mags that cater to them - purely in the interests of research, you understand - but because their behaviour is routinely observable when I'm out riding. Back in mid-January three of us were investigating some trails

MARK WILLIAMS

BUT WHEN THE 4WD BOYS CAN CAUSE PROPORTIONALLY SO MUCH MORE DAMAGE THAN US LOT, AND CONTRIBUTE PROPORTIONALLY LESS TO THE EFFORTS BEING MADE TO PROMOTE THE RESPONSIBLE USE OF OUR REMAINING TRAILS, THEN I MAKE NO APOLOGIES FOR MY VIEWS...

recently researched as being legal for MPVs when we found ourselves stuck behind several 4x4s at the start of a lane muttering into walkie-talkies, smoking snouts and looking important. As we - just - managed to squeeze past them (which is another thing I hate about 4x4 drivers, they're BOAT-hogs) one of them warned us that we'd probably never make it through the grim conditions that lay ahead. 'One of our lads just about got through,' he explained, 'but he was on Grizzlies' (a type of tyre, I assume).

Having recently traversed a track that involved a great deal of sweat, cursing and manhandling, this didn't bode well, but in fact we made a gentle descent - with barely any footwork - along what was only an averagely muddy Welsh trail, only to hear Mr Grizzly at the other end muttering into his walkie-talkie that 'They've got through' as though this was some majestic feat of human endeavour.

Call me a reactionary old snob if you will, and you probably will, but I just don't understand why these people bother in the first place. And in the second place if they didn't bother, then the rest of us off-road users might have an easier life. Yet another local well regarded BOAT, known as *Water Break It's Neck*, has recently had a TRO slapped on it because it has become seriously eroded in parts, which the Council's highways officer specifically blamed on 4x4s, adding that most of them came from way outside the area.

One local councillor actually went as far as to suggest that these urban weekend warriors should pay a toll which could be used to finance the necessary repairs, an admittedly daft idea but one which nevertheless betrayed an underlying irritation which I share.

Yes, there are also plenty of trailriders who pitch up in Mid-Wales every weekend from over the hills and a long way off, and some of

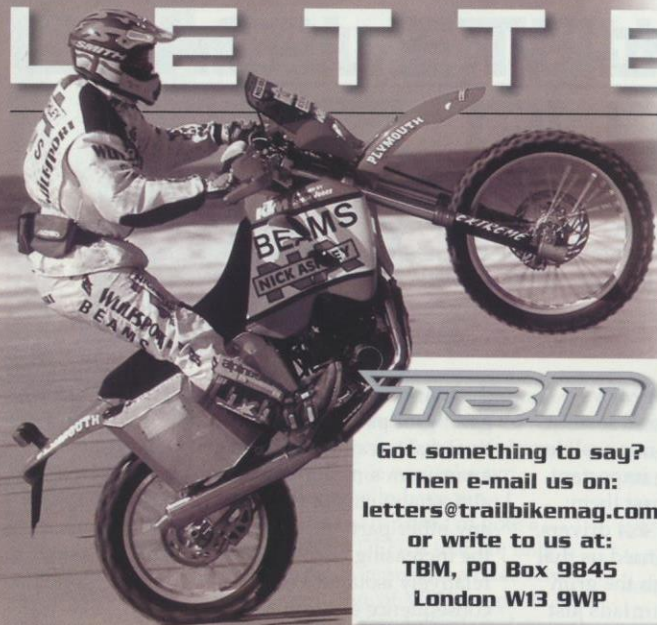
them are commercially chaperoned in bloody great groups which do our public image, and the local terrain, no good whatsoever. But apart from a motorway system that renders almost any part of the country accessible to any other part of the country in a few hours, the increasing concentration of MPV use on relatively isolated Welsh trails is the inevitable consequence of diminishing access to RoW in less rural parts of Britain.

And the more of them that are riding around on four wheels as opposed to two, the more *Water Break Its Necks* there are likely to be. Yes, I realise that such partisanship borders on bigotry, and I accept that Rights of Way should by definition be applicable to all and sundry. But when the 4WD boys cause proportionally so much more damage than us lot, and contribute proportionally less to the efforts being made to promote the responsible use of our remaining trails, then I make no apologies for my views.

If the 4x4 umbrella organisations were spending the tens of thousands of pounds the TRF have committed themselves to in order to determine the legal status of UCRs, seek judicial reviews of contentious DMMO downgrades or provide legal support for local groups fighting our corner at public enquiries, then I might not be so dismissive. But they certainly don't appear to be. They are, however, happy to benefit from the RoW victories, great or small, that we as TRF members have financed with our membership fees and fighting fund donations. And without so much as a nod of recognition, let alone gratitude. And in the current political climate, frankly that's just not good enough...

All views expressed in this column are Mark Williams' own, and not necessarily held by other editorial staff at TBM!

LETTERS



**Got something to say?
Then e-mail us on:
letters@trailbikemag.com
or write to us at:
TBM, PO Box 9845
London W13 9WP**

Go on, Insult me!

Dear TBM

I'm amazed you printed my letter in TBM113 because it was a bit of a whinge at numpties and officious council twits. But wait! what's this? No snappy sarcastic response? I always thought the purpose of writing in to the mag was to allow yourself to be belittled and made to look like a berk. The content is surely secondary to this! Where's my insult? By letting me off scott-free you've cheated me out of even more ridicule from my mates.

Geraint Rogers
Via email

Moron!

KTM Beta!

Dear TBM

I am writing in response to the recent 450 test you published in the Jan '05 issue. Having owned and ridden both an '03 and '04 KTM 450 for the last two years, I disagree with your conclusion between the KTM and the Beta. I had the pleasure to ride the two bikes back to back recently and the front end on my KTM is not as positive or as planted as the Beta. I feel the Beta is a far easier and more confidence-inspiring bike than the KTM, to the extent that I am not purchasing a KTM for the '05 season.

Andrew Collins
Via email

But are you going to buy a Beta, Andrew? For more opinions on this subject, check

out our five-way 250 four-stroke shootout in this issue which featured the smaller capacity versions ridden by five different riders...



Who says that the KTM 450's front-end isn't planted? Our test bike's certainly was...

Life-Changing

Dear TBM

First I must say that since getting my first dirt bike last June and finding TBM in the papershop last August my life has changed. The wife wonders why I come home after a ride out with the biggest grin on my face since finding the PIN number to the joint account.

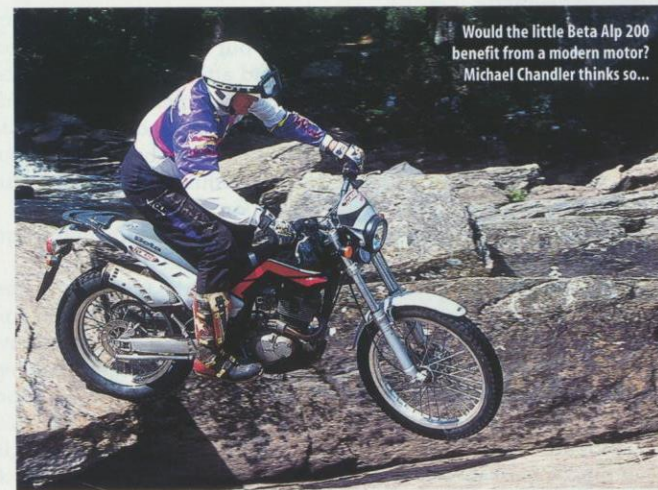
I'm fortunate to live a few miles from Scott Trial country so the tracks and lanes are great to learn on with plenty of choice, which brings me to my question. I've got a Beta Alp 200 which is a great starter bike but I'm thinking of changing to a more modern 250 four-stroke, but choice does seem very limited. The Honda XR and Yamaha TT-R are both based on old engines, and the Honda CRF and Yamaha WR-F are race machines possibly not suited to a bimble.

Suzuki DR-Z400s are much too heavy and again pretty old tech. So, possibly a KTM 250 but maybe it's a bit of a handful? Perhaps you could ask Beta if they can run a few KTM 250 engines down their Alp production line, instead of the old 200/350 Suzi's... then they might be on to a winner?

Michael Chandler
Richmond, North Yorks

PS: Any chance of an article on road legal trail tyres?

Nice idea about the modern



Would the little Beta Alp 200 benefit from a modern motor? Michael Chandler thinks so...

engined Beta Michael, however, take a look at our five-way 250 shootout this month - you might find something there that'll suit you. An article on road-legal trail tyres? Er... that story's been ten years in the making, and still counting mate!

DEFRA Ears

Dear TBM

I have just read and re-read Brian Thompson's excellent letter in the December issue of Trail (the TRF's monthly bulletin) and I am incensed.

Firstly, we have one year in which to lodge byway claims. That year is almost up. Every-one else has 24 years. Why hasn't someone served a writ on Adolf Michael and DEFRA and taken it all the way to the European Court of Human Rights?

Secondly, just what have the various Rights of Way

officers been doing for the last 55 years? Brian says: 'most county councils chose to ignore their Section 53 HA 80 duty to make byways... they opted for an easier life making footpaths and bridleways...'

These lential-eating, whining, hard-done-by, lard-arsed civil servants are guilty of dereliction of duty. If they were in the armed forces they would be court-martialled and hopefully shot!

All the evidence that we are supposed to collate in order to claim a byway is out there in the public domain for anyone to use. Perhaps I could let them off the collection of user evidence, but Tythe maps, Enclosure awards, Finance Act details etc could just as easily have been referred to by these scrounging imbeciles.

If they had done their respective jobs correctly we wouldn't be in this mess. Fifty-five years of 37-hour



LETTERS

weeks and the 'professionals' can't get it right. What chance have us amateurs got (in our spare time) of claiming anything significant in the remaining time available?

We should have every Right of Way re-entered on the Definitive Map as a BOAT. If the red-socked, bobble-hatted bunch don't like it, let them prove it to the contrary - in only one year!

Handguns... hunting... smoking... green lanes... angling? Rant over.

Brian Turner
Powys, Wales

Unhappy Honda

Dear TBM

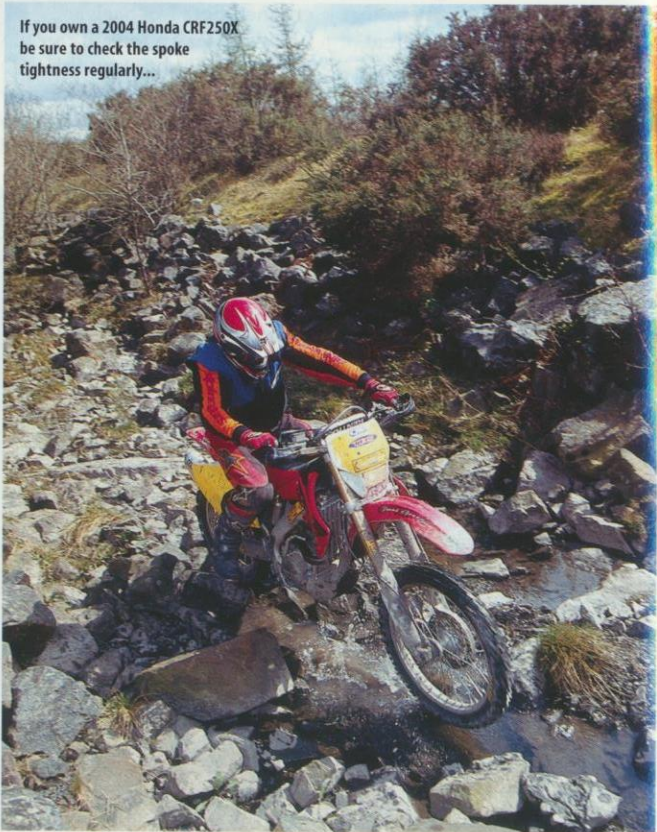
I am writing to you to let you know that I'm amazed at the lack of response Honda has been giving to dealers about a widely experienced and potentially fatal problem. In my case I purchased my CRF250X in Sept '04 and have only used it for trail riding. After the first couple of hours I noticed about three loose spokes and duly retightened them. On subsequent rides this re-occurred and I reported it to the dealer who acknowledged other cases but remarked that he had contacted Honda but without positive acknowledgement.

The dealer had rebuilt some wheels at their own expense but were now unable to offer this to me as the problem was

escalating. Over Christmas I went out trail riding for the day and after approximately four hours experienced a very unstable 'rear end' which initially felt like bad wheel bearing failure. On closer inspection there was no movement at the hub, but the wheel could be moved (by gripping the tyre at the 3 o'clock and 9 o'clock positions) some 2-3in side to side. Every spoke on the disc side of the wheel had come loose. Had this happened on the road it could potentially have been very nasty!

I subsequently took the wheel to a well known and experienced wheel builder and he immediately recognised it as a CRF-X one - as he has rebuilt quite a few so far! In his opinion the threads on the spokes are of an unusually fine pitch which he considered to be able to undo themselves much easier than a normal coarser thread. He also considered 32-spokes to be a lot less desirable than the usual 36-spoke items on a bike of this type.

I hope this may be of use to your readers, and may help



If you own a 2004 Honda CRF250X be sure to check the spoke tightness regularly...

to get a response and positive reply and solution from Honda. At this time I am still awaiting a reply from Honda after I have made several calls to them and they have said they will call back. I have a £4500 bike I am unable to use and no response from a normally reputable major manufacturer.

Kevan (full name and address supplied)

Kevan, as you know we contacted Honda on your behalf because the same thing happened on our CRF-X test bike. They gave the following response: 'If you have what you suspect to be a problem with the rear wheel of your CRF250X, please ensure that you follow the guidelines in the owner's manual, which outline the pre-ride inspection check list, including inspecting and tightening of the spokes. If the inspection is carried out and you are still experiencing difficulties with the rear wheel may we suggest that you discuss this matter with your nearest authorised off-road Honda dealer.'

Honda UK is always prepared to consider claims if ever there is a suggestion of a manufacturing or material defect. Please give your dealer all the relevant details that would enable them to submit a report on your behalf, should they consider this action justified.'

Cry Freedom

Dear TBM

Having read the letters page of the January issue and the problems a friend of Geraint Rogers was having finding information about rights of way from a local authority, some good news: As from 1 January 2005 with the advent of the Freedom of Information Act everybody has a big stick with which to beat local councils etc, who are reluctant to release such information. Now, local authorities *have to* provide requested information - or, within a set period of time, give reasons as to why they are not going to release the information. More information on how to use the act is available on the Department for Constitutional Affairs website, dca.gov.uk/foi/index.htm. I think

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our local highway authorities may be facing a busy period!

John Wright
Humberside

Gum-Digger

Dear TBM

Last time I wrote to you, I was still collecting parts for my latest creation, the Gummaberg 125 '04. Now it's ready and I'm proud to say that it turned out to be exactly what I was planning: a light, slim, well suspended enduro-crosser, with trailbike-power. It's basically a 1980 YZ, with modern Honda fenders. The motor is a Suzuki TS125, air-cooled lump, that was rebuilt from top to bottom and the exhaust goes through a KDX220 pipe and silencer.

I used the auto-lube, and fitted a small tank inside the frame, next to the home-made airbox. When I was working

on the frame, I moved the pegs further back, for better relationship between pegs and steering, and better room for taller riders, because it felt small.

How is it to ride? It's 'great fun', with a nice six-speed gearbox, old-tech motocross suspension and a motor that has found new life, with modern pipe and silencer, but I mostly like how light it is, after two years on DR-Z400.

You mention in the Maico test, if there is a market for simple inexpensive dirtbikes? I would say, yes, and I would add 'reliability'. Today's dirtbikes are too complex and too expensive to fix. The question is, is it possible to build a bike with most of the good parts, without it being too expensive? Yes, I can do it, or any garage bike-builder like me, but the big players will never do it, while their bikes sell as good as they do.

Gummi Baldurson,
Iceland, via email

Which CRM?

Dear TBM

I am a relative newcomer to trailbiking and your excellent magazine. After a lot of thought I have decided to buy a bike. I read with great interest Vince Proto's letter last month on the subject of Honda CRM250s. With the comments from yourselves I think this would be a good choice of machine. I live in Scotland (Fife) and after searching locally - have drawn a blank. It is obvious I will have to travel some distance to find the right bike. My main concern is buying something that is sound that isn't stolen or written off. Apart from an HPI check is there anything else you would recommend? My budget will be around £1500-2000.

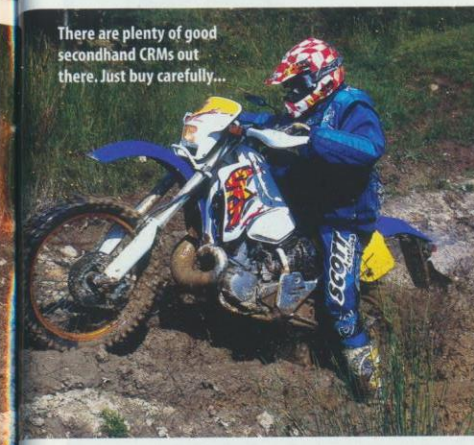
Ally Robertson
Via email

Just be picky Ally. There's plenty to choose from, so make sure you buy one that's been well looked after. At that price you could always buy from a dealer which will give you additional peace of mind.

Going Dutch

Hi TBM

I have been reading your mag since 2001, so it's time for a little review... Your magazine is the best by far, excellent articles written to entertain without losing the informa-



tive part, great pics. You could have been Dutch!

Take good care of the trails and tracks you have, or you will end up in a situation like we have here in Holland or even worse, like they do in Belgium. The best part of the Ardennes (in the eastern part of Belgium) riders have been arrested and bikes confiscated at a petrol station, getting them back took six months and a 3000 euro fine, because of riding illegally in the forest. The riders claimed they did not know, but that was no excuse! Organised events (with permission) are the only way to ride there, because in the weekends these parts were invaded by all kinds of off-road vehicle (mountainbikes, 4x4s, quads, dirtbikes).

Being responsible now will keep your trails open for the next 50 years (after that we will have run out of fuel, so I've heard). Take care!

Steve,
Holland, via email

The Low Down

Hi TBM

Great magazine. The right mix for me. I have been riding on the road for 30 years but it is only for the last couple of years that I have ventured down the trail. I really enjoy myself on a 1995 XR250R. Being a novice I have fallen off a

few times but am getting the hang of it and it's so much fun. I am standing on the pegs and getting my weight forward and I am blatting along deluding myself that I am a rally raider - at least until I get to a really deeply rutted muddy section.

After having the front wash out on me and doing the splits a couple of times, I do it trials-style. Slow, concentrating, technical but I still dab and then end up paddling and straining the body/leg interface department. I am 5ft 10in tall with the average sized inside leg. I fear I will father no more children (chance would be fine thing), the seat height of the XR is so damned, painfully high. I like everything about the XR except the seat height. The new Beta Alps look perfect for me, but a lack of funds and the fact that I don't mind getting the old XR dirty or bent lead

me to want to keep the XR.

Now the question. Can I lower the XR? Not just modify the seat but can I drop the yokes on the forks and fit a shorter shock on the back or what do you suggest?

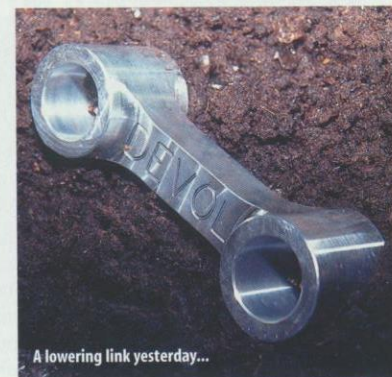
Second question. I ride in my road helmet and even in winter I get a right old sweat on. Is the off-road helmet and goggles combo the way to go? Are they really a lot better? What do you think of wearing an open-face helmet and goggles or sun/safety glasses?

Paul de Grenville-Robinson
Immingham, Lincs

Paul there are plenty of lowering links available for the XR250. These replace the standard 'dog-bone' part of the suspension linkage and reduce the XR's seat height by about 1.5in. Then it's just a matter of dropping the forks in the yokes a corresponding amount (or at least as far as the bars will let you). This is by far the cheapest and easiest way of lowering your bike. Check out the advertisers in the back of TBM for



The Gummaberg 125 in all its glory...



A lowering link yesterday...

stockists. Alternatively, if you've got access to the web try koubalink.com or performance-design.net (a link with built-in grease nipples). One thing though: make sure you specify that your bike is pre-'96 as the XR changed in '96 to a more modern design.

Secondly - junk the road lid when riding on the dirt. It's too heavy, too bulky and will steam up too quickly (at this time of year) which means you'll have to lift the visor giving you no eye protection. Buy yourself an off-road lid which will be lighter, better vented and with goggles or safety glasses will do the job perfectly. Good luck...

Futurama!

Dear TBM

I'm just writing to ask, do you know something we don't? ie both times when you have done a news bit on the Kawasaki four-stroke MXers you state 'expect an electric start enduro version later this year'

This was written way back when you did the KX250F and also not so long back in TBM 105 about the 450. I was very excited about the prospect of a competition four-stroke Kwaka enduro bike but was left disappointed when I spoke to my dealer and he told me that they don't expect the 250 until '06 and the 450 even later. Do you know of any plans to



produce the bikes in the near future? Until the 450 turns up though I am more than happy with my CRF250X which was purchased after reading the reviews you wrote, which may I add were very accurate having now owned one myself. Other than unduly getting my hopes up you write a great mag! Keep up the good work.

Oh, and the new logo is very swish, any chance of some new style stickers for all us readers in a future issue. Thanks.

Andrew Stott
Via email

Andrew, a couple of years back we spoke to a Kawasaki employee (based in the UK), who told us that he'd been on a factory visit and had seen the 250 enduro version for himself. Our predictions were based on what he told us and what he was forecasting for a potential launch date. Sadly Kawasaki have, for whatever reason, chosen not to launch (or just haven't finished

developing) that bike. New stickers on the way...

Blood 'N' Blisters

I have just completed the True Grit Enduro, and apart from the usual aches and pains, my hands are a blistered mess. This despite plenty of time trail riding on the bike beforehand. Watching the WEC DVD from Duke I note that some of the competitors tape their hands. The question is, what is the technique and what do they use as tape? I have tried taping in the past but always seem to end up with sticky rolled up lumps in my palms (takes me back to my school days!). How about an article or a bit of guidance?

