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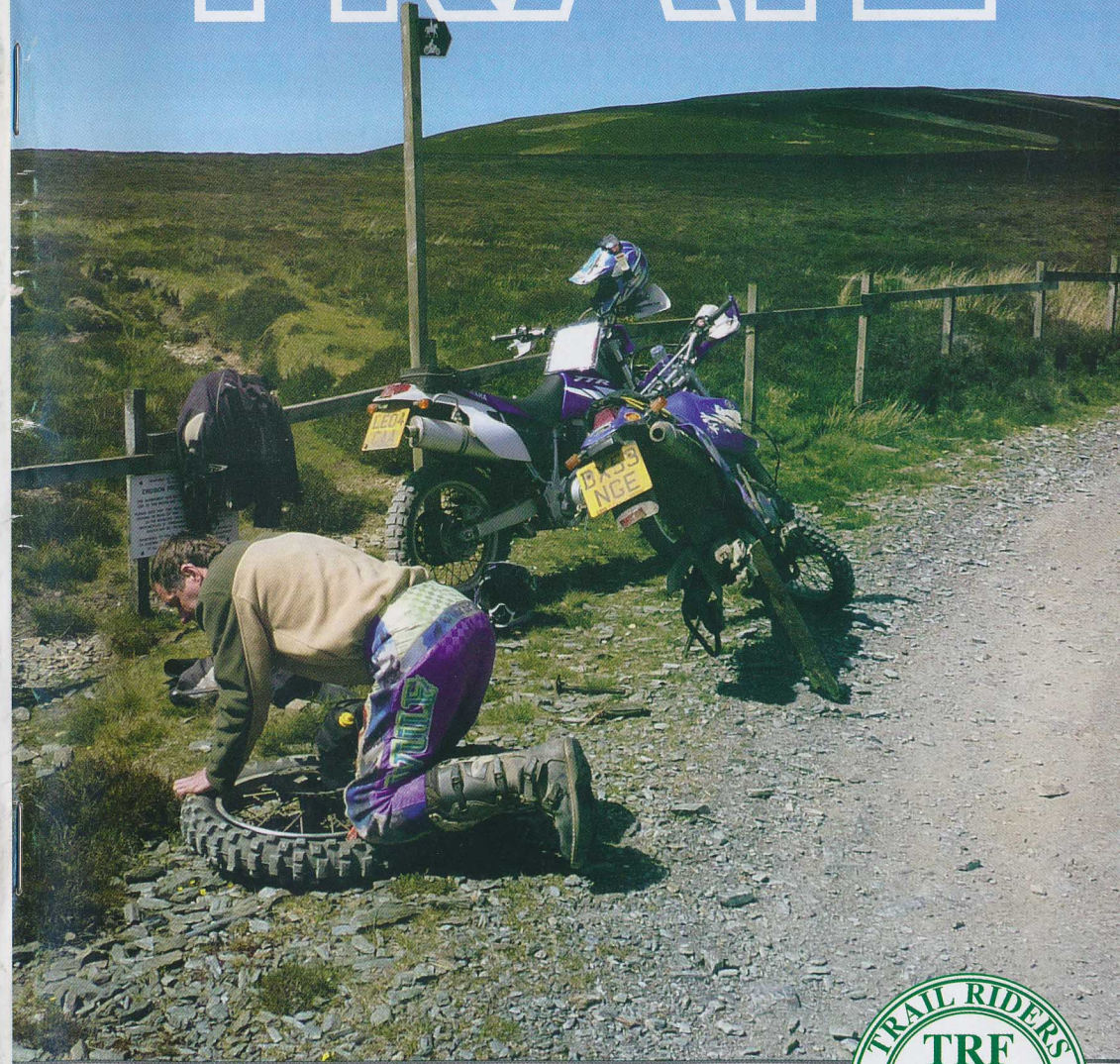
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TRAIL



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

JULY 2011 No. 395 EDITOR: FRED ELLISON



Patron: Lord Fairfax



Kingsbridge ride, Devon TRF
Photo: Steve Homer



Me & my bike at the top of the Wayfarer trail, Snowdonia.
Photo: Geoff Kelly



Rod Jay, West Yorks TRF.
Photo: Ian O'Brien

GALLERY



The boys from the not so Wild West - read more inside!
Photo: Tony Stuart

EDITOR

Have you ever thought "can I do something for the TRF?" Rights of Way not your bag? Lead a busy life so do not have much time to spare? What I have in mind will take almost no time at all. All you have to do is make sure that you mention TRAIL when you contact our advertisers.

