

BRISTOL TRAIL

The views in this magazine are of its correspondents and not necessarily the views of the Trail Riders Fellowship

November 1997



Ed's Chat

Yes I know it's A4 and not A5 format, but we have a few production difficulties now I am back in the Ed's chair. A big thanks to Barry for producing a superb mag, I know how much work went into it! Hope to see you at the club soon.

Thanks to this issues contributors. Keep the stories flowing. Any interesting tips, machine reports, run reports, pictures, etc, will be gratefully received. On disc, paper, loo roll, I don't care, its all copy!

Good to see lots of new faces at the club nights. If you have not been out riding yet, get out there. Great fun and a hell of lot cheaper than some rides I've seen advertised in some other publications!

*Tony Steel
01225 443200.*

ACU-BMF-CSMA National Rally

By Nick Crook

As the TRF has now embraced tarmac riding with such enthusiasm it is now time to let you know about an event that happens in July, the ACU-BMF-CSMA National Rally. It may be a competitive event but you would hardly notice. It is open to riders of almost any machine that are legal for road use, and that must include all of us. The event is described as a "scatter navigation event" and can be summed up as a glorified treasure hunt with competitors starting from different locations and heading towards a common finish via a route of their own choosing. No clues to solve but controls to visit where a stamp in the route card prove that you went there. The rules state that you must not visit a control more than once, must not travel more than 200 miles without an hours break, not travel more than 40 miles between controls, must not visit certain controls after you have travelled more than 225 miles. As you can see from the above that the event is more planning than riding. It involves a distance of between 235 and 500 miles depending the level of award you go for. The time allowed is from 2pm on the Saturday until 7am to 10am on the Sunday morning. The fin-

ish has in the past been in various parts of the country, this year it was at Cheltenham Racecourse. This was one of the deciding factors that made me do the event this year, only a short ride home afterwards. I chose to use my Moto Guzzi Spada and Watsonia Palma sidecar mainly because it is the only suitable machine that I have and the sidecar would provide somewhere for my son and navigator to sit and store all the tools and sundry bits and pieces needed to keep a rather tatty old example of the marque on the road for a whole night. An essential piece of kit was my little copper hammer to hit the starter motor with from time to time. Otherwise, apart from little bit of oil oozing down my right boot, we ran properly all night. We were lucky with the weather, it being a warm sunny afternoon followed by a mild night. We chose to go for the short Bronze route, mainly not to put young Tim off the idea of motorcycle events for ever. This on reflection was a good idea as it was a relaxed schedule and no stress if we got a bit lost which we did just once as the route was mainly on A class roads. The controls were in garages, cafes, schools and others. They had different facili-

ties but all were staffed by motor cycle enthusiasts. We planned our one hour rest period at a canal side cafe at Tarporly. A walk along the bank of the canal showed us a lock which had its sides made of plates of steel riveted together because the soil was very sandy and prone to collapse. It is one of only two in the country. Our route was up the Welsh Marches on the A49 and down the A38 through the Black Country. We had fish and chips and mugs of tea by the score. We even had time for a few hours rest in a school house at Bromegrove. We also had time to look at the layout of the Battle of Worcester from a specially constructed viewing platform, complete with diorama showing the troop deployments on the day. On reflection it was a very enjoyable event, the only competition is really between you and your ability to find a few controls in the small hours of the night. An ability not to do anything silly such as run out of petrol and an ability just to keep plodding steadily on, the top award of Special Gold requires an average speed of only 28 MPH when actually riding with the two one hour breaks on top of this. This is not exactly earth shattering and is easily maintained, more by keeping on the route rather than by high speed riding. If it takes your Fancy then write to the ACU National Rally secretary at ACU House, Wood Street, Rugby, Warks, CV21 2YX. Entries are taken in March and despite rumours there is not usually a shortage of entries and it is well worth it.

African Tart!