Phil C
Horwhich, via email

Phil, I always tape up my hands with regular gaffa-tape before an event. I usually tape right around both thumbs and occasionally run a strip of tape over the calluses on the palm of my hands. The palm

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LETTERS

tape doesn't last long, but the thumb tape's always there till the end. Other people swear by anti-blister (kevlar) gloves made by PC Racing (you can get these from Bert Harkins Racing among others) - but personally I find wearing two pairs of gloves just a bit bulky. Alternatively you could always try carrying a few house-bricks around with your bare hands for a couple of weeks - that should toughen them up...

Warning Shot

Dear TBM

As I have my new Gas Gas coming in a week's time I would like to make my garage more secure. I can remember in an old issue of TBM a device which consists of a blank shotgun cartridge and a trip wire. I seem to have lost that issue - could you tell me where to buy this device. Many thanks.

Andy Stagg
Via email

Andy, the 12-Bore Alarm



Mine is marketed by Peak Motorcycle Security. It costs £24.95 and you can call them on 0116 271 8384 or try logging onto bikese-cure.co.uk. But don't, whatever you do, forget that you've fitted the device and go wandering into the garage...

I Like Chinese...

Dear anyone

This isn't a techie question, but I thought the 'fabulous' lads at TBM (grovel grovel) seemed the best and only people to ask.

I have just seen a dirt bike for sale brand new for a very reasonable sum. However I have never heard of the make, and I can't find any reviews on it either.

It is a Bashan BS200GY. It has a front disc, rear drum, is road legal, and shiny new for £1300 all in. Sounds great, even comes in a nice colour, but is it any good? I don't want to blow £1300 on a dirt bike and find it's no good on the dirt.

This would be my first off-road bike, as I have stopped road riding for a while and I can't stay off a bike, I have been on an off-road day with Honda, I twisted my ankle, tore a ligament, ripped the cartilage in my knee, and got run over by another rider. But I loved it anyway, and now I need a bike of my own. But I don't really want to spend more than a grand



as whatever I get will spend a lot of time on its side!

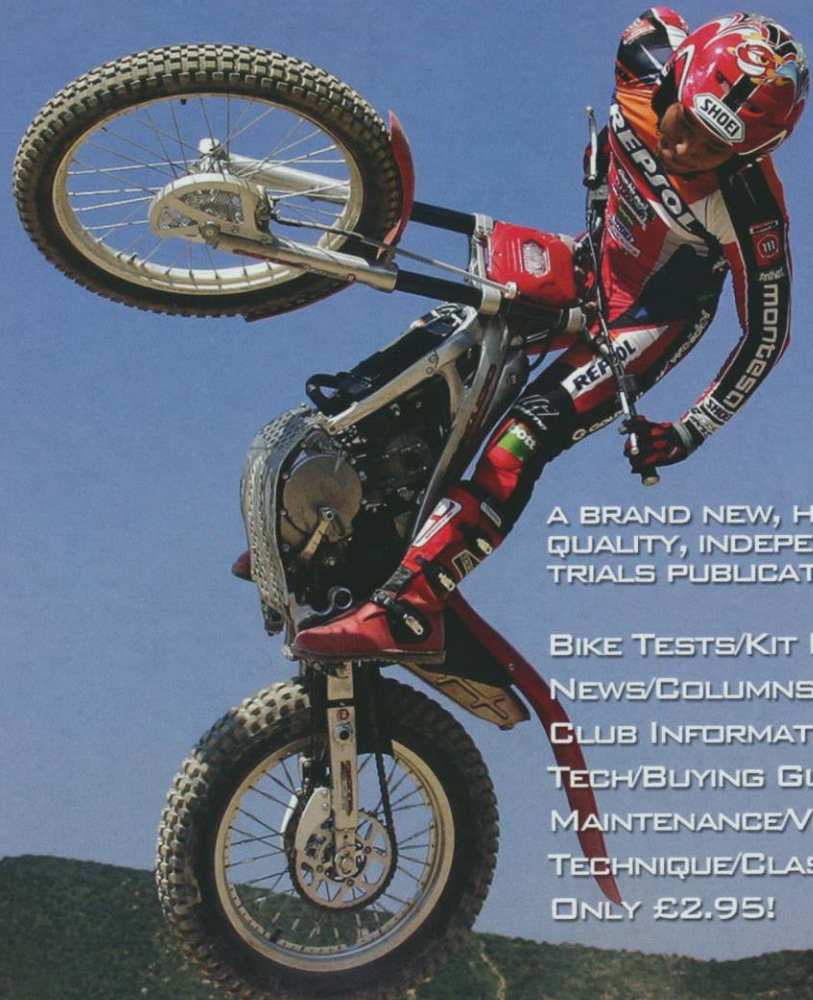
So can you help? Is this bike good, and if not what would be the best option for a cheap dirt bike?

Nathan Kedwards
Via email

Nathan, I don't s'pose you happen to own a barge-pole, but even if you did we wouldn't recommend you touched the Bashan with it. Low-spec, old-technology Chinese bikes are, on the whole, a depreciation disaster in the UK. We weren't aware of this make of bike either, but having checked out the website of Chongqing Astronautic Bashan Motorcycle Manufacturing Co Ltd (to give them their full title) we haven't changed our minds one little bit. Your money would be far better spent on something like a secondhand Honda CRM250R. £1500 will get you a usable example which will still be worth £1300 in a year or two's time... Alternatively if you really liked the look of the Bashan... Buy it and let us know how you get on!

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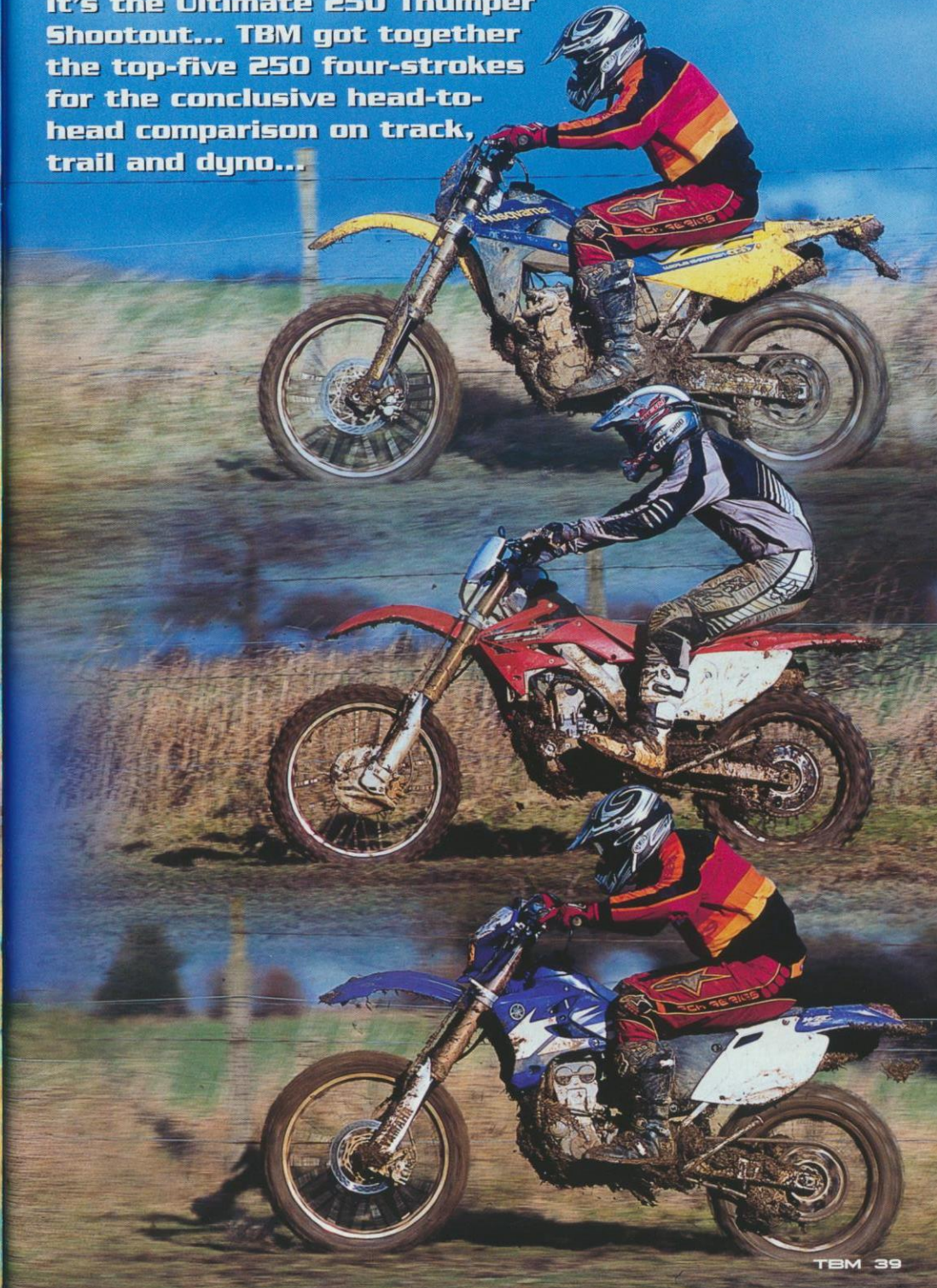
ISSUE 1 MAY '05



Charge of the LITE Brigade



It's the Ultimate 250 Thumper Shootout... TBM got together the top-five 250 four-strokes for the conclusive head-to-head comparison on track, trail and dyno...



Charge of the LITE Brigade



On the slippery corners the Honda CRF250X was the hook-up king...

that we collected together the 2005 250 thumpers, the 'lite' bikes of the enduro world.

Just like lite beers, they may be perceived as less potent than the full-strength versions (450s), but you can still get your kicks without having to deal with the 'full-fat' alternative. More and more riders are coming round to the idea that to make swift progress around an enduro course a 250 four-stroke is often more than enough. Whilst the capacity isn't ideal for trail riding, they do make passable green lane machines, and what's more, they're pretty much ideal for those new to dirtbiking who want something that they're not going to grow out of, unlike one of the older generation 250 thumpers.

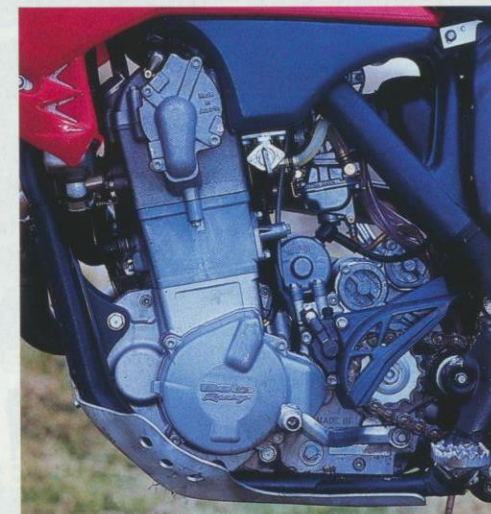
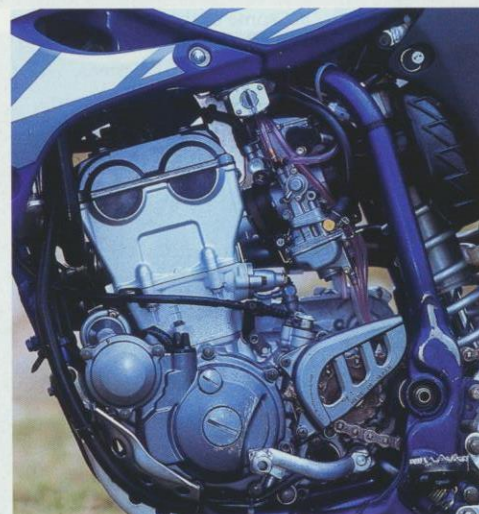
Like low-calorie lagers (and the Ed's waistline), the choice is ever-expanding. The last time we conducted a mini-thumper shootout, back in issue 91, there were four bikes to choose from - Yamaha WR, Husky TE, KTM EXC and TM. Now there are six. Swelling the ranks of 250 four-strokes are the Honda CRF-X and Beta's new KTM-powered RR. And it really can't be much longer before Kawasaki and Suzuki decide to join the party. Sadly, at the time of testing there weren't

any 2005 TM 250s in the country, so we had to go without the elusive Pesaro-built machine.

Yamaha WR250F

The Yamaha was the first of the new generation of 'high-performance' two-fifty thumpers and has undergone steady refinement ever since. The twin cam motor was best known for its blistering top-end surge, while a stable chassis and plush suspension made the whole package hugely easy to ride - the epitome of what a 250 thumper should be like.

For 2003 the WR-F took one step forward... and one step back. The engine gained that all-important electric start, though sadly that was joined by a big 'n' bulky fuel tank. Nonetheless, it still managed to come out of our 2003 shootout as the winner. But the Husky ran it pretty close...

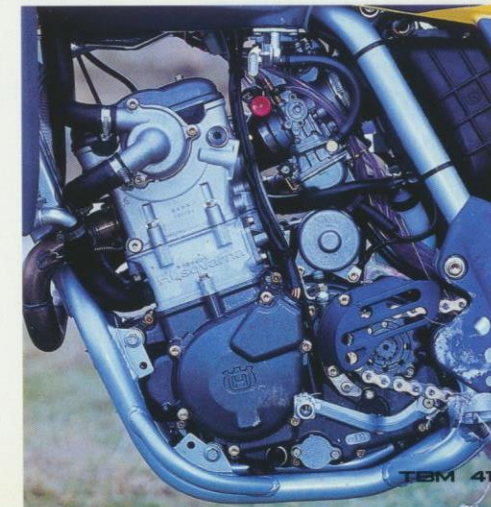


Clockwise from top left: The Unicam Honda engine is the most compact and blessed with a good dollop of torque, but produces the least overall power. Likewise, the SOHC KTM (and Beta) lumps are well down on power compared with the revvier DOHC offerings from Husky and Yamaha. But compare the size of the diminutive Husky engine with the older Yamaha donk. Somehow Husky have managed to out-miniaturise the Japanese...

Now in 2005, the 250F has reverted back to its slimline roots thanks to the fitment of an 8L tank with matching YZ radiators. And looks all the better for it. The forks are now 48mm units, up from the old 46mm items, and the bike is a claimed 20mm lower. But is it still top dog..?

Husqvarna TE250

Husky's new twin-cam motor arrived on the scene for the 2003 model year, and immediately impressed. The company's first DOHC motors loved to rev, and whilst it didn't feel quite as

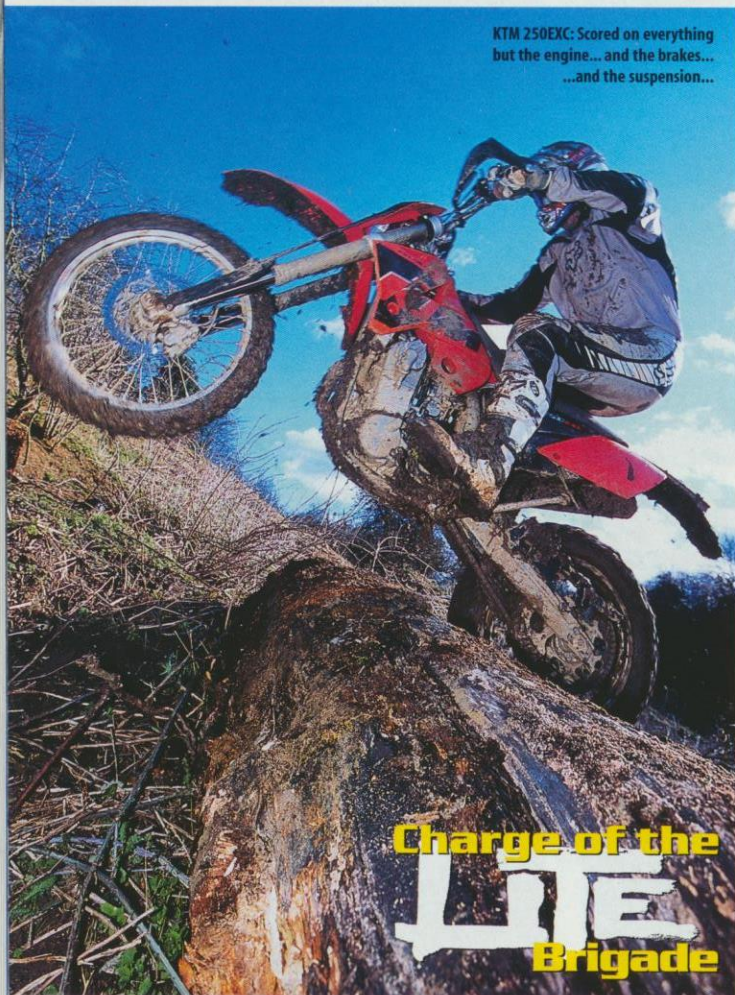


Ah, there's nothing quite like a good ol' TBM Shootout to get the adrenaline flowing and the arguments to-ing and fro-ing. With a number of bikes and a multitude of riders there's always going to be some sort of disagreement over which bike is best, worst or middling. We like a good head-to-head shootout.

Of course, we think that you like them too. Is there a better way to find a 'best in class' than pitting each of the bikes against one another? If there is, we can't think of it. Sadly, there's generally only one manufacturer who likes the 'shootout' and that's the guy whose bike does the winning. But then if you believe in your product why wouldn't you want to see it up against the competition..?

So for the latest in the long and illustrious line of TBM Shootouts we thought it was about time

KTM 250EXC: Scored on everything but the engine... and the brakes... ...and the suspension...



Charge of the Lite Brigade

SOHC 250X has proved a huge sales success in the UK over the past year, becoming the biggest selling enduro bike of 2004 despite coming bereft of any road kit.

Whilst the 'Unicam' motor was never likely to match the rival twin-cammers for top-end power, the X's torquey delivery was what really impressed, and this, combined with the lightweight, stable chassis (built specifically for the tiny 250 motor) resulted in a great little dirt bike.

Changes for 2005 extend only as far as a lighter and a stronger rear hub (to counteract some of the spoke problems of the '04 bikes?) and some bold new graphics...

KTM 250EXC Racing

The 250 Racing has always been the black sheep of the KTM four-stroke family. The first bikes (2002 model year) were described in our launch test as 'like a real bike, only slower' and although the EXC seemed to have improved the last time we tested it, it's never been regarded as one of Mattighofen's finest. The chassis is just as sharp as any other KTM, and the bike is obviously both well detailed and well specced, but the

SOHC motor (essentially a sleeved down 525 lump) has always proved a little lacklustre.

As with most of the other bikes here (and the rest of the orange range) the bike has received various upgrades over the years, though these have predominantly been to keep it in line with the other EXC models. Which means that the '05 model wears the new slimline rad shrouds, oval section frame, a funky flat headlight, small digi speedo/computer and Excel rims.

Beta RR250

It's the first year for the Beta's new range of KTM-powered enduro bikes and this is the first time we've ridden the 250 version. The Italian company have equipped their chassis with some of the finest enduro components - Marzocchi forks, Sachs shock, Nissin brakes - and the bike

strong as the Yam in the mid-range it certainly ran it close at the top-end. With the engine stuffed into a well-suspended, ultra-lightweight and sharp-turning chassis, the TE gave a hugely involving ride. Sadly, the power delivery was somewhat spoilt back then by a hiccupy Mikuni carb, though as part of the bike's steady development the 2005 motor's now fed by a flat-slide Keihin. Further changes for this year include stunning new bodywork, a bigger fuel tank, and the addition of a kick-start to act as fail-safe for the electric boot. But have Husqvarna stretched themselves enough to dethrone the Yam?

Honda CRF250X

The diminutive Honda was undoubtedly the most eagerly awaited enduro bike since Yamaha's original WR400F. Finally launched last April, the



When it comes to pipes, four of the five bikes have a similar design of end-can. The Honda however is different: its pipe is noticeably shorter and visually less attractive. It is however, the only one which offers a removable baffle. Interestingly - for the sake of thoroughness - we ran the CRF-X on the dyno both with and without the baffle. And the difference amounted to less than 1hp. When it comes to noise the Beta is by far the loudest ...

is certainly well equipped. But unlike the 450 or 525cc machines, where we can see why someone may want a grunty KTM donk in a different chassis, it's kinda' hard to work out why someone would want the 250 Katosh motor at all. Or is it..?

Time to Ride

'Forward the Lite Brigade! Charge at the climbs he said: Into the Quarry of Sand rode the... five?'

Okay, it's not quite as evocative as a Tennyson poem, and many of you will have baulked at the





Yamaha stormed up the climbs... provided you were good and ready for its top-end hit...

Charge of the LITE Brigade

off-camber corners, a few short straights and plenty of mud - all crammed into just a few small acres.

Seeing Red

First away was the Honda. The X felt the smallest of the five, which on its own is no bad thing - as the lightest bike here (115.8kg on the flash *new* TBM digital scales) it seems like a toy. However, the diminutive stature is exaggerated by the low bars, and despite the bar-clamps being adjustable I've never been able to find a really good riding position aboard the Honda. When standing it was a real stretch down to the controls, and it would take (at the very least) a set of risers to make me feel at home on the CRF. In this company it felt much like the tiny 230F trail bike.

Hard on the gas down a descent, hooking third just as we reached the flat, and then chuck the bike into a water-filled turn. A light slip of the clutch and the Honda hauled itself out of the corner and up to the next turn. In the tight confines of our quarry the Unicam motor worked a treat: the bottom-end and mid-range felt good and strong, and as it turned out, the CRF was one of just two bikes which would pull really cleanly out of this turn in third gear. Likewise, the Honda flew up the short sharp climbs with very little effort.

Unfortunately, the faster sections of our lap highlighted the motor's shortcomings. The SOHC design makes for good power low down, but there's very little in the way of top-end oomph. Driving out of slippery grass turns, the bottom-end helps you find plenty of grip (much more so than on the DOHC machines), but as soon as you reach the higher gears you just know that one of the twin cam bikes is going to come flying past in a wail of revs and a shower of roost. That's if they haven't nipped inside you going *into* one of the turns...

The Honda may be good and stable, it may be lightweight, but in this company it isn't

bastardisation of the classic text. For there was no cannon fire, and no Cossack soldiers. And we certainly weren't riding in the Ukraine. All that rained down on us was, er, rain, and the roost from the bike in front. A mix of sand quarry, open fields and nadgery track was our battleground.