You do use them don't you? You should, our advertisers support us and it is only fair, that given all things being equal, we should do likewise and support them. Don't forget if you don't tell them they won't know.

Try to make the TRF Executive Meeting in Devon on Sunday 7th August.

Happy Trails,

TRF EXEC MEETING

Sunday 7th August 2011
10 for 10.30 a.m.

The Dolphin Hotel, Station Road,
Dolphin Square, Bovey Tracey,
Devon TQ13 9AL

If you would like to raise anything at the meeting please email Polly Cody at secretary@trf.org.uk

Please ensure your group is represented

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WANTED:

- RUN REPORTS
- RIGHTS OF WAY • NOTICES
- BIKE & RIDING GEAR REVIEWS
- COVER PHOTOS
- YOUR VIEWS ON TRAIL RIDING RELATED TOPICS
- or anything you feel would be interesting*

COVER PHOTO:

From David Harding Isle of Man

COPY DEADLINE:

1st Tuesday of the Month

All contributions to THE EDITOR
Fred Ellison, Sheepcote Farm
Moor Lane, Wiswell, Clitheroe
BB7 9DG editor@trf.org.uk

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TRF OFFICERS & CONTACTS

Chairman:	Andy Gerrard	01525 717634/07803 600571 chairman@trf.org.uk 52 Conway Drive, Flitwick, Bedfordshire MK45 1ST
Membership Director:	Debbie Hutchinson	07966 438907 memsec@trf.org.uk Marcliff, Bakers Hill, Exeter, Devon EX2 9TE
Secretary:	Polly Cody	01525 717634 secretary@trf.org.uk 52 Conway Drive, Flitwick, Bedfordshire MK45 1ST
Financial Director:	John Gardner	01695 622792 finance@trf.org.uk or john.gardner119@gmail.com 119 Hallbridge Gardens, Up Holland, Skelmersdale WN8 0EP
Treasurer (Acting):	Arnold Brewer	01865 741410 treasurer@trf.org.uk 2 London Road, Headington, Oxford OX3 7PA
Editor:	Fred Ellison	01254 823893 Fax: 01254 887999 editor@trf.org.uk Sheepcote Farm, Moor Lane, Wiswell, Clitheroe BB7 9DG
P.R. Director:	Jack Knight	07791 730294 marketing@trf.org.uk 30 Braunston Road, Knossington, Oakham, Rutland LE15 8LN
Legal Director & RoW Officer:	Robin Hickin	01926 817060/07890 550847 row@trf.org.uk 42 Model Village, Southam, Warwickshire CV47 9RB
I. T. & Website:	Adrian Allen	web@trf.org.uk
BMF Liaison:	David Giles	01332 552288 bmfliaison@trf.org.uk 22 Ford Lane, Allestree, Derby DE22 2EW
LARA Rep:	David Giles	01332 552288 lararep@trf.org.uk 22 Ford Lane, Allestree, Derby DE22 2EW
Sport & Recreation Association Rep:	Dave Tilbury	023 80618937 ccprrep@trf.org.uk Oakbank Cottage, Oakbank Road, Eastleigh SO50 6PA
Equestrian Events Liaison:	Mark Holland	01989 565249/0845 3308892/07941 427774 (mob) equestrian@trf.org.uk Corn Farm, Devauden, Chepstow NP16 6NS

TRF P.O. Box 196 Derby DE1 9EY

STATIONERY & LEAFLETS

Keepers of Stationery:	Debbie Hutchinson	<i>Leaflets & Membership Forms</i>
	Fred Ellison	<i>Letterheads & Compliments Slips</i>
Display Equipment:	Leo Crone	01325 463815 (7a.m. - 5p.m.) <i>Display boards held at Ut 10, Red Barnes Way, McMullen Road, Darlington DL1 2RR</i>