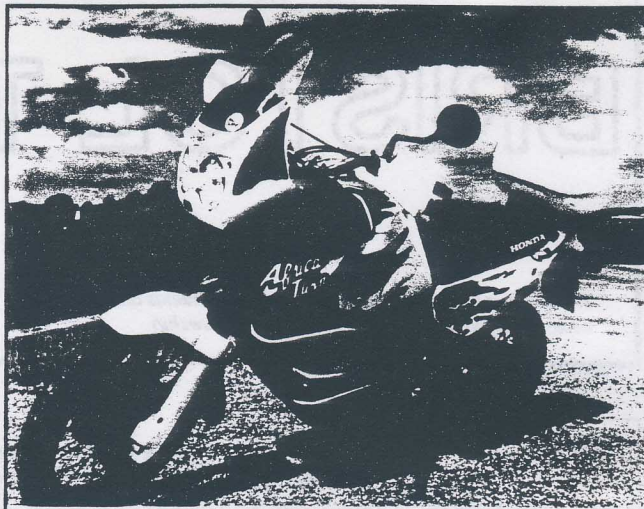
By Tony Steel

I know the Honda Africa Twin XRV750 is not what most of you would call a real trail bike, but as I have been riding one for the last few months I thought you may like to know what I think. After breaking my leg in March and having my DR350 knicked (on the same day.. thanks), my doctor said no trail riding till after Christmas! Whilst hobbling around I managed to sell my FZ750 Yam and when the insurance money came through (5 weeks later, my value minus excess, well done Devitt DA!) for the DR, I had a fair bit of cash burning a hole in my pocket. I fancied a big trailie and decided to go for a twin as they are better for cruising at speed than singles. I had my eyes open for a BMW GS, Yamaha Super Tenere, Cagiva Elephant, Honda Transalp or an Africa Twin. Well the usual hunt around the local dealers only revealed overpriced bikes as usual so when a private Africa Twin came up in the private adds at the right money I took a trip with a friend to take a peek. Now unfortunately I was still on crutches at the time, but I also knew you don't see many decent Africa Twins at the right money so off we went.

The funny thing is that I had never even sat on one of these beasts never mind ride one, so good old Leigh had a test ride for me and came back raving on how good it was in front of the seller... SHHHHHH. Anyway after a bit of haggling the deal was done and I had a 1995 model with 4700 miles on the clock. Well a few weeks

later I was on it for my work run (32 miles round trip) and I have now done 3500 miles on it.

So whats it like? First off you must understand I am 6'3" tall so it's height was not a problem. It is a long way up to get on and off but once on board it sags a fair bit. If your under 5'10" beware of cambers when you stop or else! The whole bike has that feeling of good design integrity that Honda seems to be so good at. Everything falls to hand nicely and the riding position is just right. It's a lovely high viewing position and with those twin headlamps on, I tend to get seen by car drivers much more than previous bikes I've been on. You can see behind you at any speed as very little vibration gets through to the well placed mirrors. The on board computer is very fancy having 3 trip meters, a clock, and a count up/down timer and is pretty easy to operate on the move. I must admit it's a damn handy bit of kit. The smooth (for a twin) engine is nice and grunty with the torque coming on strong at anything over 3000rpm. It has a 5 speed box. Personally I think it could do with a slightly lower 1st gear and slightly higher 5th or a 6th. The bike is happy bombing along twisty backroads using the torque to gun it out of corners, or sitting on a Autobahn at 80 (6000rpm) all day. My bike came fitted with Michelin T66 roady trail tyres (the rear is a radial) which are excellent on the road and lasting well (Rear good for 9000 miles, front 12000?). Because of it's weight the bike may not steer quite as quickly as a big single but it is still easy



to chuck it into bends and it handles very very well.

The advantage of it's weight is that it is much more stable at speed, both in a straight line and in bends (on the road of course). The suspension is excellent at soaking up bumps but keeping firm enough for good handling. This bike is heavier dry, than a Fireblade, even more so with its 5 gallon tank full. The weight does seem to drop off it once on the move but I don't really fancy picking one up on the dirt!

The bike comes with twin front discs and one rear disc. The front end pulls up OK but it's not good as some other bikes I've tried recently. It could possibly be contaminated pads or hoses so I'll have to check later when I get round to servicing the brakes. Servicing is a bit of chore, lots of plastic to remove, then tank, and then loosen the radiator to get to the tappet covers. The big bashplate has to come off to get to the awkwardly placed oil filter at the back end of the engine. It's all straightforward but time consuming. I have a Scottoiler fitted and the chain and sprockets have

not needed any adjustment since I've had it. Luckily these bikes are supposed to be pretty reliable and I have seen one with 83000 miles on the clock. The overall finish is pretty good with only the spokes showing any sign of real corrosion. My one has been ridden through at least one winter and will be used this coming winter as well so I'll have to see how it looks next spring.

And how does it cope on the dirt? Mmmmm.. I've taken it down a couple of easy local Byways and we coped OK but when I came across a fallen tree, I had to yank it round in the lane and I realised it's a heavy old beast. The tyres did have road pressures so in any mud you will have no chance of any control. On a dry Ridgeway in the Summer it would be fine, but throw some water and rocks in the equation and things could get tricky. What have I forgot?.. Average about 45 mpg and the seat is good for about 100 miles before it starts getting painfull. On the whole I'm very impressed. No wonder the Euros' love em. Knock ein bier bitter.