Testing almost always starts as a free-for-all. Jump aboard your chosen steed, fire off around the loop, and only take a breather when the Ed tries to organise some sort of cohesive attempt at evaluation. Spoilsport. And so a short course was set out for the 'enduro' section of the Shootout: loose climbs, descents, bermed turns, a couple of



When it comes to switchgear - the CRF (top-left) and WR-F (bottom-left) go for the minimalist look. KTM switchgear (top-right) used to be the best, but these days both the Beta and Husky (middle-right and lower-right respectively) come better equipped. Double thumb buttons on the Beta operate the trip computer. TE's compact switches win the day...

particularly fast turning. It's an easy thing to rectify, simply drop the forks through the yokes a few mill' and you have your solution. But left as standard you'll wonder why it seems to take an age to turn a bike as small and light as the X.

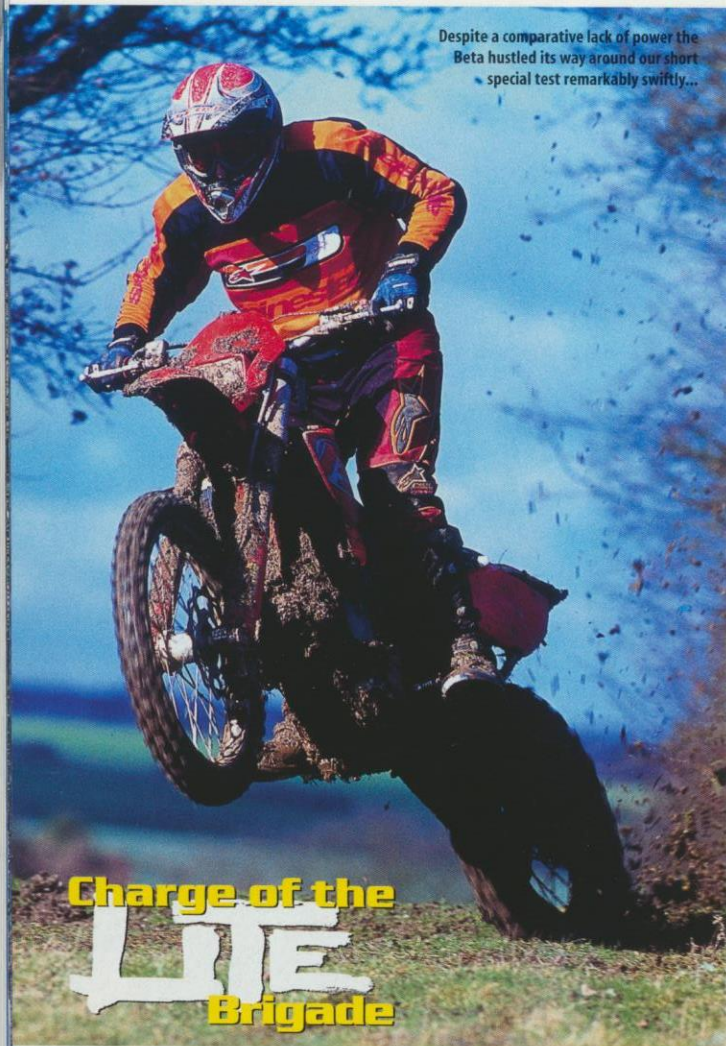
And in a similar vein, the normally excellent Showa suspension which we've raved about in the past felt just a little bit ordinary. Normally I'd rave about how positive the CRF's suspension felt, but just to emphasise how average it was, looking back through my notes from the day, I can't find anything relating to the suspension. I guess it was simply, 'okay'. Thankfully, I can say that the Nissin brakes were up to the usual exemplary standard, despite Honda's use of a smaller than normal 240mm front disc, and... I still love the minimalist look of the beam-framed bike.

Average Joe

What really made the Honda come alive in my mind was when I swapped onto the KTM - jeez the 250EXC thumper is just how I remember it! Orange is a vivid, vibrant colour, but the 250

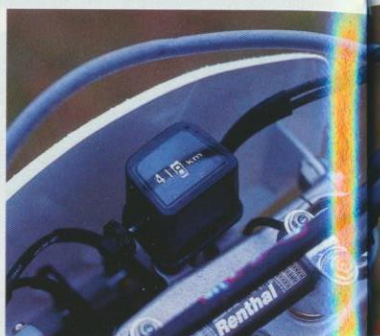
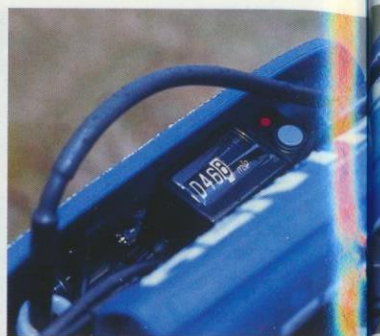


Racing might as well wear beige plastics. It's the Austin Montego of the 250 four-strokes and that motor's gotta take the blame - there's simply no spice to it. Nothing low down and very little up top, Staffwriter Mel described it as being like a male model she once knew..! What power there is is pretty linear, but there's just not enough of it. And sadly where the EXC chassis would normally add at least some excitement to the package this one felt far from perfect. Okay, so it's still the quickest-turning bike of the five and becomes a little flighty when provoked, but the suspension felt much too soft. Yep, it's not often we can say



Despite a comparative lack of power the Beta hustled its way around our short special test remarkably swiftly...

Charge of the LIE Brigade



Just as with the switchgear, the Japanese offerings don't, er... offer much in the way of comprehensive dials. By contrast the KTM, Beta and Husky all have digital trip/speedos. Best of the bunch is probably the KTM - just because its compactness makes it less prone to damage in a crash. But the Beta's is easier to read. Little red LED behind the Yamaha's headlight cowl shows the engine isolator is switched on. Both Beta and Husky have isolator buttons located on the right-side switchgear - but it's more prone in a tumble. The Honda requires you to pull in the clutch before it'll start. KTM has no isolator which is why it started up in our van on the way home!



that of a KTM, but the back-end certainly felt under-damped and came close to bottoming-out more than a few times around the bumpy quarry.

Thankfully, the forks weren't quite as bad - nice and soft gave grip in the slippery conditions encountered on the grassy sections of our course. And when combined with those great KTM ergos and the low-power motor, the 250EXC proved a doddle to ride. But that didn't translate to good times on the stopwatch. For on the way into the slick turns the squidgy Brembos gave absolutely no feel whatsoever, and once clear of the corner the lack of power made for a somewhat sedate pace through the loop. Only on the short flick-flack through the trees did the Katosh really start working, and even this feeling subsided when the

front-end began to flap from side to side riding down a whooped-out part of our track.

Where the EXC does score points is in the fit and finish, and the level of equipment. You really can't argue with KTM's build quality and the high specification. Throw in the full-road kit, and it's really only the basic-looking switchgear which spoils the party. But it's scant recompense for what is really a rather unrewarding bike.

Mind the Gap

Next up came the Yamaha, and there's no doubting that the new slimmer bodywork is a huge improvement. Throw a leg over the flat seat, and you can slide right up against the tank without your knees splaying outwards like a

jockey on a horse. The suspension sits down in its stroke, and you just know it's going to be nice and plush. And it is.

The new 48mm Kayaba forks tracked beautifully across the bumps and relayed an awesome amount of feedback on the slippery grass. The rear-end was similarly supple, though as we suspected, it did struggle to put down the motor's blistering top-end power.

Keep that twin-cam motor on the boil coming out of a turn and it was all I could do to remain upright, let alone pointing straight. It's so easy to simply pirouette on the spot, showering the rider behind in sloppy roost. I really did have to use all of my inconsiderable skill to get the WR out of a turn quickly because you simply couldn't use the

Second Opinion

It's the Husky TE250 all the way for me.

The combination of that ballsy motor, 'tight-handling' responsive chassis, good riding position and high level of standard equipment mark it out as my winner of this five way test. It's not perfect: it scoops this class by dint of being *good* in every category rather than the *best* at everything. Moreover, since we last tested it back in the summer of 2004 it's put on a little weight, the re-profiled seat - though more comfortable - is more difficult to move about on, and the Husky's bars are not as good as the braceless offerings from KTM or Beta. The gearchange was also incredibly stiff, and of course it's the priciest here - by a good margin in some cases.

Nevertheless, when you ride it, you're really forced into reaching this same conclusion 'cause it's the only one of these five bikes which thrills in terms of power delivery. It really rips. And whereas with all the other 250s you can more or less fully open the throttle once they're upright on the way out of a turn, the Husky has so much midrange that (like with a bigger-bore bike) you actually have to feather the throttle and think about your body positioning. This gives you a choice of ratios on climbs, and allows you to pull taller gears in situations where you'd end up screaming the other bikes in first or second gear. The only situation where the Husky can feel a bit of a handful is in slippery ruts where its responsive chassis can catch you out if you're not careful.

No such trouble for the Beta or Yamaha - both of which feel incredibly stable, yet manage the knack of being able to turn easily without requiring too much input. After our last report on the Beta (RR450 v 450EXC), where we felt a little unsure about the front end - it felt a bit too harsh and too remote - I'm pleased to be able report that on this test (on the RR250) the effect was much less pronounced. It's still there though (that slightly remote feeling), it's just that you get used to the front end feeling, well, a little 'different'.

In fact the Beta turned out (surprisingly) to be one of the quickest handling bikes on this test - setting my second fastest special test time behind the Husky - despite having one of the least powerful engines. This, in my opinion, is down to the fact that the Beta's very open

Husky was the mothership, powering sideways out of all the slippery corners...



Charge of the LITE Brigade

speed, but it sure takes some time. More time than our straight allowed!

So cornering took some real concentration aboard the Yam. There's quite a lot of engine braking too, which made the second lightest bike here feel slightly weighty, and the stable chassis took a bit of a shove to tip into the tighter corners. Then you simply had to keep the revs up, either by maintaining speed, or in my case by slipping the light clutch, to get cleanly out of the turn.

Around the quarry, the WR didn't feel particularly fast, and I was surprised to see from the dyno charts that the WR-F has the strongest bottom-end of all five. It certainly didn't seem that way to me, but I suspect that this was simply deceptive as the bike was particularly easy to ride.

The riding position was good, though not quite as nice and 'dominating' as the euro bikes', the brakes exemplary, and the WR had the slickest gearbox of all.

In fact, the 2005 bike displayed all of the traits (mid-range malady aside) that has kept the Yam as the all-round number one mini-thumper for so long.

Surprise Attack

I'm going to come straight out and say it, I was really surprised by the Beta. I'd been slightly disappointed by the RR450 when we tested it in issue 113, because on paper it looked like a KTM-beater. As it transpired, a lack of front-end feel cost the Italian bike the test win back then. So with this shootout taking place in similar conditions, and the bike using one of the, ahem, 'less desirable' Katosh lumps, I wasn't expecting great things. How wrong can you be.

Despite what the spec sheet says, the seat feels easily the lowest of the five, and the big braceless Magura bars are set high and forward (or at least that's where we had 'em on the adjustable top mounts), giving a roomy riding position. Very



We liked the Beta's machined top-clamp, and its adjustable bar mounts...



We liked the Honda's minimalist rear light...



We didn't like the Husky's fake grab handles! You can't get a gloved hand under them...

softly, softly approach. Woe betide you if you let the motor drop into the mid-range because the power fell into a black hole which sucked away the bike's momentum like its stellar equivalent. And even the jet thrust of the WR's reliable top-end couldn't pull it free. In the lower gears you notice this as a slight drop in power and the bike revved through it. But changing between third and fourth at anything less than full revs, the power simply fell away, requiring a quick down-change to maintain momentum. It wasn't dissimilar to the effect you get with a big turbo on a small capacity car engine. Unless you keep the revs up there's very little available power. You know the motor will eventually haul itself up to

nicely. The pegs feel slightly further back than on the other bikes, though I wouldn't necessarily describe it as a bad thing, just a bit different.

Fire up the motor and you're greeted with a slightly rortier exhaust note than that of the KTM, which may go some of the way to explain why the engine feels marginally better than it does in the Austrian chassis. Off the bottom, the lump feels slightly more responsive and accelerates with a touch more urgency than the KTM's donk. Sadly, this doesn't translate into an improvement in midrange or top-end power, but the Beta RR makes up for this in other ways.

Thanks to the excellent riding position you can really dominate the bike. The seat is extremely

cockpit design (high bars, long and round-profiled seat), let's you get right on top of the bike in the turns and chuck it around. And although both Beta and Yamaha offered their own distinct advantages at times, my second place award goes to the Beta for the following reasons. It's beautifully equipped as standard, it's nice and low, it's got (for me) the very best bar set-up out of all the bikes, as well as the best brakes. And it makes the most of its engine - something which our Yamaha failed to do.

A couple of other points worth mentioning. The Beta's sensuous carbon-fibre frame- and sump-guards have disappeared - replaced by much less sexy, but eminently more practical plastic items. The RR's seat profile and mahogany hardness may make it perfect for sliding up and down when racing, but trail riders will hate its unforgiving harshness. The suspension still feels a little mismatched to me: too hard up front and a bit too soft at the rear, though there wasn't time to experiment with differing settings. And finally it feels a bit too tall geared as standard and the exhaust is fruitier than all the rest. Nevertheless I urge anyone interested in a 250 four-stroke to take a look at the RR to discover its unique advantages.

If you're sceptical about buying European (and perhaps only interested in racing) then opt for the Yamaha WR-F. It could so easily have won this test. It makes the most power overall, its chassis, though not the quickest turning, is arguably the most predictable of all the bikes on test - and works really well in a range of conditions. Moreover the Yamaha is a well-proven product which thanks to some sensible changes for 2005 (slimmer tank and seat), just continues to get better every year. In fact it's hard not to like the Yam: it has no real vices and it's just so easy to ride - and ride hard. And despite a very basic standard spec, you know that the core product is built good and tough. Moreover Yamaha will sell you a kit to make it road legal and there's always strong demand for secondhand WR-Fs in the classifieds.

In fact were it not for the big hole in this bike's midrange (which in the test conditions had a severe effect on its overall performance), the Yamaha may well have been our favourite. Are all 2005 bikes likely to be similarly afflicted? We just can't say. Nor can we say with absolute certainty that this could be dialled out with a simple change of jetting - though we suspect it can. The point is that we have to report on how we found the bike, and our bike exhibited this trait. What we can be sure of however is that once corrected the Yamaha would be very difficult to beat - even by the Husky.

Honda CRF250X
£5070, 23hp, 115.8kg



Charge of the
LITE
Brigade

firm, with a rounded profile, and it allows you to climb all over it. It may be plank-like, but moving around takes absolutely no effort - the best enduro seat here, easily. Which meant, despite the suspension being a touch on the firm side for these conditions, the Beta proved amazingly simple to pilot. Only the Honda, felt easier to ride thanks to its tractable motor.

When we tested the RR450 in similar conditions the lack of front-end feedback really concerned me, but the 250 felt much more positive. Whether this was down to different suspension settings or the 250

motor's comparative lack of inertia I wouldn't like to say, though it was certainly an improvement. The sensation hasn't disappeared altogether - just occasionally I wasn't too sure whether I was gonna make it through a corner unscathed, but on the whole it didn't affect the riding. So much so, that whereas the KTM's chassis couldn't make up for the motor's shortcomings, the Beta's could, and did.

Of course, the RR's Nissin brakes help here, and like the KTM it too is very well equipped. But more than that, the attention to detail is superb, and the liberal use of machined ally is so much nicer than the castings on some other machines (the Japanese bikes especially). Not since the TMs of old have we seen such neat looking hubs as standard equipment, and the rear brake pedal is similarly sexy. And despite the fact that the overall styling doesn't really do it for me, I'd have to say that the colour's pretty good too. You'll never lose your Beta in parc ferme, that's for sure.

On a Charge

After the last 250 shootout (issue 91), I came down in favour of the TE250, not least because it was easily the lightest bike on test. But now it's the second heaviest! Not that it feels at all weighty, you understand, because I'd probably say that of the five bikes here it rode the lightest.

Second Opinion

Having just tested three of these 250 four-bangers for, er... another magazine, it was interesting to return to the category so soon, only on different terrain, in different conditions. How would I feel about the three bikes this time around, and how would the extra two compare?

After some worrying first impressions, I was pleased to find that the feedback was actually quite consistent. Pleased? Relieved, more like.

Top bike for me remains the Yamaha. The WR is just so well sorted. The suspension is wonderfully plush, the ergos accommodating and the power is reassuringly strong. That said, it's still far from faultless. The gap between third and fourth gears still feels too big. The front-end still feels a touch vague and the handling on the lazy side. Yet it is so very

strong. And it's virtually quirk free.

The Husky maintained its nearly-there status. In these conditions the wide tank and seat didn't seem to inhibit its performance. And the power felt stronger than the Yamaha's. In fact all round the Husky was a stunning performer, I loved the raucous exhaust note (not that loud), I loved the accurate steering. Only it was, alas, not a first time starter. I found I was having to carefully feather the throttle to tickle the TE into life. And I worried for the TE's plastics, essentially the rad guards and the sidepanels. These are made from a surprisingly brittle plastic, and I've seen them break twice now, so I found I was riding with concern for crashing - not a good thing. But yes, the Husky really has got close to the WR this year. Better plastics, better starting and it could almost be there.

Gee, the Honda felt underwhelming this time around. I enjoyed the CRF on its launch in Andorra, but this one here in Hertfordshire - I was surprised how far it fell behind the Yamaha and the Husky. The power just doesn't quite hang on long enough. And curiously it didn't feel very confident in the handling department. And the

riding position felt too close-coupled, too cramped, in this company. A nice little bike, no question, but just not as strong and confidence-inspiring as the WR and TE.

The KTM, was a KTM. Meaning beautifully put together, just so well focussed and right for the job. Only, as we all know, it's missing a fair chunk of horsepower. And without those it'll always be where it is - down at the lower end. It did everything the others did, only you had to work that little bit harder, and 'be ready' given that you were working with less. Nice bike, I really like it, but... yeah, let's see the new motor, the twin-cam unit, huh?

And the Beta? You know I really wanted to like this one. But couldn't. It felt hard, yet fragile, consummate yet flawed. The bars felt too far forward and the pegs too rearward, and the saddle was a lesson in self-flagellation. The exhaust note I thought was too loud and harsh, it would incense quiet country types. And of course it has that KTM motor, which we know just isn't quite enough. There's lots to like, but for me it's going to take a lot more familiarisation for me to feel happy with it...JB

In my personal fourth place we have the Honda CRF-X. How come so low down the pecking order after glowing reports last year? Well in a direct head-to-head comparison with the opposition, this CRF failed to sparkle - though other riders helping out with our test placed it much higher in their personal ratings. First the good points: it's unique (the only bike here with an alloy beam frame), the engine is incredibly tractable - particularly low down, I like the quick access air-box, the Nissin brakes and the chamfered foot-pegs. And the digital scales say it's the lightest here.

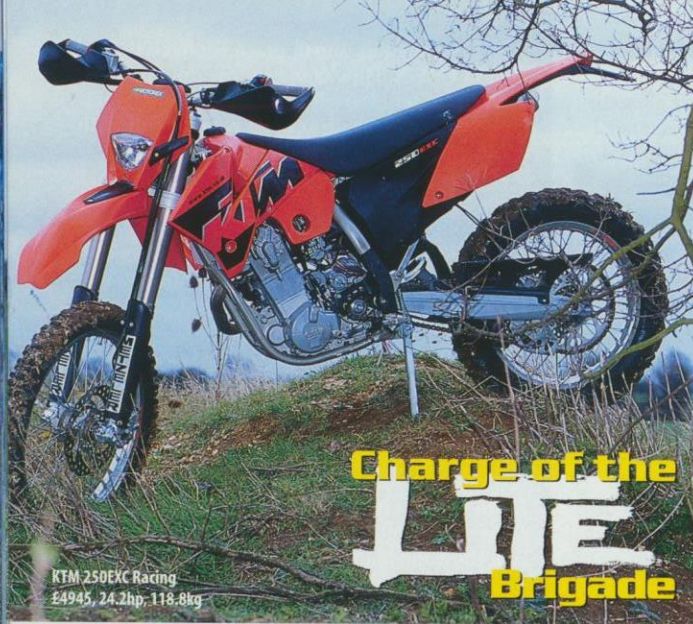
But now the less impressive points: my least favourite riding position (with standard bars) - just too small and too cramped. The handling's a bit too steady (unless you drop the forks through the yokes). The engine runs out of puff far too early - it's the least powerful here, and there are only five ratios to choose from. And like the Yamaha, the Honda comes poorly equipped as standard (but Honda don't offer a specific road kit). Other little niggles: the sidestand doesn't tuck up far enough out of the way, and strangely the X 'felt' heavier than all the others. We know the CRF-X is a fine bike, but oddly enough, even Honda's legendary build quality has come unstuck on earlier CRF-Xs. Honda need to up their game a little.

And finally we come to my last-placed bike in this test: KTM's humble 250EXC Racing. No amount of fine build quality or standard equipment can make up for the fact that in this company it feels too slow, too soft and has too little power. In that respect it hasn't changed much.

What! A KTM comes last in a five-way TBM shootout? You better believe it. Roll on the new twin-cam KTM motor because in my opinion it can't come soon enough... **Si Melber**

A brief stop at the Golden Arches helped fuel the TBM gut buckets...





KTM 250EXC Racing
£4945, 24.2hp, 118.8kg

Charge of the LITE Brigade



Yamaha WR250F
£5199, 28.2hp, 116.9kg

then flat-slides always work best at higher revs and rarely do you pootle around on one of these bikes. No, as soon as you're into the mid-range the Husky comes alive with smooth power all the way to the astronomically high rev limiter - reminiscent of the enduro-ised RM-Z we rode last year. Previous TE250s have all felt very revvy, and this bike is certainly no exception. But unlike those bikes, this one didn't feel like you had to cane it to within an inch of its life to keep on the pace, making it quite a potent weapon on our slick little course.

As a race bike, the TE's chassis is similarly impressive. Quick-turning, though not as flighty as some, it's just as responsive as the stonking powerplant and it's hard to find fault with the Marzocchi/Sachs suspension.

Occupying the middle-ground between the Yamaha's supple set-up and the Beta's firmness, the TE worked best when ridden hard. But then that's exactly how you'd want to ride this bike. Just allow for the usual Brembo shortcomings..!

Amongst the many changes for 2005 is a cosmetic makeover, with all new plastics, a larger tank and a new seat. The plastics are drop-dead gorgeous, yet they don't feel quite as flexible as dirtbike bodywork should, and the new seat isn't quite as nice. The flat profile means that it's certainly comfy, though for race use it's nowhere near as good as the 'razorblade' on the previous model. Aboard the old TEs (and the Beta) you could slip from one side of the bike to the other without even thinking about it, but on the '05 bike there's a distinct edge to the seat - hindering your posterior's progress..! The standard Tomaselli bars (wearing a Renthal barpad

here) aren't really to my tastes, though they do benefit from being tipped forward. And once this is done the resulting riding position is actually pretty good.