REGIONAL RoW ADVISORS

Wales & West Midlands	Tim Stevens	01547 529946 <i>Offa's Road, Knighton LD7 1ES</i>
South & South West	Dave Tilbury	<i>See above for contact details</i>
Eastern	Richard Sugden	01354 651390 home@rlsugden.fsnet.co.uk 122 Station Road, March, Cambridgeshire PE15 8NH
East Midlands	Robin Hickin	<i>See above for contact details</i>

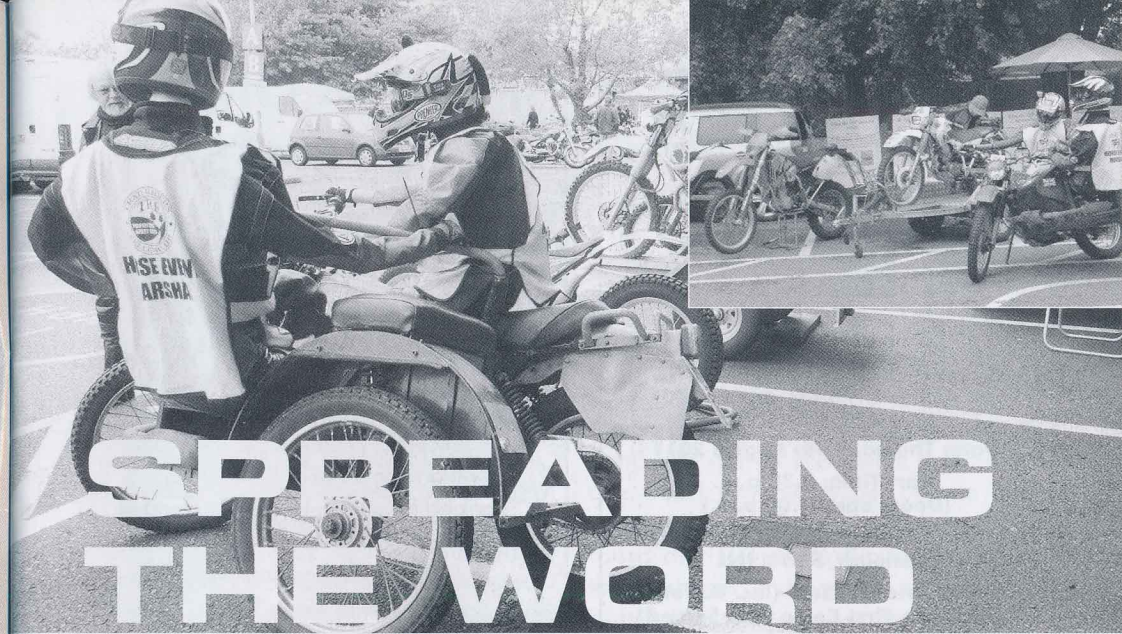
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Members Classifieds: FREE OF CHARGE Enclose membership number.

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Please send all classifieds with payment if applicable to THE EDITOR.



The Sussex branch of the TRF were invited to attend the Chichester College Bike show. It had been laid on by the college Technical Department and specifically by the Motorcycle Maintenance Training Group.

Quite a variety of exhibitors turned up to this informal, free entry, show. The main task of the show, apart from us ogling everything motor cycle, was to raise funds for the Sussex Air Ambulance, a worthy cause, whose main purpose none of us want to see close up. We donated £50 from our funds.

We did not realise that there was such a variety of interests in Sussex/Hampshire. There were several bike clubs present including VMCC, there were veteran, vintage and classic bikes represented, also drag bikes, enduros, motocross and choppers. Not bad for a small informal show, the website stated that if you arrived on a bike you were part of the show so the bike park was a show on its own. Did I mention we were also there, representing the TRF. We had lots of support from Head Office with leaflets, information boards and application forms.