New Inn Run

September 1997

By Ian Hingley

My 'half bike' trailer was pressed into action as a two bike version to get me and Steve-shiny-jacket-Say to the start. (Anyone who has ever seen my trailer will understand this) Nine of us assembled at the New Inn lay-by which is a pretty good turn out these days. Apart from my KMX200 and Andy Horsman's KDX200, the other seven were all on Honda XRs! These ranged from 200 to 600cc (via 250 and 400), from 1980 to 1997, from quiet to naughty rorty and with riding styles from economical to decidedly ragged. Steve and I were both subject to the usual 'You'll never get round on trials tyres' stuff. We'll see. As I seemed to have the only bike with no pretence at enduros, I volunteered to be back marker, with Paul Creed as run leader as usual. The first few lanes were quite overgrown with brambles grabbing at your clothing and branches whipping your helmet. This was my first ride on this run and we soon came to the notorious Roman Road, which was steep, rocky and greasy. John Moore was the first to struggle, finding that raw power on his XR400 isn't always the answer. I was going up a treat until in an instant I was flat on the floor. I discovered the culprit was a rock which had flicked my chain off. I got going again and made it to the top weaving past a few of the other strugglers on the way. Definitely a hill to keep going at all costs on. We were soon out on open moorland with magnificent

views over the surrounding hills ... and the industrial wasteland hugging the valley bottoms. Earl Barrett, first time out on his XR250 suddenly dived off the track at right angles and disappeared into the bracken. No damage done.

There next was an exhilarating lane, climbing through woods in a series of hairpin bends. The XR boys certainly enjoyed this one. I had severe forearm pump by the time I reached the top and was ready for a breather.

We rode what should have been a simple lane, but it was backfilled to a depth of about four feet with loose building rubble which proved an absolute nightmare. It was pretty much a case of manhandling your way across one at a time. We stopped for lunch at the usual pub in somewhere with loads of Lls, Ffs and Ys in it's name, only to find it had changed hands and didn't do food. A quick pint sat out in the sun, then back down to the petrol station for a cold Ginsters pasty - yum!

On the way to a disused quarry Steve Say actually managed to bundle over an errant sheep with his front wheel, which is something I've never seen before. No harm was done and I'm not sure who was the most shocked, Steve or the sheep! The quarry was being used as a film set with a mock middle-ages house built in the middle of it. More motorhomes, catering vans, luvvies, etc., than you could shake a stick at. We didn't hang about as we weren't sure we added much aesthetic quality to the scene they were trying to shoot! Over towards Talybont

reservoir, which is an area I have ridden before.

Once again, some of the best views available on the trail. Rode past the John Ebbrell Memorial seat and down to the reservoir where we stopped for an ice-cream. Back round to the outdoor pursuits centre and up onto the tops again. The 4WD ruts just get worse and worse every time I see them, and one of the XRs soon found one way too deep for comfort.

Strange, everyone else was riding up on the banks. Paul Creed did his Steve McQueen Great Escape impression by jumping clean over the ruts from one side to the other. Fancy trying it on an old Triumph Paul? We met a couple of Range Rovers coming the other way, hopefully not causing any more damage. As we began to retrace our steps to the quarry there was another group of trail riders mending a puncture. They had some serious enduro weaponry with them.

Another steep climb up on to the tops, where apparently there were holes big enough to swallow Martin Harding and his bike some years ago. (Now that must be some hole!) We stopped for a breather at the top looking down on the old Ebbw Vale garden festival site and watching the hang glider pilots take off in front of us. Each to his own I suppose.

We started to head back to the trailers and one lane seemed to go round in a complete circle almost like a motocross circuit. Strange! I somehow managed to stuff my bike into

a bank on a straightforward grassy climb, and Martin on the XR600 did a similar thing a few yards further on. Andy Horsman got a rear puncture as we did the last lane but rode back to the trailers rather than fix it by the roadside. This meant we completed the whole run with no-one having to use the spanners at all. Must be some sort of record So about 85 miles in about 7 hours in glorious sunshine, impeccably led by Paul and with good company throughout. What more could anyone want?



Kawasaki KLX300

Due for 1998 at approx £4195. Sure to be poky and light (for a 4 stroke). Hope it starts better than the old KLX250 when hot!

Secretary's Say

By Ian Hingley

Quite a busy time for me. In an effort to raise more money for the group, I've written a series of letters to local motorcycle, mountain bike, horse, car and 4WD clubs appealing for money towards Martin's expenses or for pledges towards the Norton Malreward fighting fund.