With a solid rear disc, quick release seat and axle pullers front and rear it's clear that the TE

Yep, jump aboard the new TE and you immediately notice how nimble the bike feels, and just how responsive the motor is. Crack open the throttle and that new Keihin flat-slide reacts instantly - the power coming hard and strong. Right down low there isn't a surfeit of grunt, but

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TRADE ENQUIRIES ALWAYS WELCOME. '05 CATALOGUE NOW AVAILABLE





Beta RR250
£4995, 24.1hp, 123.8kg

is detailed with paddock practicalities in mind, and from a race bike point of view I don't think it's likely to disappoint.

Final Stand

KTM's 250 four-stroke motor continues to frustrate and the fact that the company have been developing a twin-cam 250 lump shows that KTM aren't happy with it either. The Austrians are, however, happy enough to build bikes which don't slip easily into a

competition class (the 200EXC, for instance) so I see no reason why they don't build this bike with a few more cubes - 280, 320cc even, would at least make the bike more appealing to hobby riders. But as it stands, the 250EXC Racing is the lemon in the orange range.

In 2004 we really rated the little CRF-X. It's amazing what a difference a year makes! If it came with higher bars and had been adapted with the 'closed course competition' modifications (R-model camshaft, opened up airbox etc) I'm sure that the X would've been on the pace, but in standard trim the little Honda felt decidedly average. Fourth place to the (little) 'Big H'.

Third goes to the Beta RR250, though it's

missed out on silver by a whisker. Virtually everything about the bike impressed me on this test... except the motor! I think it's a much better bike than the EXC - the chassis is nicer, the riding position's better, the brakes are excellent - and it really makes the most of an average lump.

Shock, horror, the WR250F has been deposed from the 250 4T throne. Had it not been for that chasm in the mid-range then things may have turned out differently, but we simply couldn't ignore a gap that big. Word has it that Evel Knievel has it lined-up for his comeback jump!

In all seriousness, a session on the dyno playing with carb settings (or perhaps a change of pipe) would probably sort this out, but that's only

Dyno Saw

It's been nearly three years since we last tested the 250 four-strokes on the dyno - and the comparisons between now and then make for interesting reading. Back in spring 2002 we had a three-way shootout between the Yamaha WR250F, KTM 250EXC and the TM EN250. That time the Yamaha ran out a clear winner making 25.6hp @ 10,800rpm, while the TM made 24.3hp @ 9,300rpm and the KTM 250EXC a near identical 24.2hp @ 9,300rpm.

Three years on and the Yam

WR-F is still king of the dyno, eclipsing all the other bikes in terms of peak power. But look at the figures: the WR-F now makes 28.2hp @ 10,800rpm - a staggering 16-percent increase in three years, yet it's quieter! Not far behind however, is the only other DOHC-equipped machine here - the Husky TE250 - which makes a very creditable 27.5hp @ 11,500rpm.

Among the other three bikes (all of them SOHC) it's nip and tuck all the way with the KTM 250EXC producing marginally

the higher figure: 24.2hp (exactly the same as three years ago) @ 10,600rpm, compared with the Beta's 24.1hp @ 10,600rpm, and the Honda's lowly 23hp @ 8700rpm.

When it comes to torque figures it's a lot closer between our five protagonists. The Husky comes out on top with a maximum torque figure of 14.9lb ft @ 8200rpm, closely followed by the Yam at 14.8lb ft albeit 1500rpm further up the rev range at 9700rpm. Next it's the Honda with 14.5lb ft @ 7500rpm, closely followed by the Beta with 14.3lb ft @ 7200rpm. Finally the KTM brings up the rear with a figure of 14.1lb ft @ 8100rpm.

Reading the Results

So what does it all mean? Well a few things stand out from our dyno results. First of all - and most worryingly - the Yamaha has a big hole in its power delivery around 7000rpm. This isn't only obvious from the dyno chart but also when you ride the thing - it just goes absolutely flat and struggles to pull through the midrange of the higher gears. And whilst the Yamaha makes very good peak power - it lacks the punchy midrange of the others in the crucial 5800-8700rpm sector (just like it did back in 2002). We should point out that until we get another '05 WR-F to run on the dyno, we can't

say with absolute certainty that all the '05 bikes are like this. On the other hand this was a test bike supplied to the press...

The Husky meanwhile has the best power-curve of all the bikes, with a smooth and linear increase all the way from 6200-12000rpm. Interestingly the Husky also has one of the best (fattest) torque curves, albeit transposed slightly higher up the rev range than the other bikes - it's still making decent torque even at 12,500rpm. No doubt she's a revver.

So what can we say about the others? Well the Honda has a pretty good torque curve. It makes decent bottom end power (even though it has to give second best to the Yam up till 5800rpm), at which point it overtakes the WR-F with its sizeable midrange all the way up till 8600rpm, but sadly it signs off earliest of all the bikes. And it feels exactly like this when you ride it.

With identical powerplants you'd expect the KTM and the Beta to be very similar in terms of both power and torque - and they are. Albeit the Beta actually has a much stronger bottom-end, and is slightly better in the midrange thanks to a different exhaust system. But... it's louder.

The bottom line is that the Husky takes top honours in our dyno shoot-out for its broad spread of usable power,

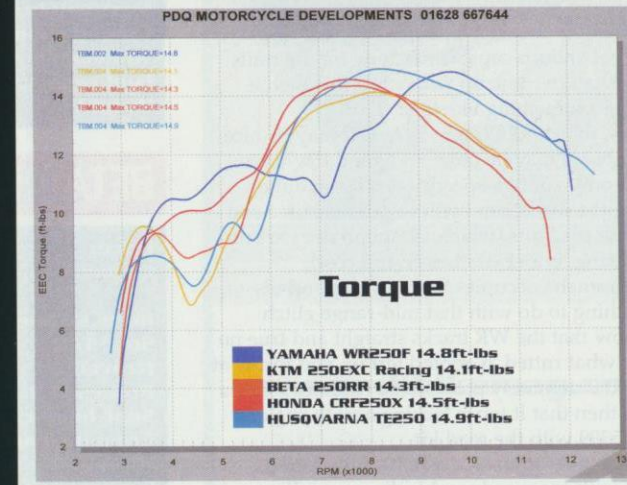
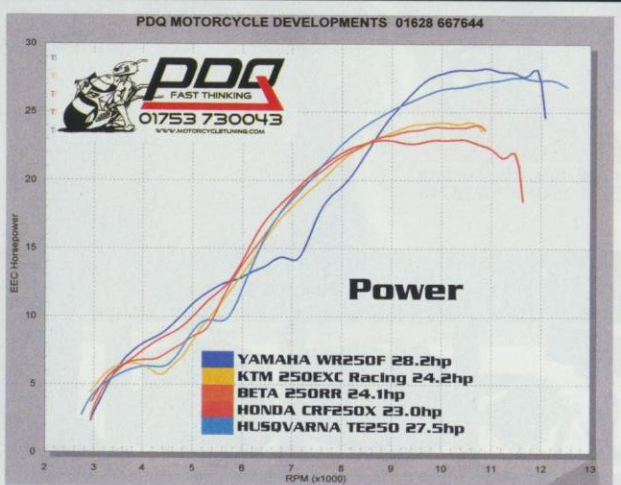
its linear power curve and its sizeable midrange. It also keeps on revving when all the others have yawned and gone to bed.

It may be a fraction less powerful than the all-conquering Yamaha, but its strength lies in its all-round performance...

Dyno Standards

Dynamometers measure the amount of force (power) developed by an engine from its ability to accelerate a rotating drum of a known mass (the rolling road part). Don't get too hung up about the actual power figures (manufacturers tend to quote theoretical power figures, and frequently exaggerate). The important thing is the

relative power compared with other bikes in the same class. Interestingly, tests we've conducted in the past, have shown that knobby tyres tend to give readings of approximately 1-2hp less than the same bike fitted with a smooth (road) tyre. On the other hand if you ride your bike on knobbies, then that's the power that's available to you...





Husqvarna TE250
£5499, 27.5hp, 123kg

Charge of the
LITE
Brigade

to taking the clean sweep, and in fact I'd award it joint honours here with the Beta. The TE comes with a flexible motor (for a 250 thumper), a six-speed box, comfy seat, large(ish) tank, and all the road bits, so it's certainly up to the job. Only the front-end's waywardness in ruts marks it down in my book - cos I'd eventually grow tired of fighting the bars.

No such problem on the Beta RR, it's eminently stable on even the most technical going. It too comes with quality road kit, and the seat is commendably low. But that perch is just a little too knife-like and the rasping exhaust note is similarly cutting. However, I think it'll be the easiest to ride on the lanes, and that counts for a lot when you're footing your way through tractor ruts!

And so there you have it, the findings of another TBM Shootout. We didn't all agree on the order of our top five - but by dint of securing the most first and second-place votes, the Husqvarna comes out on top. It really is that good...

speculation. And on a run through a special test I know which bike I'd rather be riding...

Yep, my pick for top 250 four-stroke is Husky's TE250. The motor felt strong and simply willed you to rev it higher, whilst the chassis took everything in its stride. The bike isn't perfect, a different seat and better brakes (the front's too soft and the rear refused to lock up!) would improve matters, though as it stands I'd happily take one racing. The TE was quickest around our course, and although times aren't necessarily everything, this was simply the icing on the cake.

On Trail

It's a bit harder to put these bikes in order of 'trail preference', not least because I wouldn't particularly choose any of them for riding the lanes. But we know that some people do want an easy-going yet enduro-capable machine for the trails and if I had to come up with a top five then it would go something like this:

Sadly, the Honda comes in last. It may be nice and stable, it may be quiet and good low-down, but it's only got five-speeds (so it'll run out of puff on the roads), and you've got to source and fit all the road bits (which, although not particularly taxing, is an extra hassle and cost).

The Yamaha occupies fourth place, and it's got nothing to do with that mid-range glitch. We know that the WR tracks straight and true no matter what rutted 'n' rooted terrain you throw at it, and it'll definitely prove to be reliable. So it's a shame then that it too is lacking a sixth cog and costs £5399 with the road kit.

Bronze goes to the Katosh. It's fully kitted, comes with six-speeds and feels very mellow.

Surprisingly, the racy Husky comes pretty close

YAMAHA WR250F

Price:	£5199 / £5399 inc homologation kit
Engine:	249cc, DOHC, 5-valve, e-start, 5-speed
Bore/ stroke:	77 x 53.6mm
Susp F/ R (travel):	48mm KYB (300mm) Linkage KYB (315mm)
Brakes F/ R:	250/245mm Nissin calipers
Seat height:	990mm
Ground clear:	375mm
Wheelbase:	1470mm
Fuel capacity:	8L
Weight:	116.9kg

BETA RR250

Price:	£4995 + otr
Engine:	249.6cc, SOHC, 4-valve, dual-start, 6-speed (KTM)
Bore/ stroke:	75 x 56.6mm
Susp F/ R (travel):	45mm Marzocchi (290mm) Linkage Sachs (300mm)
Brakes F/ R:	255/240mm, Nissin calipers
Seat height:	940mm
Ground clear:	320mm
Wheelbase:	1490mm
Fuel capacity:	8.5L
Weight:	123.8kg

Thanks to: Richard Bott, to farmhand Tom, to Nick at PDQ (01753 730043) for manning the dyno way into overtime, to Chris Hockey at Endurotech (07971 447085), to John Lampkin for the Beta (01535 655970), to Geraint Jones at the Yam Off Road Experience (01686 413324), KTM UK (01280 709500), Husky Sport (01962 771122), and Shed at the Honda Off-Road Experience (01933 674036). Cheers guys.

HONDA CRF250X

Price:	£5070 inc delivery
Engine:	249.4cc, SOHC, 4-valve, dual-start, 5-speed
Bore/ stroke:	78 x 52.2mm
Susp F/ R (travel):	47mm Showa (315mm) Linkage Showa (312mm)
Brakes F/ R:	240/240mm, Nissin calipers
Seat height:	955mm
Ground clear:	348mm
Wheelbase:	1483mm
Fuel capacity:	8.3L
Weight:	115.8kg

KTM 250EXC Racing

Price:	£4945 + otr
Engine:	249.6cc, SOHC, 4-valve, dual-start, 6-speed
Bore/ stroke:	75 x 56.6mm
Susp F/ R (travel):	48mm WP (300mm) PDS, WP (335mm)
Brakes F/ R:	260/220mm, Brembo calipers
Seat height:	925mm
Ground clear:	380mm
Wheelbase:	1481mm
Fuel capacity:	8L
Weight:	118.8kg

HUSQVARNA TE250

Price:	£5499 + otr
Engine:	249.5cc, DOHC, 4-valve, dual-start, 6-speed
Bore/ stroke:	76 x 55mm
Susp F/ R (travel):	45mm Marzocchi (300mm) Linkage, Sachs (320mm)
Brakes F/ R:	260/220mm, Brembo calipers
Seat height:	965mm
Ground clear:	335mm
Wheelbase:	1470mm
Fuel capacity:	9.2L
Weight:	123kg

For the full picture...

RAIL BIKE & ENDURO



MAGAZINE

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EVENTS



BACKGROUND IMAGE 1/3

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HACKED Off

It's not just punters who get it wrong - journalists aren't immune to the odd bout of ritual humiliation either! TBM managed to convince a few fellow scribes to reveal their embarrassing off-road experiences in true 'It'll Be Alright On the Night' style...

Remember the famous Eighties VW Golf advert where a woman walks down the street throwing away everything except her V-dub keys? Well, she soon found out journalists aren't as reliable as Volkswagens either...

I'm A Journalist, Get Me Out Of Here!

'Many moons ago when I was working for a certain weekly motorcycle paper I had to cover the making of a TV show called



'Ridgeriders' where famous-ish people had to go and ride some trails.

Unfortunately my paper only had a Triumph Sprint for me to ride, and it wasn't even a later model, it was basically the Trident with a top fairing - come on, it was 1994 after all.

So, there I was in Kent on a damp, 45-degree rutted trail with programme presenter Nick Knowles, Tony 'Baldrick' Robinson and ex-VW ad model Paula Hamilton all waiting to be shown how to ride up this trail.

Which was great... apart from the fact that trying to get the Trumpet up the hill with lots of cack clogged in the back wheel proved to be my off-road baptism of fire, although all my skills gained from riding a field bike kinda' helped!

However, what goes up must come down and that proved just too much for such a heavy bike, and I dropped it right on top of myself. I then had to suffer the ignominy of all three 'celebrities' having to come and pick the sodding thing off me, saying 'You're the guy from MCN and you crashed...' Gits!

Bertie Simmonds, Freelancer

Life was anything but a dream for this hapless hack as he followed his bike merrily down the stream...

Cry Me A River

'My first weekend ever trail riding in Wales was on the vague pretext of a magazine feature: 'Useless Morons of Mud' - I think we called it.

I was working for Performance Bikes at the time and had no real experience off-road, so turned up in mid-November dressed in full MX gear (brand new and blagged, obviously) and scruffy DR350



(which I owned, at least).

We left Rhayader early doors and headed for the hills. Now, somewhere near the Monks' Trod is a river, quite a big one, especially when it's been raining.

On this particular day there were a gang of lads on bikes on the far riverbank and they waved at us not to cross. I, of course, had other ideas. It looked okay - the bit I could see was shallow, no more than two to three feet deep at the most.

So, without a word to my mates I turned the DR around, got a good run-up and hit the shore flat in third. Everything was going fine; big bow wave, lots of noise, bit of style and then... BWWWOAArrrrr... I was swimming. Dressed in full MX gear, boots, lid, armour, at 8.00am on an icy cold winter morning!

The river bed had dropped to eight feet and the current was strong, really strong. The bike was bumping along the bottom

HACKED Off

turning over and over. Every so often I'd see its headlight (still shining) as it revolved and I doggy paddled. Eventually we both fetched up about 300 yards downstream.

All I could make out of my 'mates' was a load of bobbing heads and shaking shoulders as they filled their goggles with tears of laughter. For at least ten minutes.

It took two hours to retrieve the DR and get it cracked up and running. By the time we got back to the Lion Royal eight hours later, after a full day out, I really thought I was a gonna' die from hypothermia. Never mind the very public (and self-induced) humiliation...'

Alex Hearn, Two Wheels Only

We've all suffered blockages of one type or another - normally after eating too many egg sarnies - but they have to be very bad indeed to stop you from starting an enduro...

What A Corker

'As a teenager I'd always had two-stroke enduro bikes and as a result, the technique of starting a four-stroke was one that I'd never needed to master.

Roll on several years to the Welsh Two-Day, armed with a borrowed Yamaha WR250F and the moment that I'd been dreading finally arrived - I'd have to kick-start a thumper in competition.

No worries I thought, practice makes perfect so I spent a whole afternoon



practicing breathing life into the quarter-litre Yam. I got so good at it that the bike would start even when I tried to mess it up. I had nothing to worry about.

Come the first morning of the event and I was feeling confident. Despite watching several clubman riders fail to start their machines for one reason or another, I remained firm in my belief that I wouldn't get penalised before I'd even started. It had never happened before and it wasn't going to happen now.

As my minute drew closer I prepared the bike for the start. Turning on the fuel to drown the carb with fresh fuel, I pulled out the choke knob and cracked the throttle three times, just the way she liked it. Then, having been called to the start line, I pushed down the kick-starter and she fired into life. I'd done it!

But then, just as I was about to pull in the clutch, the bike died - I was in trouble. Kicking, decompressing, kicking with throttle, kicking without throttle and laying the bike on its side before I kicked some more and she still refused to go. 'What the hell had I done wrong?'

That's when I got a tap on my left shoulder. 'This might be the problem,'

suggested a fellow competitor, waving an exhaust bung he'd just pulled from the silencer of my bike. Three kicks later I started the Welsh Two-Day feeling relieved but just a little bit silly!

Jonty Edmunds, Freelance Photo Journalist

Let's face it, when riding in Wales you can almost always guarantee the presence of two things - rain and sheep - but on this occasion neither proved to be 'fatale' for one particular 'femme'...

The Quad Mother

'Last year Yamaha invited me to Wales for the re-launch of their DT125 along with most of the off-road press. After a day's riding the trails round Geraint Jones' gaff,

we all took to the country roads that lead to the pub.

Keen to get the beers in, we were riding at a fair whack on the twisty and narrow lanes when suddenly (and without warning) a quad pulled out from a dirt track to take up the whole width of my road ahead.

My heart felt like I was in a Loony Tunes cartoon and I'd just seen Jessica Rabbit. In my panic I laid the bike on its side to avoid a head-on with Mr Quad. The guy behind me took the more sensible option of turning off into the adjacent field to avoid the carnage - we were on dirt bikes after all.

I hit the deck hard but in my embarrassment, I stood up straight away to pick up the bike and act like nothing happened, but my little finger felt a bit funny and I noticed it was pointing up at a very odd angle.

Meanwhile a little further up the road, Geraint and the others were busy picking



HACKED Off

up Yamaha's PR guy Harley Stephens after his encounter with a suicidal sheep. Both Harley and the sheep survived relatively unscathed, but by the time the convoy reached us my hand had swelled to football sized proportions.

I'd began wondering how the hell I was going to drive the 250 miles home when this nice bloke called Si Melber stepped in and offered to drive me back. Who said chivalry was dead? Cheers Si!
Harriet Ridley, Two Wheels Only

We all try to move forwards in life, but there's always somebody willing to reverse the trend...

Back To Front

'I used to own a KTM 300EXC for a couple of years which was awesome. Trouble-free running, completely reliable and never once let me down... until one day while out trail riding with a few mates in Nottinghamshire.

I arrived early at the chosen venue and decided to get ready. So I put all my riding gear on, got the bike out of the van and tried to start it. I kicked and kicked my smoker's lungs out and still couldn't get the thing started. Sweat was pouring off me and I really thought I was going to have a heart attack, so I slammed the stupid thing against the side of the van and tried to cool



down by taking half my clothes off.

I then decided to take the plug out to have a look at that - it was wet through as to be expected so I dried it as best I could and put it back in. It fired a little, and then after about ten kicks later it gave one almighty backfire, kicked back and almost broke my leg, whilst sending the kickstart flying off into the undergrowth!

My first thought through the mist of pain was 'Don't stall it' so I carried on revving to warm it up gently. Just then my mates arrived and just as they pulled up I decided to give the Katosh a handful, showering their van in mud.

I slammed it into first, wound the throttle back, dropped the clutch and went flying over the handlebars as the bike cleared off at 30mph in reverse.

Little did I realise that a two-stroke could fire-up and run backwards - I guess she didn't want to go out and play that day.'

Chippy Wood, Bike

The very real threat of the hangman's noose in this case unfortunately failed to garrotte a certain journo's garrulity...

All Choked Up

'In my 15 years of running trail bike holidays I have seen plenty of people do incredibly idiotic things, but tragically I have never witnessed quite the level of stupidity a couple of friends and I displayed when we were students.

The proud owner of an XT500, I had ridden over one Sunday morning to help a mate try and start his decrepit Bultaco Sherpa. After messing around with spark plugs and fuel mixes we decided the best way of getting some life into the Sherpa would be to 'give it a bloody good tow'.

Another mate was big into climbing, so we nicked one of his 300-metre ropes, tied one end to the Sherpa's forks and wound the other end through the sub frame of the XT with the excess rope draped rakishly around my shoulders. The final part of this great plan was to stick yet another mate on the back of the XT, holding a loop of rope in his right hand that he could let go if 'things started to go wrong'.

With all three of us in position, but not a helmet or glove between us, I gently put the Yamaha into gear, took up the slack and off

we went. Everything was going fine until the bloke on the Bultaco put his bike into first gear. This instantly locked his back wheel, which in turn snatched the loop out of my mate's hand, with all the strain now going to the rope wrapped around my shoulders.