Our team comprised of Keith Webster, George Bryant plus our leader and all round top Gong for the day, Don Kirk. It was a first for all of us, so we set out our pitch, consisting of 4 bikes and a combination which had graced a few green lanes in the past, Keith had prepared the combination by bringing a couple of his mates which we tied to the handlebars and other parts of the sidecar ironmongery, it was an attention getter which worked. We set out the information boards and stood back ready for the hoards of punters. There was a steady trickle for most of the day, varying from small children who wanted to ride "off road" to "I take my plates off and ride where I like types" We were surprised by the number of women who showed interest and there were several interested parties who seemed very keen to know what we did and took details of regional TRF groups. We got tired of saying that to ride ROW, Green lanes and UCR's your bike had to be fully road legal. All in all we spread the word and hopefully we may find a new member or two.

George Bryant

SOUTHERN

Presents

An Evening with Mick Extance British Dakar Legend



Mick Extance is arguably Britain's most successful endurance rider of recent years and five time finisher of the infamous Dakar Rally and will be our guest of honour on Thursday 4th August 2011 for an informal talk evening

Date: Thursday 4th August 2011

Start Time: 7.30 p.m.
(Doors open 7.00 p.m.)

**Location: Fleming Park Leisure Centre,
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Ticket Price: £15.00 (inc. Buffet)
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For tickets please contact Rob:
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In memory of Brian (Stodge) Crabtree

Saturday 6th August 2011
Gates open 5.30p.m.

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7pm Auction of Brian's Royal Enfield
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or it is in May's TRAIL.

Southern TRF: An Evening with Mick Extance

Thursday 4th August 2011

See opposite for further details.

Bikers' Night

in memory of Brian Crabtree

Saturday 6th August 2011

See opposite for further details.

TRF Executive Meeting

Sunday 7th August 2011

10 for 10.30 a.m.

The Dolphin Hotel, Station Road, Dolphin
Square, Bovey Tracey, Devon TQ13 9AL.

TRF AGM

October 16th 2011 provisionally

MAKE SURE YOUR EVENT IS LISTED

Send any details to The Editor (see
contact details inside front cover)

Cornwall TRF Help Disabled Group Buy a 'Phab' Minibus

Sunday the 10th of October saw Cardinham Woods full of people on trail motorcycles, quad bikes, trials cars and even a golf buggy having a PHAB time exploring the forest trails raising money for St Austell PHAB Group (Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied). The event at Cardinham came about following the success of the forest trail rides for people with disabilities put on by the Cornwall TRF Group on The Colquite Estate, in Dunmere Woods near Bodmin, with the kind permission of the landowners, Countess Pinky Le Grelle, Lady Iona Molesworth and The Forestry Commission, the last one in July last year was attended by more than 250 people.

Chris Mason of The Forestry Commission contacted Cornwall Group Chairman and event organiser Ross Fisher to ask if we would like to run a similar event in Cardinham Woods, near Bodmin, which is a forest park open to the public.

This posed several problems for Ross, such as could the Group afford to stage a second event as the previous one cost the Group about £550, and how would we manage to ride safely - and without causing any offence - amongst the public in the park with their dogs and children. Always keen to take on a challenge Ross made a few phone calls, rallied the troops, had a meeting with Chris Mason and the date was set.

St Austell PHAB Group were looking to raise money to replace their ageing minibus, so after speaking to their Chairman, Francis Rowe, it was decided to run the event as a

sponsored trail ride to raise some money for them. Little did we know what a success the day would turn out to be, on one of the sunniest days in October, with over £2,800 raised, over 100 people enjoying rides around the forest trails, and everyone including the St Austell Deputy Mayoress, Sandra Hayward who kindly supported the event, having a great day out. Speaking after the event Chris Mason said "This day has been a great success for all concerned, we had a few parking issues but the whole day was well organised and we are hoping that the TRF will be here again next year". Ross added "I had several sleepless nights this week as I know that Cardinham Woods and motorcycles are not two things you usually associate but it would appear that we have pulled it off and that it is down to the way that all sides worked together and the reception that people visiting the woods on the day gave us, many making a donation and taking part. Thanks to all who have supported this event and made this day one to remember".