The response has been very good, with a series of phone calls from these other clubs wanting to discuss things further. For those of you not at the recent meetings, pledges now stand at £500 from our own funds, £250 from Wessex ACU, £500 from Bristol Phoenix, and £105 in personal donations. I am still in negotiation with the MCC who are talking about pledging a minimum of £500, and Bristol Car Club who are talking about £50 per year for three years for Martin's expenses and have raised the fighting fund issue with their governing body, the ACTC. I have also had several calls from Avon Green Laners 4WD club, who should also pledge something.

I believe this spirit of co-operation between like-minded clubs can only bode well for the future, irrespective of the Norton Malreward appeal result.

On the riding front, I had a good day on the cycle ride/picnic. Lovely weather and great company. Pity Richard 'Dangerous Sports' Jones came such a cropper within sight of the end.

I went on Paul Creed's New Inn run for the first time in

September. Another glorious day riding over some excellent terrain.

If any of you are interested in Long Distance trials and fancy a good off tarmac day on Exmoor, then try the Neil Westcott Trial on 23rd November. My favourite trial of the year. See me for a copy of the regs.

Please try and attend the AGM on 10th November. Remember, it's **your** club - use the opportunity to have your say about how it's being run

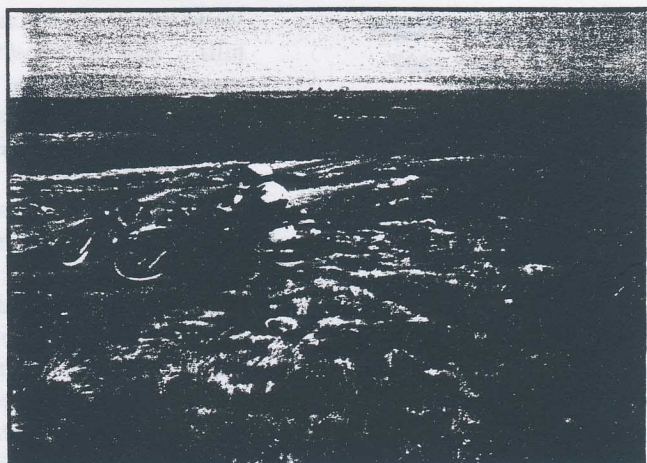
TRF Questionnaire

Back in the Spring issue, I included a questionnaire so we could get a better profile of the membership. After some cajoling I managed to get an excellent 18 replies which is over half the group. If you don't fit in with the answers below, maybe you didn't bother to reply. I've finally got round to typing all the answers into my Excel spreadsheet to produce some statistics. No doubt I should produce pretty graphs and pie charts, but you'll just have to put up with figures.

Age
We range from 29 to 55 with an average of nearly 42. Makes me like a spring chicken. The one and only 29 year old now no longer rides with us. I reckon you youngsters must be too busy riding to bother to reply.

Marital Status
76% married and 18% with partners.

Kids
44% of us have kids, with an average of 2.25 per family.



Norman Winkworth
enjoying one of his favourite pastimes on his trusty IT

Jobs
50% employed and 39% self employed. Many of us involved in engineering of some sort. Also a professional photographer and a conservation contractor, both of whom could be useful.

Trail bikes
62% Honda (17% XR250, 11% XR400), 23% Kawasaki, 15% Suzuki. Average value £1775. 77% used for non trail riding 'sometimes'.

Road bikes
72% of us have a road bike. Average value £2425.

Car
Anything from a 30 year old Mini to a Porsche 944!

Rides
We claim to average 10 Bristol Group rides per year each. Somehow I don't think so. This was distorted a bit by someone claiming 24 Bristol Group rides per year. 38% ride with other groups, averaging 6 times per year each. 66% ride 'unofficially', again averaging 6 times per year each. Top score

was 49 rides per year.

Expertise
We have 11% experts, 78% intermediates and 11% novices!

Speed
94% thought the pace OK. 6% found it too fast.

Length
6% found the rides too long, 81% OK and 12% too short.

Terrain
6% found the rides too hard, 88% OK and 6% too easy.

Pub
Only 12% considered the pub essential, 50% thought OK and 38% would rather ride. Interesting, eh.

Seasons
83% like riding in Spring, 28% in Summer, 72% in Autumn and 61% in Winter.

Tyres
50% claim to ride on **tri-als** tyres with 17% each for trail, enduro and MX. Come off it guys, trials tyres are those things with

little, shallow, closely packed knobbles you all reckon don't grip in mud! Maybe when I ride it's always with the other 50%

Maps

We all claim to carrying maps with us. 89% have marked maps.