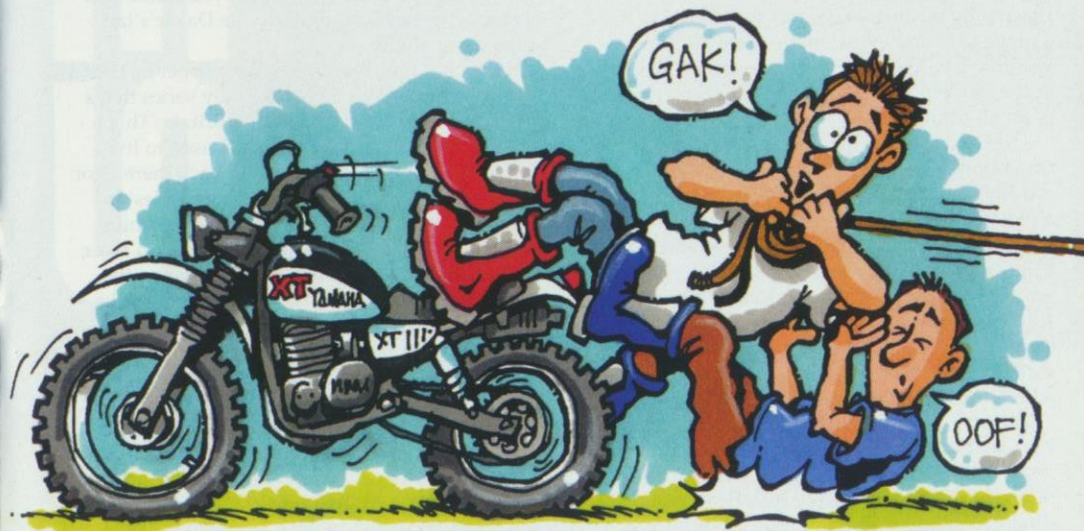
From that moment on things went wrong very quickly. The rope rode up to my neck and started simultaneously strangling me and pulling me backwards off the bike. Sliding towards the rear of the Yam I pushed my mate off the back and then fell on top of him.

At that precise moment the Sherpa decided to fire up and ran over us both, causing the Bultaco rider to crash in the process. Miraculously, despite zero protective gear, nobody was hurt in the two-bike/three-man pile up, though I sported rope-burn marks to my neck for a month or so afterwards.

The Bultaco went back into the shed, and as far as I know (or care), was never coaxed into life again.'

Chris Evans, Freelance Journalist

TBM would like to point out that no journalists were seriously harmed in the making of this feature... just their egos! Thanks to everybody for divulging their dirty secrets to us.



STAFF

JON BENTMAN
BMW F650GS DAKAR
SPRING OFFENSIVE

STORY: JON BENTMAN; PICS: DOUBLE RED

News of a dedicated big bike rally series produced a small flurry of enthusiasm from the staff of TBM, all anxious to have a crack at proving their mettle...

Believe it or not, this plan makes perfect sense. Nobody around here believes it, I can tell by their forced tones and complicit sideways glances, but time will bear out the efficacy of this most masterful of master plans. You see, my first action as a TBMer has been to order up a splendid BMW F650GS Dakar, with which I foresee an extended season of fun and games competing in all manner of on- and off-road events. It's a bike for all-reasons, for me, a man of all-seasons. Or some such thing. Best I just get on with the facts then, huh?



The Plan

Essentially we're going to test the GS Dakar over a range of riding experiences to see just how versatile the bike is. And to determine whether, in the modern context, there is still such a beast as an all-rounder.

The Dakar will in the first instance, be a commuter. My daily ride to the TBM bunker is a 50-mile cross-London traverse, made twice a day, obviously. Unpleasant at the best of the times, it demands of a bike agility, comfort and frugality in equal measure. This will be the humble weekday existence for the Beemer. At the weekends though its anticipated life will be much more fun. I'm planning on a vast cross-section of competitive events that should all fall within the Dak's spread of competence.

The plan is to kick off the Dak's activities with a crack at the Motor Cycle Club's Land's End Trial. This is something of a classic event, where riders tackle a succession of historical observed climbs set along a winding route, which meanders its way down through the south western-

most tip of England. Or thereabouts. Ah yes, and it runs through the day and the night. I think. Fact is, I know very little about these Long Distance Trials but I think, yes, think, that just maybe they'll be right up the Dakar's tail pipe of capability.

Like you, I too read the news snippet in TBM's January issue about a big bike rally series that's going to run throughout 2005 in Britain. This I think is a brilliant idea. You see, I used to live in New Zealand for a while, and back there I got to ride what were called 'Adventure Rides' in which I piloted the odd GS Dakar. And while I'm an ex-road-racer and wannabe enduro racer, there's a lot to be said for the fun I had on the big 650, ambling along farm and coastal tracks, on a machine that didn't need to be trailered, that didn't require frequent fuel stops, and that could even carry two. Yes, the riding was at a more gentle pace but, given the skills needed to successfully guide a 200kg bike cross-country, these rides were neither lacking in challenge nor fun. So this new series sounds like a must-do. Then there's the Moto Rallies. Okay, I know nothing about these except what I've read of Blezard's annual forays Frog-side. I'm talking about these

WIKIS



STREET BIKES

strange, typically French-police-run road rallies, usually held over three or so days, where riders follow a road-book from hill-climb to race track to... well, whatever. They look utterly mad, which is natural, seeing as they're run by Frenchmen, and brilliantly adventurous. And they look like they were created for a bike like the Dakar.

And as for supermoto track days... This is probably not a good idea, but I have this notion that the Dak might make a cool amateur-hour supermoto tool. Not a serious one, obviously, but for something else fun to do with the Dakar, I think a track day (on a predominantly tarmac) supermoto circuit could be a go-er.

The Reality

Of course, all of this is going to require the odd subtle modification for the Beemer just to make the days easier and more fun. We anticipate some crash protection will help.

I'm not big on crashing but, in the same way that carrying an umbrella prevents rain, so a plethora of crash bars, bungs and pads should do well in warding off the crash gremlins.

If you're around rally-touring types enough you'll eventually hear the term 'road book' bandied around. You can't have a rally bike without a road book. Just what these are and how they work, we'll discover in due course.

Then there's the fun stuff to play with, like aftermarket handlebars and footrest kits. Xenon lights and bolt-on mufflers. All of which should sharpen the Dakar to a rapier-like sense of poise and prowess. Or not.

The truth is I don't know an awful lot about any of this stuff, but I've simply been reading TBM long enough and fantasising for too long - it's time to get out there and join in the fun.

Useful contacts:

bmw-motorrad.co.uk
bigbikechallenge.co.uk



BMW F650GS Dakar

Price:
Engine:

£5650 inclusive
 Electric-start, liquid-cooled,
 DOHC four-valve single

Displacement:

652cc

Bore/ stroke:

100 x 83mm

Transmission:

50-speed

Susp F/ R

41mm telescopic (210mm)

(travel):

Linkage type (210mm)

Brake Front:

300mm disc,

twin-piston caliper

Brake Rear:

240mm disc, single

piston caliper

Seat height:

870mm

Wheelbase:

1489mm

Fuel capacity:

17.3L

Weight:

177.2kg

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 with minimum noise

92 dB(A)

Absolute Performance II



Alu/Stainless enduro silencer
 Maximum performance with minimum noise
 92 dB(A)

£ 259.95



Absolute Power II
 Stainless steel Silencer

Noise Catcher for Absolute Power II :
 To reduce exhaust's decibel output

£ 199.95



£ 7.83

2 Stroke Sump Guard



£ 56.95

4 Stroke Sump Guard



£ 79.95

Rad Brace



£ 54.95

Dealer list :

DirT Bike Store, Somerset - 01278 424979 - Leisure Trail UK, Notts - 01159 732466 - Ray Hockey M/C, Gwent - 01873 840170 - Jim Sandiford M/C, Lancs - 01282 428383
 Russell's M/C, N.Ireland 02890 817000 - Steve Plain M/C, Powys - 01597 825817 - Taylor Racing, Wilts - 01249 657575 - The Mud Shack, Glos - 01453 885932.



RACE SPEC

SHOCKING IN PINK



Okay, the colour's very *gurdy* - these are after all Mel's new goggles - but they come in a good range of masculine colours too. The Scott Voltage MX goggle is, as the name suggests, a motocross oriented piece of eyewear, but it will also suit those edgy enduro racers who like a distinct look.

There's function as well as form, for the Voltage features Scott's triple-layer face foam, which is a story of varying densities and thicknesses designed to maximise comfort and minimise sweat.

The special vents in the brow section of the frame are there to direct air over the lens to minimise fogging - it's not just a piece of stylised plastic. Oh yes, and the strap has silicon grip on the inside for secure fitting.

In fact the Voltage carries all the usual Scott accessories, including lens tints and tear-offs and costs a fairly shocking £39.95. Contact Bert Harkins Racing on 01582 491076 to get your hands on some.

CORE VALUES



A new dirt bike boot from a Welsh distributor. Shown here in a blue/white colour scheme, they're also available in black. Anyway, they're known as EC1s and benefit from a lot of experienced enduro rider input. Lightweight and flexible, they're constructed from a leather upper with thermo-moulded plastic protection around all the worst stress and rub points. Double stitching is present in all the right places while the plastic straps and buckles are fully adjustable, and just as importantly, replaceable.

In typical Welsh fashion they're minimum flash, maximum practicality, oh, and are reasonably priced too, costing £119.99. Like we said, they're Welsh boots. Contact CORE on 01686 412157 for more details.

USE THE FORCE

Body armour is useful stuff. It can make the difference between work on Monday and a visit to the fractures unit.

British company Forcefield offers a comprehensive range of body armours designed to protect without inhibiting movement and, equally as importantly, without inhibiting air-flow. Forcefield use what they call TPro technology in their armour, a kind of honeycomb outer and softer foam inner, which is designed to repeatedly absorb impacts and shocks. That's the important bit, seeing as some riders tend to crash a fair bit, you want protection that will work as well on the 50th impact as on the first.

The Forcefield shirt shown here is typical of their technical design. The shirt itself is manufactured from Coolmax, which they claim has good moisture management capabilities to reduce skin temperature and thus heart rate, leaving the rider cool, dry and comfortable.

The TPro Armourflex body armour is placed within the shirt's pockets, protecting shoulder, elbow-forearm, chest and ribs. It can be used in conjunction with the brand's back protector (sold separately).

The shirt shown here retails at £130, and it's an extra £50 for the back protector - call Forcefield on 01933 410818 for info.



RUBBER DUCK

No one likes punctures. Except tube manufacturers maybe. And tyre shops obviously. No, punctures are hugely inconvenient - they can put the mockers on an otherwise very fine day out.

Oh yes, and they kill an enduro rider's result. Typically we've got around punctures by riding on bib mousses, those sort-of-solid inner tubes that are evil to fit and expensive to buy. Well, there is an alternative in case you've missed them - check out these ultra heavy-duty inner tubes from Michelin.

These ones are the 4mm jobbies and they are truly the mother of all inner tubes. Available in all the usual tyre sizes they could transform your off-road experience and cost from around £16.00 each. For more details, contact Michelin UK on 01782 401755.





Could it be that the worst of winter is behind us? Perhaps, but the wet stuff won't stop falling for sometime yet and there's nothing worse than playing the British weather lottery while out riding. TBM reviews what macs you should pack and which you should send packing...

Return of The

MAC

STORY: JON BENTMAN; PICS: POSITIVE IMAGES

The Holy Grail for most dirtbike riders during the cold months is a jacket that will stop the rain getting in, keep out the wind and won't turn into a portable sauna ten minutes down the trail.

Other elusive qualities include the ability to stuff it into the smallest possible space just in case the sun does make a welcome appearance,

and being a bit of a lightweight in this instance is definitely an added bonus.

And if that wasn't enough, decent rip, tear and scuff resisting properties wouldn't go amiss in the event of a bit of rough 'n' tumble. Ah yes, and if it can look a touch trick at the same time, that'll help too. Not asking much then...

Here are a selection of what's around...

Moose Quick Coat / £24.50

What You Get: A fetchingly see-through waterproof confection augured from finest PVC, guaranteed 100-percent PVC in fact. The seams are all electronically welded with a full-length zip. There's a rather handy zippered pocket that will comfortably stow your latest copy of TBM. The neck, cuffs and hem are all elasticated. And of course there's the subtle-in-black Moose Racing USA logo running down both sleeves and across your lower lumber. **Sizes:** S-XL. **Colours:** Clear.

What We Think: It's light and packs very well. Feels suitably robust too, being thick enough to resist tearing but not so thick as to add unnecessary weight, with good course-set zips. The neck sits good and high so should prevent nasty draughts, although the zip

may irritate your Adam's apple (guys only). Generous arm length and not bad bum coverage either. Big drawback will be breathability, or rather lack of. So yes, it'll be waterproof but you will sweat.

Contact: DirtBike Store on 01278 424979 or go to dirtbikestore.com



Extreme Pro-Wear

Waterproof Over-Jacket / £24.50

What You Get: A fully lined seam-sealed stitched waterproof jacket, featuring a half-length zip, protected by a velcro flap (creating an opening big enough to go over a crash helmet), plus a front 'stuffa' pouch. Two waist adjustment straps and a padded high collar keep things snug. **Sizes:** XS-XXL.

Colour: Black. Also available are 28-40inch matching trousers for £22.50.

What We Think: For what is an easy-on-the-pocket item, the design is quite decent. The lining makes the putting on and taking off a lot easier and will reduce to some degree the sweat build-up. The fleece-lined collar is neat too. But you can tell the price limitations in the basic cuff and hem details. Although it's also one of the bulkiest jackets here when it

comes to stashing it in a bag, it will fit quite easily over armour. Excellent value for the budget conscious.

Contact: DirtBike Store on 01278 424979 or check out dirtbikestore.com



XC-TING

Technico / £36.99

What You Get: Constructed from an 'elastic fabric', this distinctive soft-feel pac-a-mac is waterproof with thermo-sealed seams and a roomy front pouch. The half-length opening is only secured by velcro, the cuffs are elasticated but the hem isn't. The badge XC-ting appears on the arms and in subtle sizing on the chest and back too.

Sizes: S-XXXL.

Colours: Black, red, blue.

What We Think: XC-ting is a trials brand, an area of sport where flexibility and ease of movement is paramount, and this jacket does allow plenty of movement. The lack of elastic in the hem will be a drawback to those who like to beetle along, as the back could lift in the slipstream. Could really do with a few more

creature comforts for dedicated trail-enduro users, but otherwise pleasingly different to the mainstream fare.

Contact: Braybrook Off Road on 07802 572023



Shot

Rain-Jacket / £30.95

What You Get: A neat nylon waterproof jacket featuring a full-length zip with velcro secured storm flap, neoprene cuffs, (also with velcro fastening), a corduroy-lined high collar and a window pocket on the sleeve, perfect for timecards. No lining to speak of, but there's a flap across the back that will go some way towards releasing the steam. The hem is well elasticated too. The legend 'Shot Race Gear' is emblazoned down both sleeves and a couple of logos across the upper and lower back brighten things up. **Sizes:** XS-XXL. **Colour:** Black.

What We Think: This is one of the most packable jackets here, it really squashes down nicely and weighs almost nothing - a big bonus. We liked the cuff and collar detailing

which will go a fair way to stop chaffing. It's rather neatly cut and will double as a paddock jacket with ease.

Contact: Race Spec on 01531 631700 or log onto racespec.co.uk



ALPINESTARS

RJ-3 Rain Jacket / £33.99

What You Get: Made from coated rip-stop nylon, this jacket sports a zippered and storm-flapped half-opening for easy over-the-helmet fittings. The cuffs are elasticated, there's waist adjustment, but surprisingly the hem is neither adjustable nor has any stretch. There's also a small Scotchlite strip across the shoulders and the A-star logo adorns the back and front bottom jacket corners. **Sizes:** M-XXL. Matching trousers also available in the same sizes priced at £25.95.

Colours: Black.

What We Think: Quite basic, although we like the rip-stop element, if it really does stop rips. It has a comfy fleece collar, but the 100-percent nylon interior lining could make things get a little sweaty. The lack of detailing in cuff and hem is disappointing too, given

that it's an Alpinestars bit of kit, although no doubt there'll be those who'll appreciate the A-star street-cred. There's no mention whether the jacket is fully waterproof either.

Contact: Race Spec on 01531 631700 or try racespec.co.uk



ALPINESTARS

El-Nino Rain Jacket / £54.95

What You Get: A rather nattily named two-tone lined jacket made from a 'soft to touch taslan material'. There's a full-length zip complete with storm flap, and also features reflective piping and logos. The neck is corduroy lined, the cuffs are elasticated and there's a drawcord on the hem. The waist is heavily elasticated, which should provide decent closure. **Sizes:** M-XXL. Co-ordinating bottoms are also available at £45.95. **Colours:** Black, black/blue.

What We Think: Quite a serious jacket insofar as its generous elastic allocation makes for a figure-hugging fit. There's a sense of robustness from the velcro'd storm flap and tight cuffs. But the lack of pockets is a serious downer and it's a bit bulky when it comes to stowing away. Body armour types will

need to order a larger size than usual to fit it all underneath. The reflective piping is a good safety point for those who get stuck out on trails and back lanes late in the evening.

Contact: Race Spec on 01531 631700 or go to racespec.co.uk



UFO

Rain Jacket / £39.95

What You Get: Ostensibly a waterproof fashion jacket that will double - but only just - as a riding mac. It features a nylon shell, an aertex-type lining with a velcro sealed front pocket and two zippered side pockets. The cuffs are elasticated and the hem has a drawcord. There's a quarter zip at the front although it's not actually big enough to get a helmet through and the hood also only serves to complicate matters. **Sizes:** S-XL. **Colours:** Black/grey/red.

What We Think: This is doubtless a good lookin' super smart jacket, albeit in a slightly motocross kind of way. The hood and the fact you can't pull it on over a crash helmet really are severe limitations to practical use. Nonetheless a must-have for those keen to swan

around the paddock looking like the very distinguished Jonty Edmunds.

Contact: MDR on 01935 429646



MSR

Hydroshell / £115.00

What You Get: A seriously lightweight, incredibly technical riding jacket that packs right down to virtually nothing. There are no pockets but you do get scuba-style 'Gelanots' neck and cuff details, triple taped seams plus a drawcord on the hem. It's constructed from a rip-stop nylon and polyester mix and the cut is designed specifically to allow for body armour to be worn underneath. **Sizes:** M-XXL. **Colours:** Black, blue/black, red/black.

What We Think: This is a real race-style jacket, minimalist in execution and totally fuss free. Like a racing yacht, it's trick, sleek and purposeful but with little to cosset the user and at £115 quid it's fairly pricey too! You may want to

check out the sizes before you buy - the large one we received is a touch economical on cut. But big on quality.

Contact: CI Sport on 01372 378000



MSR

150E Pak Jak / £169.95

What You Get: Look beyond the astronomical price tag and you'll find a waterproof, breathable creation loaded with features and design highlights. Includes a full-length zip with velcro sealed storm flap, lined collar, adjustable cuffs, hem drawcord and two side pockets. The list goes on to include a full width zippable vent across the back plus a pocket on the rear that reverses to become a bumbag with strap so you can wear the packed-jak around your waist. The inner liner is micro-porous to allow sweat out, and again all seams are triple taped. **Sizes:** M-XXL. **Colours:** Black, blue/black, red/black.

What We Think: Beautifully designed jacket and surprisingly light for one so extensively detailed. The side pockets are fairly cavernous and feature the trickiest waterproof sealing

to a zip we've seen. And the mesh vent reaches across the back, and down the arms - that's a huge exhaust. Definitely the last word in lightweight jackets but like all good things, this comes at a price.

Contact: CI Sport on 01372 378000



HIGHWAY TO HELL

HELL'S GATE, 5 FEBRUARY

STORY & PICS: JONTY EDMUNDS

Could the Brits once again dominate the world's toughest one day enduro...?



It took Knighter precisely six seconds to hit the front of the pack! A position he never relinquished...

It's close to 12.45pm on a cold Friday night in Italy and not for the first time my conversation with friends at the bar of the four-star Il Ciocco hotel and tourist complex, high in the Tuscan Apennines, is interrupted by rasping laughter from behind me. Ignoring the high spirited revellers, as I've been trying to do for the past hour, I continue my discussion but to no avail. Turning to face the huge open fire around which close to a dozen Brits have made their home for the night, I realise what all the raucous amusement is about.

Stood no more than a foot away from the generously stocked fire is one of the group's younger members, his back to the inferno. With a pained but curiously determined look upon his face it isn't until I glance for a second time that I realise why he's grimacing. Subtly exposing the upper two-thirds of his bum to the fire, he's stood toasting his buttocks like marshmallows. His friend, acting as official time keeper for the night, is seated less than a metre away openly encouraging him. Shouts of 'that's 20-seconds now' and 'another five-seconds and you'll have beaten your dad's time' can be heard all around. It's the night before the second running of the Hell's Gate extreme enduro, and spirits in the British camp are running high.

Breakfast the following morning is not

The look on David's face says it all... Another Hell's Gate - another victory for the Manxman...



surprisingly a much less energetic affair. With the seven o'clock start time of the qualifying morning race having been and gone, the large dining room in which I'm sat drinking coffee is occupied only by two Italians and the majority of the British partygoers (meaning Welsh with a couple of English), each arriving one by one, clearly not looking on top of their game. 'I feel bloody rough this morning,' comments one of the Brits as he wanders about aimlessly trying to find Marmite.



Even multi-world Enduro champs can get it wrong sometimes, as Anders Eriksson demonstrates...

Spirits were running high the night before in anticipation of a good result. After all who could topple the world's number one extreme enduro rider David Knight, the winner of the event 12-months ago? Furthermore we had two of the best trials-turned-enduro riders in the shape of Wayne Braybrook and Juan Knight competing for us. Yet more reason to drink and be merry.

Under Cover Of Darkness

The Hell's Gate event is the idea of Italian Fabio Fasola, a former Italian enduro champion turned enduro and supermoto coach, and is designed to 'bring back the forgotten themes of physical exertion and passion into enduro'. Bringing the event to the world's attentions last year by offering prize money that wasn't to be sniffed at, only three riders reached the finish - David Knight, Bartosz Oblucki and Mario Rinaldi, with Knighter claiming the 8000 euro winner's cheque. With any rider that falls more than 40-minutes behind the leader mercilessly weeded out of the

main event at the time-checks, competitors would finish the race under cover of darkness. Awaiting those that make it to the end is a ludicrously steep hill just metres from the finish line. No rider can scale a hill as steep as this without the assistance of willing spectators, but their participation is all part of the event's magic.

