



Patron: Lord Strathcarron

# TRAIL

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The Bulletin of the TRF, the National Club for all who wish to ride Legal Motorcycles on Legal Carriageways.

EDITOR: Fred Ellison.



A Ford crossing at Crummack on Wharfe in the Yorkshire Dales.

*Piccy by Stephen Brass.*

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**All Contributions to the Editor ..... Please keep it short and sweet!**

**COPY DEADLINE: FIRST POST, 1ST TUESDAY OF MONTH**



# THE BRIEF SAGA OF THE SL230 HONDA

As you will all know the majority of mature trail riders in the Trail Riders Fellowship ride a machine that Messrs Mitsui don't believe that they can sell. It is the XT225 Serow and they are all unofficial imports. Despite no official spares backup, no demonstrator and no publicity, there are several thousand in this country, let alone France, Holland, Denmark, etc. Although I like the Serow I also liked the Honda version, which was designed several years after the Serow and should therefore be more advanced technically - this is the SL230.

A friend of mine in Australia sent me a leaflet and it looked very desirable. I wrote to Honda to ask them if they had any plans to import it and despite being a multi-million pound turnover company they obviously couldn't find the money for a stamp to reply.

In November 1998 the International Six Days Enduro was held in Traralgon, Australia and I took time out to watch it. While I was there I saw several SL230 motorcycles and found out the details of the cost of the machines, the cost of shipping it and the cost of insurance whilst shipping to the UK and it all came to a reasonable total. So I arranged for a money order and set the wheels in motion - literally. In the fullness of time the container was packed and the ship sailed. It docked and the container was unpacked at Enfield. I then paid the Customs and Excise an inordinate amount and could collect the bike, but before I could ride it I had to

insure it and register it for a number plate, another 50 for that, apart from the Road Fund.

At last I could do some minor assembly, like connecting the battery and ride the beast. After a few exploratory trips around the block it was out on the open road - great. It came with the full complement of wipers and mirrors, and after driving a can all week was quite pleasant to look in the mirrors and check what was behind. Also the electric start was new to me on a motorcycle of this size (well, the BMW had one!) and when I took it to Tweseldown to collect the scorecards on a horse event it was very useful as the previous bike did not have a reliable tickover and used to stop at most of the 24 fences when I stopped to pick up the scorecards, which meant a very tired right leg at the end of the day. The going at Tweseldown was relatively easy and I volunteered for another event at Borough Court, near Hartley Witney. Some of the going was a little more difficult and I took a passenger round the course, just to see what it handled like, and there were no problems.

Overall I was very pleased with my purchase which was a civilised bike for going into town and finding a parking space. It had a brilliant (literally) headlight for returning from club nights although this had no off switch. Best of all were the disc brakes at both ends. They worked really well and would stop on tarmac or mud in half the time of my previous bike with drum brakes.



So was all unadulterated joy or were there any snags? Well there was one, the seat - it sloped forward and I slid down it making an acute bend in the knees that was not very comfortable, but I could slide back on longer journeys and on muddy lanes I could stand up but after all I could plant both feet on the ground when at a stop which is the best way to be.

The next outing was a trail ride. Starting from Reading we went through the Berkshire mud along Woodcock Lane, Broad Way and the Devils Highway. Lanes familiar to all you Loddon Vale trail riders and I coped well having sufficient power and little enough weight to keep forward movement without impeding those behind. The bike coped well. I was rather unfit but had an easy time because of the

bike's capability. After lunch we went into Hampshire and there was quite a change. Here we were on wet chalk instead of mud and starting the first lane I thought I had a puncture, the back was all over the place. When I looked around I was not alone, the change in conditions caught everyone out. Speaking of tyres there is a rather unusual arrangement. The front tyre is standard but the rear is tubeless, so if there is a puncture it is a question of changing not the tube but the whole tyre, still it saves carrying two sizes of tube around - just one tube and a spare tyre! Anyway we had a great day out. It was a manageable group, with enough to pull Guy out of the really deep mud before all his toolboxes were buried. Then it was home to a hot bath and wash the bike off. I had fallen off once and nearly had Colin use me for extra grip, but he just managed to stop.

Reading has just opened a new shopping centre and I thought I would go and see it and check it out for Christmas presents. Knowing that finding car parking would be difficult and expensive I went on the Honda. I found parking in a bay marked for "solo m/c" and explored the shopping centre. On returning to the street my bike had disappeared. I couldn't believe it. Someone had stolen my bike. Barely 1000 miles on it. I reported it to the Police who said that it was their policy to charge £105 for any vehicle that they recovered, so lose the bike or lose your money. You can't win.

So after my brief time with the SL230 would I buy another? - you bet!

*John R. Higgin, Basingstoke*

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