Trailer

67% of us have access to a trailer/van for carrying the bike.

Distance

Up to 50 miles to the start of a local run and up to 300 miles for a distant run.

When/where

50% like Saturdays, 72% Sundays, 44% weekends. 56% like local rides and 44% distant rides. 89% enjoy 'Avon', 56% Gwent, 89% Exmoor, 72% Brecons, 44% Mid Wales, 39% Yorks. Dales and 22% Lake District.

Leisure

71% of us either do or used to compete in motorcycle events. 53% meet TRF members socially and 71% would like to see more TRF social activities as follows:

Pubs 29% Videos 41% Meal 35% Skittles 24%

Karts 35% Watersports 29% BBQ 59%

Picnic 41% Treasure Hunt 53%

Visits:

World MX 24% World Trials 29% Superbikes 24%

Bike GP 6% Pre 65 Bonanza 29%

Beach Race 35% Touring Cars 18% F1 GP 6%

Welsh 2 day 41% Camping W/ends 35%

Dirt Bike Show 41% Bike Show 12%

'Other' hobbies were varied as expected. Cricket, climbing, diving, cycling, football, squash, outdoors, photography, wildlife, etc. I ignored the person who put 'work'!

Motorbike magazines - Not surprisingly, Trail Bike was the winner with 53% of us buying it, followed by TMX at 41%, MCN at 35%, MCS&L, Bike and Ride each with 18%.

FAVOURITES

Trail Bike: XR400 with 24% and XR250 with 18% dominated the answers, nothing else getting above 6%. Doesn't anyone like DR350s any more? Others included a BSA (?), Husky, DR350 & 600, XR200, ATK and Yam Serow. Interesting selection. Two lucky people owned their favourites already.

Road Bike: Triumphs with 25% came top followed by Ducati, BMW and VFR750 with 16% each. Also mentioned were BSA A10 (guess who?) and Ariel Arrow! Once again a couple of people already own their dream bike.

Car: Anything from a Morris Traveller to Italian exotica were our dream cars, with TVR coming top with 25%.

Food: Curry was top with 33%, Roast with 25%, and Chinese with 16%. Was the person who put Bran Flakes winding me up?

Drink: 56% were beer lovers, with various real ales listed. 12% preferred lager. Some of the others mentioned included,

water, Lucozade and ouzo-and-coke!

TRF

We claim to attend almost 10 monthly meetings each on average. (Andy should be able to do a cash flow prediction based on this!) Over 70% of us claimed to have led a run (oh yeah?), 59% have attended a Public Inquiry and less than 24% have attended a National AGM or Exec.

Skills on offer to us include welding, garage, transport, photocopying, chainsaw, first aid, PC, e-mail, and various others.

Amount for National subs ranged from £10 to £30 with an average of £22.

Bristol Group subs ranged from £5 to £15 with an average of £9.25

Room hire ranged from 50p to £1, with an average of 91p

Run fees ranged from £2 to £3 with an average of £2.60.

Suggestions to improve Bristol TRF included more run leaders, more involvement from members, more commitment, less doom and gloom, and marked up maps to be available. All the usual stuff really.

So that's it. If any wants to look at the full figures, they're quite welcome. And I don't want anyone questioning my maths or my interpretation of the answers, OK. Thanks to all those who took part, I'm sure we can all learn something from these figures and improve our enjoyment of the group.

Bristol TRF Contacts 1997 Committee

- Chairman: Steve Say
56 Fairlyn Drive, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 4PX
Telephone: 01179 761 635
- Secretary: Ian Hingley
31 Overhill Road, Downend, Bristol, BS16 5DS
Telephone: 01176 567509
- Treasurer & Membership: Andy Horseman
191 Dundry Lane, St George, Bristol BS5 8SU
Telephone: 01179 407 043
- Rights of Way Officer & Group Rep: Martin Harding,
100 Cavendish Road, Patchway, Bristol BS12 5HH
Telephone: 0117 969 6674
- Lane Clearing Officer: John Hitchings
99 Watleys End Road, Winterborne, Bristol BS17 1PW
Telephone: 01454 250 439
- Run Co-ordinator: Paul Creed
9 Redland Hill, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6UX
Telephone: 01179 732 103
- Social Secretary: Richard Jones
33A Forest Road, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 2EJ
Telephone: 01179 353 733
- Lane Records Officer: Nick Crook
34 Ravenswood, Longwell Green, Bristol BS1 56YR
Telephone: 01179 327 084