To help celebrate the event's second birthday a few changes and improvements were made to this year's edition of the Hell's Gate including sponsorship from Team Special Events (that's Camel Ciggies to you and me). But disappointingly the number of top riders that had travelled to Tuscany to compete this year was dramatically fewer than last year. Topping the list of named riders was of course David Knight who started the race as favourite. Alongside him, Swede Anders Eriksson, the Husqvarna mounted seven-time world enduro champion, was giving the event a go for the first time. And despite being known for his 'Viking strength', he was feeling a little dubious about the main event knowing that



Wayne Braybrook puts in the effort, with a gritty ride to second overall...

his ability to deal with rocks wasn't quite as good as it needed to be. With the exception of a few of Italy's B-list WEC riders that was pretty much it as far as the sport's big hitters were concerned.

So what was the reason for the spectacular no-show of well known WEC stars? Surely the chance of a challenging workout ahead of the world championship would be of benefit to them? The answer is simple: David Knight. And the fact that the prize money was 'winner-takes-all'. As a rider who's feared and revered for his dogged determination, bike handling skills and love of tough events, if DK finished the event, DK would win the event. That's how most riders saw it. And with no start money paid to anyone, the riders that were needed to make the Hells Gate a real success, disappointingly stayed away. They might have given their reason for not competing as 'it interrupts with my pre-season testing' but what they really meant was 'I haven't got a chance (in Hell!) of beating Knighter.'

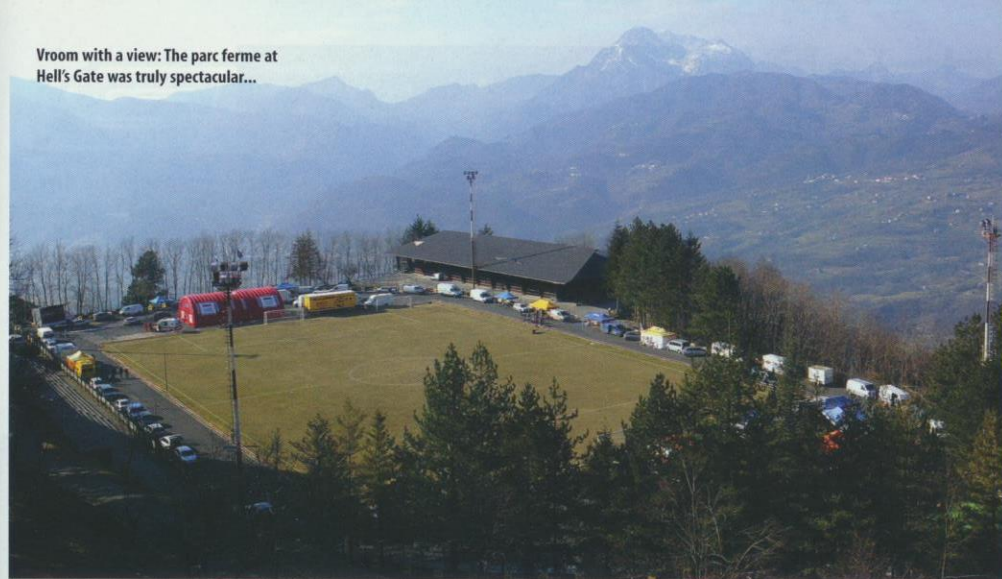
Of course there were other riders willing to give the event a go - 60 of them in total, most notably the Repsol KTM Rallye team comprising former Dakar winner Nani Roma, Jean Brucy and this year's runner-up Marc Coma. But they didn't last long and failed to even finish the morning



race. The rest of the entry was made up of mad Italians, lots of Italians, that simply wanted to have a go. Also having a go for the first time were Brits Wayne Braybrook and Juan Knight.

Sticking with the 'race of two halves' theme introduced last year, riders again had to compete in a five-hour morning qualifying enduro with the top 50-percent passing through into the main event. With the fastest rider getting first pick on the starting grid for the feature event, simply qualifying without too many dramas was what most were happy to do. Unfortunately for Welshman Edward Jones that wasn't the case as he departed the goat track along which he was riding only to find himself stuck at the bottom

Vroom with a view: The parc ferme at Hell's Gate was truly spectacular...



of a steep ravine until such time as he was rescued. Managing to still finish the morning race, he wasn't allowed to pass through into the main event. Knighter, Wayne, Juan and Manxman Ben Begbie did however.

Taking Control: The Race...

By virtue of topping the morning race, Knighter is given prime spot on the starting grid for the main event. With his open face helmet and a grin from ear to ear, it's clear that David will soon be in control of the race.

Seven-time world champion Anders Eriksson looks pensive, 'It was bad enough this morning, I don't want to think what the main race will be like.' But he doesn't have time to think because with the drop of a flag the race is underway - and it's Anders who leads.

... For six seconds. That's how long it takes for Knighter to hit the front of the race, before any of them have even reached the dirt. And as the riders disappear off up the first of many climbs, and I head for the first known trouble spot, it seems as if the inevitable has already happened and riders were right to stay away.

Crouched in position at the steepest part of the first spectator point the sound of Knighter's buzzing two-stroke can be heard long before it can be seen. On the sheer bank on which I, a handful of British supporters and some enthusiastic locals are all perched, ice covers much of the ground

making standing difficult. It must make riding a whole lot more interesting.

David arrives first. One of only a handful of riders who knows what to expect of the course having ridden it last year, the grin that was firmly planted on his face at the start of the race is still in place. Pausing for a moment at the bottom of the rock-littered climb he sets off only to run out of momentum with three metres still to climb. 'Bugger,' he mutters, calmly gets off his bike and assists dragging it to the top of the climb.

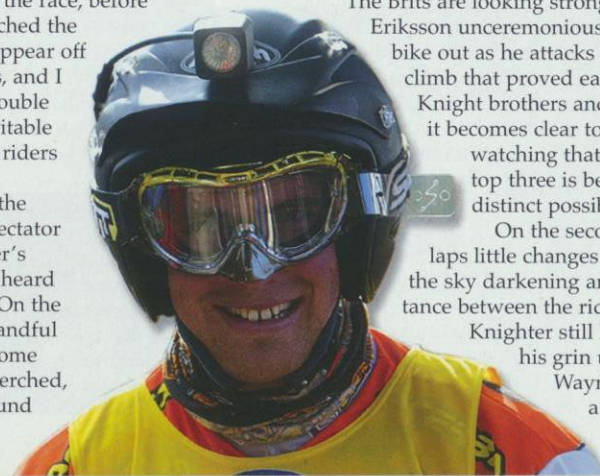
A little while later and Wayne Braybrook arrives. Seemingly in more of a hurry to get to the top of the climb than Knighter, he puts his trials skills to good use and without too much bother is soon on his way. Leaving Italian spectators wondering who the rider on the Honda was.

Things are looking good as David's brother Juan appears next, as the third placed rider.

The Brits are looking strong. And when Eriksson unceremoniously loops his bike out as he attacks the very same climb that proved easy for the Knight brothers and Braybrook, it becomes clear to everyone watching that an all-British top three is becoming a distinct possibility

On the second and third laps little changes apart from the sky darkening and the distance between the riders widens.

Knighter still leads with his grin unaltered, Wayne holds down a strong second





Three Brits on a podium:
Now there's a thing you
don't see every day...

in front of him. It's time for the Manx charm. 'I crashed not far from the finish and damaged my lights,' he says, 'It made things a bit harder but I really enjoyed the last lap. It's great to win, I hope we can make it a British one-two-three.'

Impromptu speech over David works his way back through the crowd to help Wayne and Juan to the finish, the grin on his face is now even bigger than ever.

place with Juan third. Then there is a gap - a big gap - until Anders arrives. Seemingly aware of the fact that only a problem to one of the riders ahead of him will see him finish top three, he digs deep and once again makes a mess of the rocky, icy climb. Watching a multi-world-enduro-champion struggle like this brings home just how well each of the three Brits are riding.

With the race having suddenly arrived at the third lap it's time to head for the finish and Hell's Peak. Leaving behind the large crowd of spectators, I head towards an even bigger crowd that has gathered on 'the hill'. Close to 100m long, near vertical at the top and illuminated by half a dozen spotlights hanging from the surrounding trees, it's Knighter that arrives at its base first.

As the commentator livens up the crowd DK attacks the climb arriving halfway up before having to dismount. Swamped by enthusiastic spectators, he makes several attempts to climb further up the hill before his bike is attached to ropes and starts its unpredictable journey to the top. Trying to direct the passionate Italians, David all but gives up, comes close to breaking his arm and decides instead to let them manhandle his bike to the top while he holds firmly to the handlebars. Less than 10-minutes after he arrived on the hill, Knighter is at the top. Knackered, relieved and only a few seconds away from being 8000 euros better off, Knighter has done it again.

Mobbed by spectators, all wanting to shake his hand, David arrives on the podium to receive his trophy and cheque. 'That was effing hard,' he says to the Manx contingent that travelled to support him before having a microphone thrust

With yet more hand shaking and back-patting David arrives on the hill as Wayne is halfway up. Doing his bit to join the communal effort that eventually gets Bindy to the top, Knighter looks as if he could have ridden another four laps. Was the event not hard enough for him?

But before long there are two Brits on the hill, Wayne at the top and Juan at the bottom. Set upon by a gang of (mainly Welsh and now sober) supporters, Juan struggles to keep hold of his bike as it arrives at the top of the slope without him. Clambering on his hands and knees he's eventually reunited with his machine and joins David and Wayne on the podium.

All with stories to tell, and all clearly enjoying the atmosphere - and the fact that there isn't an Italian, Swede, Spaniard or Finn in sight - three Brits standing on the podium certainly isn't an everyday happening.

Later that night at the gala dinner and prize giving ceremony the three Brits, along with the only other two event finishers, Anders Eriksson and Italian Andrea Beconi, receive the applause they deserve. All five made it to the finish of the race but everyone knows it's the Brits that really shone at Hell's Gate '05. Roll on Next year...

RESULTS

- 1 DAVID KNIGHT
- 2 WAYNE BRAYBROOK
- 3 JUAN KNIGHT
- 4 ANDERS ERIKSSON
- 5 ANDREA BECONI

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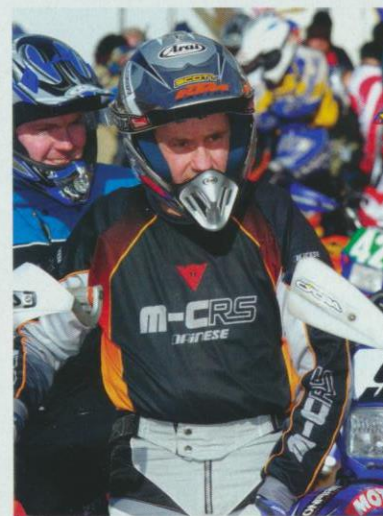
Guys, as soon as Knighter has left the start I need you to move these barriers so that spectators are kept away from the start area,' croaked Steve Ireland, the man responsible for The Tough One - Britain's first extreme sprint hare scramble race.

Masked behind a woolly hat and sunglasses with loudspeaker in hand, the strain of running

best having turned up to compete and spectators paying to 'see the show', Steve knew he could afford to make no mistakes whatsoever.

So what was it that made Steve Ireland and the Wirral Off-Road club want to run The Tough One? The event would end up costing thousands of pounds for the 'right' venue, and earn them next to nothing in the way of entry fees from the

Ed Jones managed to overhaul Rinaldi for a well-deserved third place...



his first 'high profile' event was starting to show, despite having organised hundreds of hare scramble events over recent years.

With all but a few of Britain's

45 competing riders. And then, they'd have to put up a prize fund of £2500.

'I wanted to be the first organiser in the UK to pull off something a little different,' explained Steve. 'We have a massive home grown talent in David Knight and I knew that he would really make an event like The Tough One a real success. Now that he earns his living competing in mainland Europe, few British spectators get the chance to see how good he really is. In Europe they have extreme events like the Extreme Lumezzane, Shark Extreme and Hell's Gate and I felt that the UK could do with something similar.'

'I knew deep down the Wirral Off-Road team could organise such an event so we decided to go for it. But it had to be different - that's why we invited the top riders in the country, as we knew we had a cracking venue that was perfect for a two-hour, short, sharp and exciting hare scramble race.' And that's exactly what the Tough One proved to be...

And Now For Something Completely Different

Making the event stand out from other hare scramble events was a challenge, but the coup de grace was Knighter starting five minutes behind his pro-class competitors - just to see how good he really is!

Then there was the prize money. £250 for the rider leading the race at the end of the first lap,



Despite a frosty start, good conditions made the event more enjoyable...

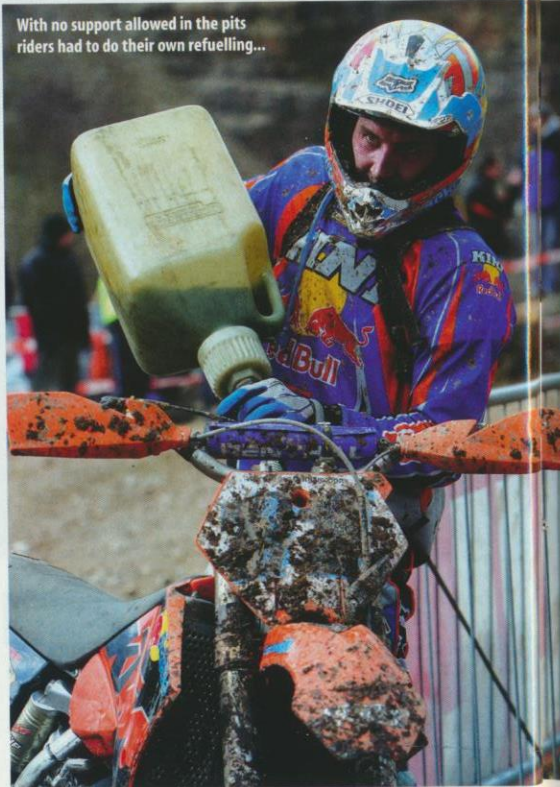
another £250 for the rider leading at the end of the first hour, a £1000 for the race winner, £500 for the first expert class rider home and finally, the return of the £50 entry fee to the second to tenth placed expert finishers.

Next up was the fact that only riders were allowed into the re-fuelling area, making it a 100-percent self-service mid-race stop for fuel, drink and goggles for all. Then there was the course. Not the usual up-hill-and-down dale affair, no, The Tough One had to be, well... tough. And it was.

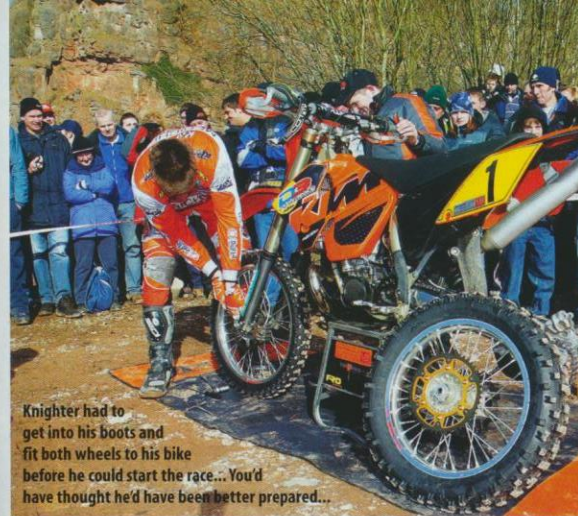
With ground frost making things just that little bit trickier, the seven to 25-minute long lap (depending on whether you were Knighter or a mid-pack expert), saw riders negotiate their way up and down tight 'n' twisty climbs, across rocks, fields, logs and tyres for two tiring hours. As a former downhill mountain bike venue the quarry also provided hard-standing for parking - another thing that made the race different from most 'park in a field' type events.

Best Of British

But to make the event work and get spectators to come and watch would take more than just a good course, so 20 of Britain's top riders were invited and agreed to compete. With all of them coming from the UK enduro and cross-country scene, some were chosen for the entertainment value they would add, while others simply for



With no support allowed in the pits riders had to do their own refuelling...



Knighter had to get into his boots and fit both wheels to his bike before he could start the race... You'd have thought he'd have been better prepared...



When you've got as many world championships as Mario Rinaldi has, you can afford to smile...

When The Going Gets Tough... event organiser Steve Ireland

The man-hours that went into the planning, promoting and general organisation of the event was just phenomenal. I didn't want to leave anything to chance with it being a much higher profile event than most Wirral-Off Road races.

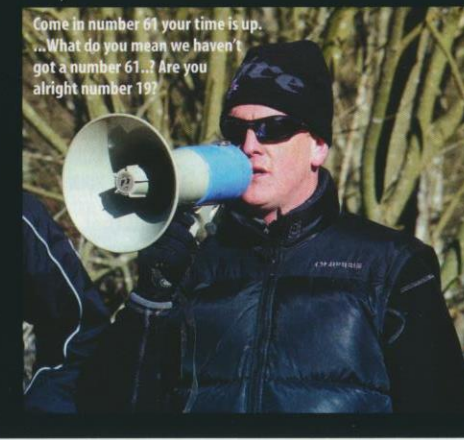
'Also, with the top riders committing to it, loads of sponsors agreeing to support it and a TV presence, I didn't want anything to go wrong. With the superb team of friends and helpers that we have at the club I feel we put on a good show. I've certainly learnt a lot from the day - you can't rush anything when organising something like The Tough One. You always need to be prepared to listen and always do what you say you are going to do.

'I travelled out to Italy for the Hell's Gate event purely to have a look at what Fabio Fasola and his organising team did and to see just how extreme the event was. I wanted to find out as much as I could as to how they dealt with spectators and also how much sponsorship was involved. I picked up a load of information out there and realised things would have to be done differently in Britain.

'At The Tough One we just couldn't allow lots of spectators onto the course to help the riders like they do in Italy because it's too dangerous. Also, because the Italian organisers didn't seem to worry about it too much they were able to have more 'extreme' sections in their course - we just can't do that in Britain.

I knew then that some riders might complain that the event wasn't tough enough but it's my job to think about rider and spectator safety as it's my neck that would be on the chopping block if something did go wrong.

'Now that it's all over I feel the event went really well and was run safely with plenty of entertainment for the spectators and a good challenge for the riders. The TV production team being there was great and the weather, despite being cold, also helped make a great day. Having Mario Rinaldi compete and then present the trophies and spray champagne over the winners was fantastic. I'm very, very happy with the way it went.'



Come in number 61 your time is up... What do you mean we haven't got a number 61...? Are you alright number 19?



Knighter overcame the deficit of having to ride in his socks... to win the event by four minutes!

their results and bike riding skills.

With established hare scramble riders like Edward Jones, Richard Hay and Mark Jackson lining up alongside former British Enduro Champion Ady Smith, Chris Tett, enduro-turned-rallye rider Mick Extance, Chris Hockey, Tim Lewis, Rob Wrayford, Tim Foreman, Chris Birch, Andrew Cripps, John Shirt and Paul Bolton, the compact entry list read like a who's who of the BEC. With the exception of Paul Whibley and Daryl Bolter, who were both subsequently unable to ride due to injury, the list of names in the pocket-sized programme remained unchanged.

At the sharp end of the entry was Juan Knight, triple World Enduro Champion Mario Rinaldi from Italy and of course David Knight. Making his last pre-WEC and BEC appearance aboard a two-stroke before switching back to his trusty 525 KTM, the questions of 'can Knighter win?' and 'how long will it take him to hit the front?' was all that everyone wanted to know before the start.

'Yes' and 'one-hour 12 minutes' turned out to be the subsequent answers.

Making A Show Of It

To have David sat twiddling his thumbs waiting for the five minutes to pass before he could start the event would have been anything but exciting



to watch... so instead, he had to put on both his riding boots - having been stood in his socks waiting for the start of the race - before fitting both wheels into his KTM. With that done he was free to go and that's when the real race started.

The pro-class riders left the start in a frantic rush all hoping to make it back to the end of the first lap in the lead and earn £250. Only one rider could claim the prize though and it was David's brother Juan who did - the one rider David hoped it wouldn't be.

Knighter knew that if his brother got away cleanly at the start then things could be a whole lot harder for him - Juan was the only rider David feared. As Juan comfortably maintained his lead at the front of the race, all eyes were looking out for David, who was already clawing his way through the expert class riders with less than a lap completed.

After the first lap, and as the leading pro riders caught the tail end of the experts, the continually circulating mass of competitors made it tricky to work out which riders were in what position.

Behind Juan was former trials rider Andrew Cripps, before he faded back to finish in an eventual tenth place. Edward Jones, Mark Jackson and Paul Bolton all ended up placing well, but Italian Mario Rinaldi suffered a bad start and was close to last of the pro-class riders with only Knighter and a few others behind him.

As lap after lap passed, Juan remained out front and David played catch-up. Dealing with the course's trickiest obstacles as if they simply didn't exist, only the fact that the other riders were struggling in places acted as a reminder of just how well the two front-runners were riding.

The Manxman managed to find grip in places others failed to and reduced his brother's lead with each passing lap. Just before the race's mid-way point David was within sight of the leading trio and, knowing that a win was on the cards, seemed to gain confidence with every lap. Hopping his way through the feet-up, trials-like sections of the course, he simply jumped across the 'tyre section' as if he were dropping off nothing more severe than a kerb.

It's A Knockout

Just after re-fuelling Knighter finally took the lead from his brother, having taken advantage of Juan's problem with a sticking throttle - but not before managing to knock his brother off his bike halfway up one of the course's trickier climbs! Because of this unfortunate coming together, poor Juan had to return to the bottom of the hill for another attempt at it. So much for brotherly love!

Despite the fact that David had now reached the front of the pro class and was headed for certain victory, the show still wasn't over. Free from the pressure of having to catch up the lost five minutes, Knighter started to play with the course as if he were out practicing with some mates. Unable to resist the urge to show-boat a little as the final laps counted down, he proved without a shadow of doubt why he is best when it comes to one-off and extreme off-road races.

David eventually crossed the finish line four minutes up on his brother and a further four minutes ahead of third place Edward Jones, who

had managed to sneak ahead of Rinaldi in the closing stages of the final lap.

Billed as being 'as challenging and enjoyable for riders as it would be entertaining for spectators' Knighter's talents on a bike, coupled with the efforts of all the competitors and the hard work put in by the Wirral Off-Road crew resulted in an event that delivered what it had promised.

Well worthy of the 'Tough One' title, as the car park emptied, Steve Ireland could finally relax, his dream of running 'something a little different' well and truly achieved...

PRO CLASS RESULTS

1	DAVID KNIGHT	KTM	16 LAPS
2	JUAN KNIGHT	GAS	16 LAPS
3	EDWARD JONES	KTM	16 LAPS
4	MARIO RINALDI	HUSABERG	16 LAPS
5	ADY SMITH	KTM	15 LAPS
6	MARK JACKSON	KTM	15 LAPS
7	PAUL BOLTON	BETA	15 LAPS
8	TIM LEWIS	TM	15 LAPS
9	MARTIN SANDIFORD	HONDA	15 LAPS
10	ANDREW CRIPPS	GAS GAS	15 LAPS
11	JOHN SHIRT	GAS GAS	15 LAPS
12	RICHARD HAY	YAMAHA	15 LAPS
13	ROB WRAYFORD	YAMAHA	15 LAPS
14	CHRIS TETT	HUSABERG	14 LAPS
15	CHRIS HOCKEY	HUSQVARNA	14 LAPS
16	TOM SAGAR	GAS GAS	14 LAPS
17	TIM FOREMAN	KTM	14 LAPS
18	CHRIS BIRCH	HUSQVARNA	12 LAPS
19	MICK EXTANCE	HONDA	12 LAPS

EXPERT CLASS RESULTS

1	JUSTIN WILSON	KTM	15 LAPS
2	DARREN WHEELER	YAMAHA	15 LAPS
3	ROB WARNER	YAMAHA	14 LAPS
4	BEN BEGGIE	GAS GAS	14 LAPS
5	ASHLEY WOOD	HONDA	13 LAPS
6	ANDY HACKETT	HUSQVARNA	13 LAPS
7	IAN JONES	YAMAHA	13 LAPS
8	WILLIAM JONES	KTM	13 LAPS
9	KIERAN HANKIN	HUSABERG	13 LAPS
10	PAUL HERBERT	YAMAHA	13 LAPS
11	GRANT SMITH	HONDA	13 LAPS
12	RICH WARNER	KTM	12 LAPS
13	MICK IRVING	KTM	12 LAPS
14	NEIL BOYD	YAMAHA	12 LAPS
15	JASON CROSSLAND	GAS GAS	11 LAPS
16	IAN BARNETT	GAS GAS	11 LAPS
17	ANTHONY SUTTON	KAWASAKI	11 LAPS
18	CHRIS WHITEHOUSE	HUSQVARNA	11 LAPS
19	PAUL WATSON	KTM	10 LAPS
20	ANTHONY DEAN	YAMAHA	10 LAPS
21	IAN MCMAHON	KTM	10 LAPS
22	JOHN PEARSON	HUSABERG	7 LAPS



Italy's first indoor enduro saw many of the big names in WEC battle it out around Genova's Palasport arena. Sadly Salminen, Merriman and Aro were absent from the line-up, but the crowd were still treated to an awesome display of riding skills.

The course proved to be one of the best indoor tracks to date, and with plenty of rocks, logs, watersplashes, a steep bank and even a selection of supercross-style jumps, it proved a real test for the world level riders.

It was a good day at the office for the Brits, as David Knight lead Paul Eddy home for a UK one-two. Home-crowd favourite Alessandro Botturi took third, despite only scraping into the final as the 'promoters choice' after failing to qualify through both the semis and 'last chance' qualifier..! Here's to 2006...

PASTA GENOVESSE

GENOVA INDOOR ENDURO, GENOVA PALASPORT, ITALY 22 JANUARY



SPEED



'THE GUY STARTING THE RACES REALISED WE'D CLOCKED HIM AND STITCHED US UP GOOD AND PROPER. PRETENDING HE WAS DROPPING THE START GATES HE, WELL, DIDN'T, WHICH MESSED UP OUR STARTS'

T

he past four weeks since my last column have been pretty extreme. Not just in the context that I've been extremely busy as the new season approaches, but extreme because my last three events have all been unconventional races - the Genova Indoor Enduro, Hell's Gate and The Tough One. Each as different as the next, I think I've only seen a time card once in the past three months.

The relative lull of activity over Christmas and New Year is very much

BRITAIN'S TOP ENDURO RIDER WRITES EXCLUSIVELY FOR TBM...

a distant memory now as the pre-season three T's - training, testing and travelling - have well and truly kicked in. With my race team for the year - Farioli KTM - being based in Bergamo, Northern Italy, this year in general is going to be more hectic simply because of the extra travel involved.

I've got to say that 2005 has started in the best possible way. Last month I signed off by saying that I hoped I'd have won an event or two before my next missive and I have. The first was the Genova event. I was feeling really confident going into the event and the buzz surrounding the race because it was the first of the season made it really enjoyable. Seeing all the riders in their new colours and on their new bikes is always exciting although it did take a bit of getting used to.

The track was awesome, every bit as enjoyable as the Las Vegas circuit I raced late last year. It was probably the best indoor track I've ridden on because it offered more than just one or two lines over each obstacle and

wasn't just lots of straights linked together with 180-degree turns. As a result, I hope that indoor enduros will now be a permanent feature in Italy.

The three races prior to the final all went exceptionally well as I didn't need to push too hard and still managed to come away winning. When the final came I started next to Paul Edmondson, having spotted that he seemed to have figured out when the gate was dropping. The only problem was the guy starting the races had also clocked the fact that we'd clocked *him* and stitched us up good and proper. Pretending he was going to drop the start gates he, well, didn't, which completely messed up our starts. Then, banging bars with both my Spanish team-mate Ivan Cervantes and Italian Alessandro Botturi, I was lucky to make it to the first turn at all.

Thankfully, a good line and a little courage soon saw me in third with just Eddy and Italian Alessio Paoli ahead of me. Within a couple of laps I was leading, having put on a bit of a spurt and claimed the win comfortably. Although I was expected to win by a lot of people I was certainly glad to have done so, especially as it was the first race of the season and all.

My next event was the Hell's Gate, which again I felt under a little pressure to win. As everyone knows, I thrive on challenging races and have a pretty good track record in them, but people seem to forget just how tough some of the events are and that I'm only human and mistakes do happen. While it's nice to be recognised as the rider expected to win it can sometimes get a bit much. I can't imagine what it must be like for Valentino Rossi.

The event was great fun and the 8000 euro winner's prize was a nice bonus but the race was lacking

something this year, namely WEC regulars. Anders Eriksson, fair play to him, rode but was the only 'top' rider other than myself that wanted to be there. It makes me laugh that riders say that there's no money to be won in enduros but when there is they don't want to try and win it. Okay, so the event is difficult but if I were organising an event I'd want riders to earn their pay - wouldn't you? What made the weekend even better was the fact that Wayne Braybrook and my brother Juan both finished up on the podium with me. Which was a really great feeling.

From Hell's Gate it was back to the Farioli team base for three days of tyre testing. With the team having switched from Michelin to Metzeler we've had loads of testing to do, and it still isn't finished. I then headed to Spain to stay with Ivan Cervantes for a few days, and what a few days it was. The area on which Ivan trains is one of the best places I've ever ridden. I won't tell you exactly where it is, I'll just tell you what he has to train on. As well as motocross special tests, extreme tests, cross-country tests and miles and miles of enduro tracks, he also has a supercross track and his own indoor (but it's outdoors) enduro track - three laps of which and I was finished. Depending on how things go testing back on the Island, I might head back there prior to the first two rounds of the WEC in early April.

The Tough One brought my 'extreme month' to a close and marked pretty much the last time I'll ride a two-stroke competitively until after the WEC and BEC is over. It proved to be a great race, which I managed to win ahead of my brother Juan and Edward Jones.

What made the event really enjoyable for me

Leading light: David fights his way through the dark at Hell's Gate...



was the fact that it wasn't so difficult that I was exhausted when I finished it, like I was at Hell's Gate. What also made it good fun was that there was a decent amount of prize money up for grabs and was extremely well supported with loads of spectators - two things that we don't often get at 'off-road' events in Britain.

I'll be honest, as soon as I agreed to start the race five minutes behind the rest of the pro class riders I knew that I'd have a job on my hands beating my brother, especially if he started well. And when I saw that Juan was leading the race from the start, and knowing that I would have to pass all the expert class riders before even getting anywhere near the pro lot, I wasn't overly confident that I would win.

As it turned out I managed to get past most of the experts without too much trouble and then I was able to pick-off the pro riders one at a time until I had a 'coming together' with Juan, which saw me take the lead.

I think I can speak for pretty much all the riders when I say that the race was a great idea and that the track was tough but not overly difficult. It's great to see somebody try and raise the profile of off-road events. I just hope that because I won this year I won't have to start even further behind next year...

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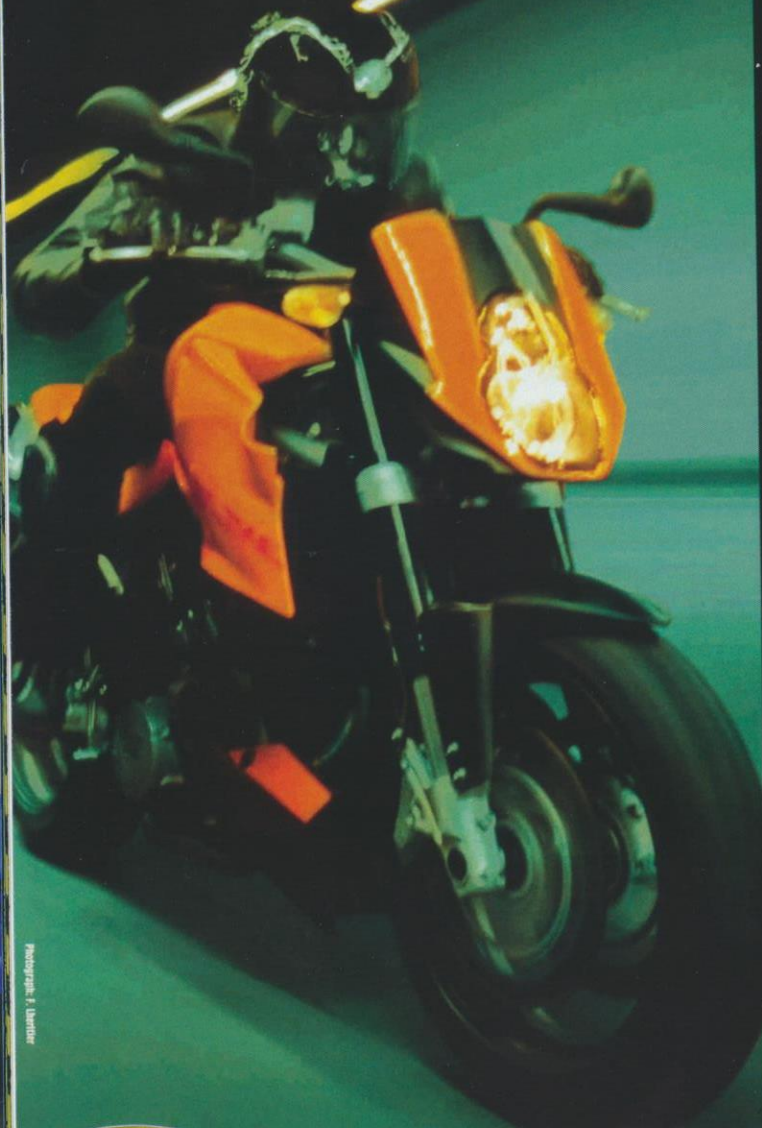









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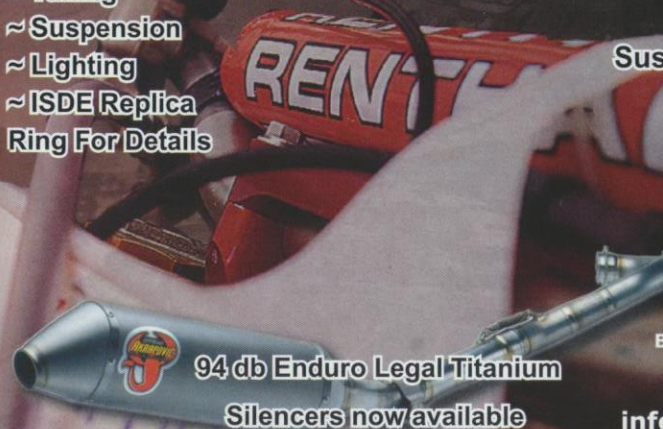
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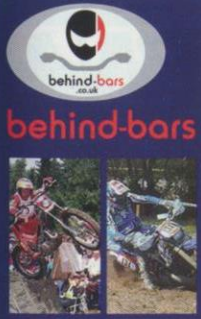
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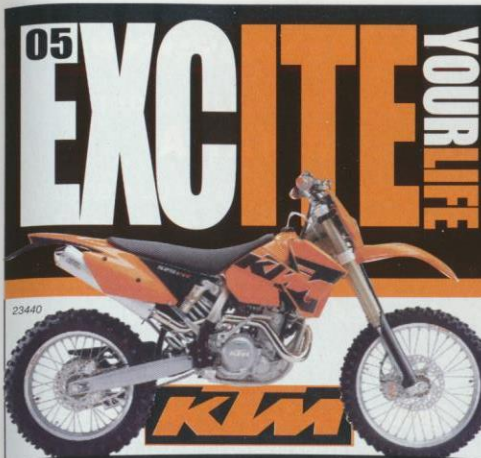
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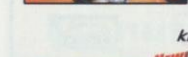


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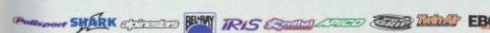
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Mark Williams charts the sad and sorry tale of Laverda's brave but ill-fated foray into dirt biking...

Laverda isn't a name normally associated with dirtbikes, but in fact the company has a long and proud heritage in two rather differing off-road arena: that of agricultural machinery and dirtbikes. Not to be confused, obviously. In fact Laverda can trace its history back further than any other Italian bike manufacturer, for it was founded long before the internal combustion engine was even invented. 1873 was the year Pietro Laverda established his farm machinery factory in Breganze, nestling in the lee of the Dolomites, and the town that would remain its base for over a century. And this is where his grandson, Francesco, began constructing his first motorcycle in 1948.

As a distant sideline to his tractor and implement business, progress on the 74cc push-rod single was slow, and Francesco allegedly had to cast the piston for his prototype on his kitchen table. A year or so later the bike finally emerged with a neat, pressed steel frame (a consequence of owning a heavyweight stamping press) and a power output of 3bhp at 5200rpm. Contrast that with Laverda's 90hp 1000cc triples that were, in the late Seventies, the fastest production bikes in the world (140.04 mph, since you ask), and you'll realise that Francesco and his two sons, Massimo and Piero took the company a long way in less than 30 years.

The Jota and SFC DOHC triples for which Laverda is perhaps still best known are not, however, the only impressive machines to have come of the Breganze production line. Laverda's first big four-stroke, the SOHC 750-S, appeared in 1968, its angular engine exterior influenced by the Honda CB77/72s which Massimo had been impressed by whilst studying in America, but an altogether more butch and obviously powerful design that formed the basis of Laverda's successful GT and SFC racers. Using a similar, if smaller version of the same engine, the 500cc Alpina (why not the 'Dolomiti'?) was an equally successful design both on and off the racetrack and spawned an entire race series of its own in the late '70s.

But although these are the bikes they'll be best remembered for long after the giant Fiat empire



effectively squeezed the company out of business in the late '80s, Laverda actually made some very interesting off-road bikes, too. As far as the British were concerned, we didn't really discover this until the improbably titled Chott (named after a dried-up desert lake bed in Tunisia!) was imported by Slater Brothers in 1976/7, but along with the 199cc oversquare twin-pot roadster that was then the mainstay of its motorcycle production, the company had dabbled with a few motocross prototypes in the early Sixties.

However back in 1966 Laverda launched its first pukka trailbike, the imaginatively christened 125 Trail, using the same motor that powered its then smallest roadster. Oversquare at 52 x 54mm, the engine pumped out a useful 14bhp @ 8500rpm, and like all Laverda motors, its OHV design was particularly pleasing aesthetically. Mind you, with its deeply fitted



CHOTT

in the dark

250 2T **Chott** 250 2TR
in the dark

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

ENGINE
Single cylinder two stroke
cylinder capacity 246.9 cc.
carburettor Dell'Orto PHB/32
4 % oil mixture

TRANSMISSION
5 speed gearbox

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LAVERDA

almost to the horizontal and featuring a low-slung exhaust, it looked to be a bit of a liability when confronted by serious mud, water or rockery. Although sales were sluggish, Laverda remained undaunted and using a virtually identical chassis and an uprated engine they unveiled a 'Regolarita Corsa' (competition trial) version of the diminutive 125 at the 1967 Milan Show.

The 125 RC had an upswept exhaust, fibreglass tank and improved suspension, all developed with the help of top Italian enduro rider, Luigi Gorini, who went on to lead a factory team of three such bikes in the 1968 ISDT. Lacking the promised five-speed gearbox and bedevilled by the accident-prone cylinder head, the team effort was a bit of a damp squib, and it's believed that only 30 of the bikes were ever offered for public sale.

But despite this conspicuous lack of dirtbike

success, it wasn't, as some had predicted, the end of Laverda's efforts in this department. Just when the company was on a roll with the 3C and Jota roadsters in the mid-Seventies, Laverda suddenly announced their first ever two-stroke, and a trailbike at that.

The Chott - or 2T as was its factory designation - followed company form by boasting a highly innovative specification. Most notably and obviously, the steering rake could be quickly and easily adjusted to suit different types of off-road use! The steering head itself pivoted on the lower of two sets of 3/4in diameter upper frame rails and bolted into one of three positions: 20-degrees for 'trials'; 25-degrees for general trail work; or 30-degrees for fast cross-country or forestry going. Simply removing the Q/D seat (which also revealed an unusually massive air-filter) and tank - why can't modern dirtbikes discard these components in a hurry? - revealed the bolts and brackets which could be altered in a matter of minutes by a single pair of hands.

Not so unique, but innovative in its execution,

the Chott's exactly square (68 x 68mm) engine featured a twin-plug cylinder head fed by a Bosch twin-coil electronic ignition unit that was similar to those of Laverda's four-stroke twins and triples. A 12-volt battery ensured that sparks would never be a problem. On the original bike, Laverda made much of the fact that they'd used magnesium for the engine cases as well as the large, eight-inch front and rear drum brakes, and claimed that this had saved around 20-percent of the weight of conventional castings. Just as well really for the extra burden created by the complex upper framework meant that despite the magnesium engine, the Chott weighed in at 260lb dry, only a few pounds less than the equivalent Kawasaki or Honda, and quite a few more than, say, a Montesa or KTM 'trailbike'. The Chott did have another couple of tricks up its sleeve though: an all-enclosed rear chaincase with rubber gaiters which ensured minimum maintenance and in a similar vein, a silencer whose end-cap unbolted in a trice to extract a one-piece baffle arrangement which could be quickly and easily de-cooked with a wire brush.

But whilst the Chott, with its gold painted magnesium castings, top-of-the-range Ceriani forks and rear shocks and

generally high degree of attention to detail was certainly a high quality product, it relied on petrol lubrication at a time when the Japanese were offering oil-injection on their 'strokers, and it came with a whopping £700 price tag in the UK. In comparison the aforementioned Honda XL250 cost just £640.

However with its road bikes, Laverda had always relied on the strength of its engineering and the quality of its running gear (eg Bosch electrics), and buyers had been willing to pay a premium for these. Applying such logic to the off-road market was, as they discovered to their cost, not necessarily tenable unless, as was the case with KTM and Maico, your products could achieve competition success. The Chott, however, was not a competition bike, and when I tested one for Which Bike magazine in the summer of '76, I was a little disappointed with its performance even as a trailbike.

With its 10:1 compression ratio and high-mounted (though primary drive) kick-starter, it required a knack to spark-up and the 32mm Dell'Orto carb needed much choke to get it running smoothly from cold. Typical of all Laverdas, the five-speed gearbox was as stiff as its suspension, although the ever-cheerful

Continued on page 118



The trail versions of Laverda's early off-roaders showed promise...

BRITAIN'S MR CHOTT

CHOTT
in the dark



Although known in Laverda Owners Club circles for his expert fettling of the big triples, Graham 'Clem' Clemans owns one of the very few remaining Chotts in the UK that actually runs.

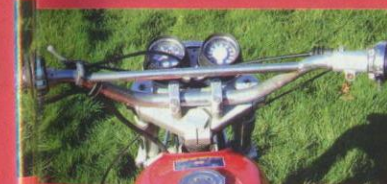
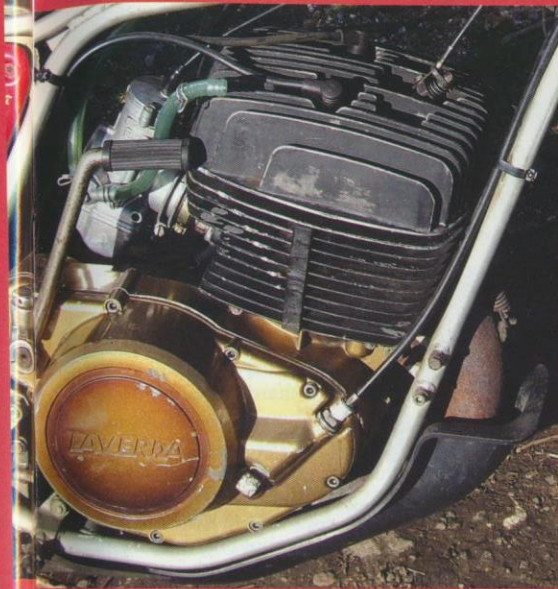
Even with just 42 bikes imported here, I would have expected a slightly higher tally of working bikes, but Clem soon revealed to me the Laverda's guilty secret: premature crank failure.

'Insufficient lubrication in the right place at the right time,' he explained, 'and there isn't really any solution to the problem. That's why there are broken ones still lying around all over the country, waiting for the remedy that's never going to appear. I only know of

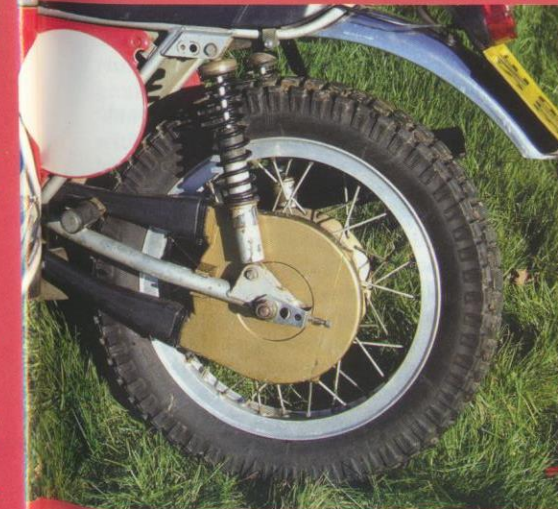
one other that's still a runner' he confesses.

And if there was a remedy, Clem should be able to supply it. Having bought the bike some 15 or more years ago 'from another long-term owner and Club member', his devotion to keeping such a rarity alive was such that he eventually acquired the complete stock of remaining spares from Slater Brothers. And in the bowels of his basement workshop-cum-garage he showed me the racks of spare triple clamps, pistons and even end-caps for the protective chaincase that sit there waiting for the call.

Another uncomfortable truth about the Chott is that the much-vaunted magnesium castings quite simply, aren't magnesium at all! Apparently a friend of Clem's who took his cracked rear hub to



Like all Laverdas of the day, the Chott was a good-looking motorcycle which showed some very sensible design elements such as the fully enclosed drive chain (below)...



be repaired by a specialist welder issued the usual warnings about magnesium catching fire if it was overheated, and the man with the gas-torch told him that it was simply ordinary alloy, albeit painted gold.

So despite Laverda's legendary reputation for engineering overkill, somehow the demands of getting the bike into a market it didn't really know about allowed them to let their standards drop, and so it's perhaps no surprise that commercial success eluded them. Although to Graham Clemans, the lone torch bearer for a gloriously lame duck, owning and maintaining this monument to Piero and Massimo's culpability is obviously the source of considerable pride.

'I'll never sell it,' he admits, 'but the irony is that I hardly ever dare run it if I'm going to keep it in running order!'



Chott
in the dark



Laverda made various different versions of the two-stroke Chott - including this butch-looking ISDT version...

steel variety, but the driven clutch plate was fibre, and running dry as they were, the whole thing made a helluva racket. Somewhat ironically, the big black silencer kept exhaust decibels to an acceptable minimum.

Oddly enough, Illustrated's test pilot noted that the Chott was 'not a trail bike' but rather a 'purpose built, hard-core time-trial, enduro or ISDT machine.' I must say that such a role never occurred to me at the time, for not only was the

importer, Roger Slater, assured me that both would loosen up with use... something that never really happened in four years of my Jota ownership!

And with what I regarded as insufficient torque below 4000rpm - and I forgot to mention that the Chott was fitted with a tachometer as well as a speedo, so for once I could be precise about this (or as precise as an Italian tacho can be) - the bike required a lot of revs to hustle it along. Add to the equation its stock Metzeler trials tyres, and it wasn't a lot of fun in really muddy conditions, either. Other reviewers disagreed with me however, Italy's authoritative *Motociclismo* magazine claimed serious torque above 3000rpm and Britain's *Motorcycle Illustrated* observed that 'it pulled well' below that four grand mark. Maybe I was inured to the charms of the XT500 I'd tested the week before, but nevertheless the Chott churned out an alleged 26bhp at 7600rpm - to which it would spin with ease - and the dry clutch easily handled any feathering necessary to keep the engine going in soft or nadgery conditions.

The clutch itself was an interesting item because it ran dry, but in a lubricated primary chaincase, the fully-enclosed drum being kept oil-free by means of an O-ring seal. Moreover the clutch plate itself was of the conventional

bike too well endowed with stuff like indicators, battery and weight, but the under-slung exhaust augured a too-high centre of gravity and too-low ground clearance, the front mudguard was made of steel and rested an inch above its tyre and like the bashplate, now made of fibreglass rather than the prototype's drilled alloy, had the effect of gathering large amounts of mud just where you didn't want it.

And so to my mind the Chott was more of a 'dual purpose' machine, admittedly with high pose value given its unusual specification and tank badge, than a real dirtbike and although comfortable and swift as a roadster, its brakes weren't really up to the job and engine noise and vibration made it a tiring ride. I think Laverda tacitly admitted all this when they announced its stablemate, and ultimately its sole successor, the 2T/R (or 2T 'Regularita') in 1977.

This was a much different animal with a re-ported engine - albeit still without reed-valve induction or oil-injection - which offered more low-end heft and a claimed output maxima of 30bhp at 8000rpm. It swapped the steel fenders for plastic, high-rise Preston Petty-style items, dumped the tacho and indicators and managed to shed 10lbs in all. The 2T/R still suffered from an overly high centre of gravity and still had a bashplate which invited mud to clog up the space between exhaust port and lower frame tubes, but it was more of a serious contender off-road.

None were officially imported into the UK, which is a pity 'cause even at Chott-style prices it probably would've given the Montesas and Maicos of this world a run for their money, and a total of only about 5000 Chotts and 2T/Rs were produced before Laverda killed them off in late 1978. Perhaps this was inevitable for other, darkly mechanical, reasons we'll come to later.

But still Laverda kept plugging away at the market, their next and penultimate effort being the rather more successful 125 Enduro - the first machine they'd ever built powered by someone else's engine. Massimo had done a deal with Husqvarna whereby they'd supply engines for an all-new Regularita chassis, which eventually housed the Swedish company's 250cc motor, too.

In almost every way, the Husky-engined bikes were everything their predecessors weren't. Modified by Laverda engineer Sandro Todeschini to churn out an extra 3bhp at 500rpm higher up the rev range, the 125 Regularita put out a gob-smacking 18bhp at 10,500rpm and he changed the reed-valve and replaced the 32mm Bing carb with a Dell'Orto to fill a notable torque gap below 3000rpm. The frame, modelled quite obviously on Husqvarna's own motocrossers, offered oodles of ground clearance and suspension travel thanks to 'laid-down' Corte Cosso rear shocks (complete with remote gas reservoirs) and re-valved Marzocchi forks.

Evidently a blinder of a bike in the right hands, it was nevertheless very expensive in its native country and never imported here. The 250L/H (for 'Laverda Husqvarna') which followed the eight-litre pipsqueak was rather less successful, putting out fewer ponies than Laverda's own 2T/R, suffering from excessive vibration and noise as well as exhibiting a marked reluctance to start, hot or cold.

Todeschini and his team were unable to tame these deficiencies, at least at a price the factory felt would be acceptable to the punters, and so like the Chott and the 2T/R before them, the HusqVerdas withered on the vine after just three



Laverda's lightweight Regularita Corsa

year's production and perhaps only 2000 sold units. It was an ignominious end to Laverda's off-road ambitions which nevertheless remains a fascinating chapter in the annals of off-road sport.

Special thanks to Graham Clemans, Dave Minton, Richard Slater and Nick Davies for help with this feature. Graham (and the Laverda Owners Club) can be contacted online at clemlav@tingonline.co.uk

LAVERDA CHOTT (2T)

Price (1977):
Value now:
Engine:

£700
Impossible to quantify
246.9cc, air-cooled, petroil
lubricated two-stroke single
68 x 68mm

Bore/stroke:
Comp ratio:
Max power:
Transmission:
Chassis:

10:1
28bhp @ 7600rpm (claimed)
5-speed
Duplex down tube,
quad-plex spine

Susp F/ R
(travel):
Brakes F/ R:
Wheels F/ R:
Seat height:
Ground clear:
Wheelbase:
Fuel capacity:
Dry weight:

Ceriani (190mm)
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32in
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55in (variable)
2.4gal
260lbs (claimed)

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Bieffe kevlar competition helmet, size large/60, white with red chequered graphics, unused, £55 ono. Tel 07977 099020 (Lancs)

Assorted oils-seals for various 70s/80s/90s dirt bikes, Jap and Euro, trail/MX/trials, over 70 seals, £65 the lot. Tel 07977 099020 (Lancs)

Remus exhaust and Y-piece for BMW R1150GS, exc cond, £200 ono. Tel (mobile) 07932 112065 or 01494 524568 (Bucks)

Wheel for Yamaha WR250/450E, Excel rims, tyres and discs, as new, £300 ono. Tel (mobile) 07932 112065 or 01494 524568 (Bucks)

Issues of TBM, 36 in total, from 58-112, all in as new cond, £54 plus £6 postage. Tel 07973 254579 (Hants)

CRD Absolute Power silencer for DR-Z, like new, £100. Tel (mobile) 07909 922579 or 01428 727355 (Hants)

Full DEP system for Honda CRF250X, with new main jet, three weeks old, £280 ono will post. Tel (mobile) 07861 668883 or 01453 834582 (Gloucs)

Breaking Honda Transalp, rear disc model, blown gearbox, all parts except fairing and frame, good exhaust, disc etc. Tel 01302 859857 (S Yorks)

Trail/enduro fenders, wheel bearings, oil seals, tyres, off-road clothing plus more, for £5. Tel 07977 099020 (Lancs)

Breaking KTM Duke II, 2003/04, all parts available. Tel David on 07762 376422 (Essex)

Suzuki DR-Z400 spares, 2004, digital clocks, £60. Talon lowering link, £25. Wide pegs, £25. Pair of rads, £160. Plus other odds 'n' ends. Tel 07830 288800 (Essex)

Yamaha WR250F spares, 2002, loads available inc engine and CDI unit, plus high capacity tank, open to offers, will split. Tel 0115 944 1192 (Derbys)

Two sets of Rental bars, braced, blue plus one set of alloy barkbusters, all new and unused, £30 the lot. Tel 07960 078278 (S Yorks)

KLX300 performance parts, cams, £130. Carb, £60. Front pipe, £50. Grippy seat-cover with timecard holder, new, £25. Tel 01285 720921 (Gloucs)

Single-bike box trailer, indispension units, spare wheel, and trailerboard, £105. Tel 01252 715346 (Surrey)

R1150GS Wunderlust (?) Adventure screen, brand new, cost £110, offers. Tel 07802 925609 (Northumberland)

IMS large tank for 1996-2001 YZ125/250, white, very tidy, £65 ono. Tel 0117 613 626 (Bristol)

Acerbis 15L tank for 2002 YZ426F. Also FMF pipe, standard spare tyres and plastics, outstanding cond. Tel 07782 193269 (Cheshire)

Parts for KTM R30, black hugger, £60. Road/race alloy can, oval, with removable baffle, £75. Both as new. Tel Chris on 01625 423836 (Cheshire)

Standard wheels for YZ450E, good cond, £350 ono or poss ex 18in rear for 2001 YZ250, NOT 450 as it's too wide. Tel (mobile) 07770 433772 or 020 8460 3122 (London)

Suzuki DR-Z400 parts, complete forks, £195. Swingarm and shock, £95. Rear sub-frame and airbox, £75. Front caliper, master cylinder, and hose, £95. Digi speedo, £60. Tel 01296 630396 (Bucks)

Wheels for Kawasaki KLX650, c/w discs, sprocket and good Metz tyres, vgc, £110 ono. Tel 01427 891211 (S Yorks)

Garmin 12XL GPS, £50. Touratech bracket for 12XL, £20. ICO trip meter for rallies, £100. Tel 01543 481629 (Staffs)

Acerbis 23L tank to fit Yamaha XT600E, white, £125. Rear rack for same, £40. Tel 01827 708740 (Staffs)

Soft seat to fit KTM 400EXC, vgc, no holes, will fit other models, ride in comfort for £35 ono. Tel 01797 344452 (Kent)

Parts for XR400R, Acerbis forkguards, front fender, headlight, trip, pegs, offers. Two pairs of MX jeans, 30 and 32in waist, plus one jersey, £25. Tel 07702 064710 (Wilts)

DR-Z forks, shock and subframe, loads of bits, ring for details. Tel 02392 632418 (Hants)

Suzuki TS185C or ER barrel and head, plus CDI. TS185C headlight, tank, might be more, £60 the lot. Tel 01453 768528 (Gloucs)

Armstrong MT500 forks and yokes, one seal leaking but otherwise good cond, green, offers. Tel (mobile) 07881 668650 or 01270 882367 (Staffs)

Silencer to fit Yamaha Serow, good condition but altered with larger internal and exit pipe for better flow, still quiet, £30 plus postage. Also rear wheel for KMX200, good cond, £20 plus postage. Tel 01933 315307 (Northants)

DR800 bits, plastics, headlight, bars, handguards, seat, rear pegs, bashplate, indicators, rack, rear light, sub-frame, all fair cond, ring for prices. Tel 07876 657898 (Herts)

XR400R parts, FMF Q-pipe, exc cond, £100. Wide pegs, £30. Trailtech computer, as new, never fitted, £70. All plus p&p. Tel 0121 745 7360 (W Mids)

KTM enduro wheels, brand new, 1.60x21 and 2.15x21, will fit 2003-05 two-and four-strokes, £425 the pair inc p&p. Tel 01481 239611 (Guernsey)

Yamaha 125cc engine, four-stroke, elec start, with loom and all ancillaries, ready for transplant or project, £200. Tel 01638 731996 (Cams)

DEP exhaust for Gas Gas EC200, 2002-03, hardly used, exc cond, £100 plus p&p. Tel (mobile) 07786 312612 or 01386 832111 (W Mids)

FMF Ti exhaust to fit KTM 400-520, 2000-02, as new, £230. Tel 07816 604132 (S Wales)

Fan assembly for CRF250X, still in box, £100. Tel (mobile) 07793 914802 or 0113 2578904 (W Yorks)

Parts for Honda XR650, Talon rear wheel, red hub, stainless nipples, £200. Arrow exhaust system, £200. IMS 20L tank, £150. All six months old. Tel 01795 661911 (Kent)

Pair of wheels for Yamaha XT350, alloy rims, front disc, sprocket, exc cond, £120. Tel 01453 768528 (Gloucs)

Stolen Yamaha WR250E, frame no JYACG11W00003257, engine no G322E005395, black frame, IMS tank, Scotts steering damper, Dr D pipe, BBR kick and brake levers, taken from Belfast on 18-01-05. Tel (mobile) 07752 116112 or 02890 90286758 (Co Antrim)

Stolen Yamaha TTR250, 2003, blue, reg BL53 ENX, frame no JYADG02X83A006971, blue rear fender bag, blue/white Acerbis handguards, Pirelli MT18s, stolen from Dudley on 12-02-05. Tel (mobile) 07799 0574847 or 01384 861723 (W Mids)

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May 2001 69, Rant, Allens Suzuki DR-Z400S Special, '01 TM300E, I Was On Gold Until..., '01 Triumph Tiger 955i launch test, Staff Bikes: BMW R1150GS, World Enduro Championship rd1, Stephane Peterhansl's Yamaha WR250F Special, Reader's Report: KTM 125EXC, Project KLX300R pt2.

June 2001 70, TM250 4T, XR650R v Husky TE1610 v CCM 604E, Baja trail holiday, Baja or Bust: The Baja 500, Trailer v Van v Bike rack, Reader's Special: Gilera Yamaha XT660E hybrid, I Was On Gold Until..., August 2001 72, Fast Eddy rd2, Trail riding holiday in Scotland, KTM 250EXC 4T - launch test, R1150GS v Navigator - Stella Alpina Rally, '01 400 Shootout: KTM v VOR v DR-Z v WR426F v FE400E, WEC rd6, Reader's Special: XCR340, Project KLX300R pt3.

September 2001 73, John Deacon remembered, KTM 250EXC 2T - Rand Auvergne, Trail riding in northwest Scotland, British ISDE prospects, Sachs ZX125, Staff Bikes: R1150GS & WR250Z, Trail riding in Dubai, Reader's Special: CR330 SM.

October 2001 74, WR426F SM, Gas Gas Pampera mkIII, Triumph Tiger 955i, TM 400, 2T/4T power, 76th ISDE, Transdanubia Rally, Reader's Special: DR800.

November 2001 75, Milan show, Royal Enfield 350T, Secondhand test: Husky TE350 - Hafren Rally, Project KLX300R pt4 - ISDE, Reader's Special: YZ250F, Staff Bikes: KTM Duke & VOR EN400, Trail riding in Canada, British Enduro Champs - Natterjack Enduro, I Was On Gold Until...

December 2001 76, Husaberg F5650C SM, Rant, 2001 round-up, CRF450R, Rally of Discovery - Crete, Staff Bikes: R1150GS, Project IT490 - Weston Beach Race.

January 2002 77, FMF DR-Z special, Technically Speaking - valve clearances, Indoor enduro, Special tests - Juha Salminen, Trail riding in Iceland, DR-Z v CRM v Pampera, Bike Buyer's Guide, Aussie sand racer. February 2002 78, Alfer VR125, Rant, 2x, Doing the Rounds - Wiltshire TRF, Dakar Rallye, Gas Gas EC400FSE, Product review - handguards, David Knight, I Was On Gold Until...

March 2002 79, Suzuki V-Street - launch test, Doing the Rounds: Diamonds MCC, 200 Shootout: Gasser v KTM v KDX, Winter Warmer, Staff Bikes: WR250Z, Product review - hydration packs, David Knight, Vertemati E501.

April 2002 80, Praga 250, Rant, Writes of Way: Doing the Rounds: Peak District, BMW R1150GS Adventure - first UK test, The Future's Bright - KTM history, Product review - body armour, British Enduro Champs - Breckland, World Enduro Champs rd1, David Knight, Alfer VR250.

May 2002 81, Motorspania Furia 50, Doing the Rounds: Cornwall, CCM 644 DS, Rolling Thunder - CCM History, Product review - kit bags, Cambrian Rally, World Enduro Champs rd2, David Knight, Used and Abused: XR250.

June 2002 82, Suzuki DR-Z400S, Doing the Rounds: John Deacon memorial, 250 4T Shootout: KTM v WR-F v TM, Product review - gloves, Rally of Discovery, Trail riding in New Zealand, World Enduro Champs rd3&4, David Knight.

July 2002 83, KTM 450EXC - launch test, Rant, Doing the Rounds: Lincoln, Past Present and Pesto - '75 KTM v '02 WR-F, Master Class - Positioning, 2T v 4T - Husaberg 400 v Gas Gas 250, Product review - braceless bars, Staff Bikes: KDX220, World Enduro Champs rd5/6&7, David Knight.

August 2002 84, Gilera Apache, Erzberg Iron Road Rodeo, Product review - crash helmets (pt 1), Master Class - Cambers/hills, Alfer/Yamaha 250 prototype, Trail riding in Andorra, Used and Abused: XT225 Serow, Welsh Two Day Enduro, British Enduro Champs - Hafren, David Knight.

September 2002 85, KTM 450EXC trail test, Rant, Extreme Lumezzane, Product review - crash helmets (pt 2), Master Class - Ruts, Cannondale E440 - launch test, Coast to Coast - across Scotland, Used and Abused: KTM 200EXC/EGS, British Enduro Champs - Gatterick & Epynt, David Knight.

October 2002 86, Munich Show, Rant, Dawn Till Dusk - 12hr enduro, Husqvarna TE400, Master Class - Bogs, Australia by XT500, Product review - boots, Giovanni Sala profile, Used and Abused: WR400F, British Enduro Champs - Natterjack, David Knight.

November 2002 87, Bracken & Hafren Rally, Yamaha WR450F - first UK test, Master Class - Water, Product review - enduro jackets, Jawa 653, Staff Bikes: KDX220, Five, Used and Abused - RMX250, ISDE, David Knight.

December 2002 88, End of year review, Rant, Reader's Special: DR-Z436 Rally, Master class - Ditches/logs, Product review - air filters, Dictionary of Dirt, Trail riding in Australia, Used and Abused: Gas Gas Pampera, Five, Scott Trial, Indoor enduro, David Knight.

February 2003 90, Rant, First Check: e-start XR400R, First Check: 2003 Varadero, Dakar Rallye, 300 Shootout: KTM v Gas Gas, Buying Power, Spanish trail riding, Eriksson profile, Sheffield Trial, David Knight.

March 2003 91, First Check: Knighter's WEC WR500F, 250cc 4-T Shootout: KTM v Yam v TM v Husky, 12.5-2 v T-250 4-T: KTM v Yam, Product review - headlights, Alto Turia Ride, Staff Bikes: KDX220R, Triumph Twins, Carry On; Mitsubishi L200, Five, Six hour enduro.

May 2003 93, First Check; GNCC Racers, First Check; Beta Alp 200, Rant, 250 2-T Shootout: Gas Gas v KTM v Husky v Kawasaki KKE, Geraint Jones Off-Road Experience, From the Archives; Suzuki PE, Staff Bikes; CRM/CR, First Love; Villa 125, WEC rd3, David Knight, Readers' Rides; Honda CR250.

June 2003 94, First Check; YZ250/Provi/Governor, First Check; Factory Gas Gas EC125, Rant, Vertemati E450E v KTM 450EXC, DT125, Montesa 250 Enduro H6/ Cambrian Rally, Cambrian Rally, Readers' Rides; KTM/XT350, WEC rd4&5, David Knight, Scottish Six Days Trial.

July 2003 95, First Check; Factory VORs, Scorpio 125 4-T, Beta Alp 4.0 - first test, Goggle prep, From the Archives; BMW R80G's, Used and Abused - KTM 400EXC, WEC rd6&7, David Knight, Dougie Lamplin trials school.

August 2003 96, First Check; Yamaha TT600R, First Check; WEC winning Wags KTM500, Gas Gas EC200, IoW Off-Road Festival, From the Archives; BSA Bantam Bushman, Shane Watts, BEC - Hafren, David Knight, 200 Club/Welsh two day.

September 2003 97, First Check; Honda CRF450XC, First Check; Husky TE250E, CCM 404DS/Enduro - exclusive first test, Used and Abused - Husaberg FE501, From the Archives; Ducati Street Scrambler, Extreme Lumezzane, BEC - Epynt, David Knight, Five, Carry On; Proton Jumbuck.

October 2003 98, First Check; Honda XR125L v Moto-Roma MRX125, Rant, 2004 KTM 250EXC 2-T, Wags KTM 250EXC 2-T, Dawn to Dusk, CCM 404DS/Dawn to Dusk, From the Archives; Husqvarna 360C, BEC - Natterjack, UK XC - rd4, David Knight, Moto Gori retrospective.

November 2003 99, First Check; Husqvarna TE500, Honda CRF250R - launch test, How to change mousses, Tuareg Rally, Rally of Discovery, From the Archives; BSA Victor, Staff Bikes; Kawasaki KDX200R, Trial des Nations, David Knight, Drag racing a dirt bike, Crime of the Century - ISDE history.

December 2003 100, 5 Minutes With: Wayne Braybrook & Stefan Merriman, First Check; Yamaha DT230 Lanza, First Check; Yamaha WR450 2-Trac, Rant, KTM 280EXC, End of year review, Trail riding in Tasmania, Dawn to Dusk 2004 regs, From the Archives; Bultaco Matador, ISDE - Brazil, David Knight, Barcelona Indoor Enduro, Top Ten Enduro Riders.

January 2004 101, Indoor trail/end

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