PHAB have now put the money raised together with Group funds enabling them to replace their ageing minibus. PHAB Chairman Francis Rowe said "without the help of the TRF we would not have been able to replace our minibus at this time and I was afraid the old bus would not go on much longer. We are thrilled with the new bus and I would like to thank all who made it possible".

Tony Stuart, Cornwall TRF

TRAIL RIDING FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Harry and I attended this event in South Wales as part of a long weekend, riding the beautiful roads of Wales. We were a little apprehensive about taking vulnerable people, as passengers, off-road in the forest. We imagined a short, easy, circuit of level ground, amongst the trees since we were riding our Big Trailies.

When we arrived in Abercarn's Gwyddon Forest we were greeted by Mike Rees, one of the organisers, who gave us a briefing at the start of the two mile circuit. There were a couple of 4x4s, a Quad and about ten motorcycles ready to take the two bus loads of handicapped passengers round the circuit.

The passengers ranged from fourteen to forty and were all capable of hanging on for the ride, at least nobody fell off.

I must admit I did feel very nervous about this

event but believe me if you have the time and a trail bike get yourself down to South Wales next year. Your fears about carrying vulnerable passengers will soon be allayed and I am sure you will really enjoy the experience of helping those less fortunate than yourself.

The circuit climbed up through the forest, to a height of about 500 feet, took in a couple of bends, ran along a lovely view point ridge and then descended again through a number of twists and turns back to the start. What a great run.

I said to Mike "I thought the circuit would be flat". "Flat!" He said, with great surprise, "This is the Welsh Valleys".

Our passengers were gathered in a group at the start of the circuit, replete with crash helmets. As we drew up they chose which of the dozen or so vehicles they would like to ride. Helpers assisted them to get on board and away we went, as they hung on tightly.

Not only did Harry and I have a great time, over the three hour period of the rides but the passengers appeared to have the time of their lives.

One lad sang all the way round. Whether he was excited or just scared I will never know, I can only say I am sure it was a very rewarding experience for both of us.

Anyone wanting a break during the proceedings was catered for. Free of Charge. Hamburgers and drinks flowed all afternoon for the riders and passengers alike.

The guys loading and unloading the

passengers worked like slaves all afternoon.

My admiration goes out to Mike and his helpers for organising this event. They have obviously built up a lovely relationship with this group of disabled people and their families over the years. A great family atmosphere!!

At the end of the event we were thanked by

In a scene reminiscent of the battle for Rorke's Drift a small band of trail riding volunteers stood by their bikes in the remote Gwyddon Forest of South Wales. Quartermaster Duggan anxiously checked and rechecked his burger stock knowing full well the great onslaught that awaited him. As noon approached Sergeant Major Rees gathered his troops together for a description of the challenge that awaited them. Words like caution, speed limits, risk assessment, emergency plan etc. were all mentioned before his final rousing battle cry.

"Now show them ramblers what we are made of - get out there and enjoy yourselves".

As the cheering subsided an outrider posted high up on the hillside rode into camp to tell of a plume of dust rising from the trail down in the valley. They were coming. Within minutes the mini buses charged into camp and the hordes of people with learning difficulties rushed for the waiting bikes and burgers with smiles as big as buckets. Some made straight for waiting bikes shouting "Hello - nice to see you again. Where are the helmets?"

Others made for the quarter pounders to set new Olympic records in burger eating while they waited their turn on the bikes.

3 hours later the battle subsided, honours even. Riders, quad pilots and land rover drivers were all shattered and the visitors had seen off the stock of burgers. Their enjoyment was written on their faces for all to see but reluctantly they had to leave for home with hugs, handshakes and high fives all round.

We riders and helpers went home with the inner warmth of knowing that today we had made the world a better place for some less fortunate people.

Behind this "battle" story is a tale of how a

the parents. No thanks were necessary, it was a pleasure.

Make a note in your diary for next year and join in the event, a very worthwhile cause. Give something back to the community and the TRF.

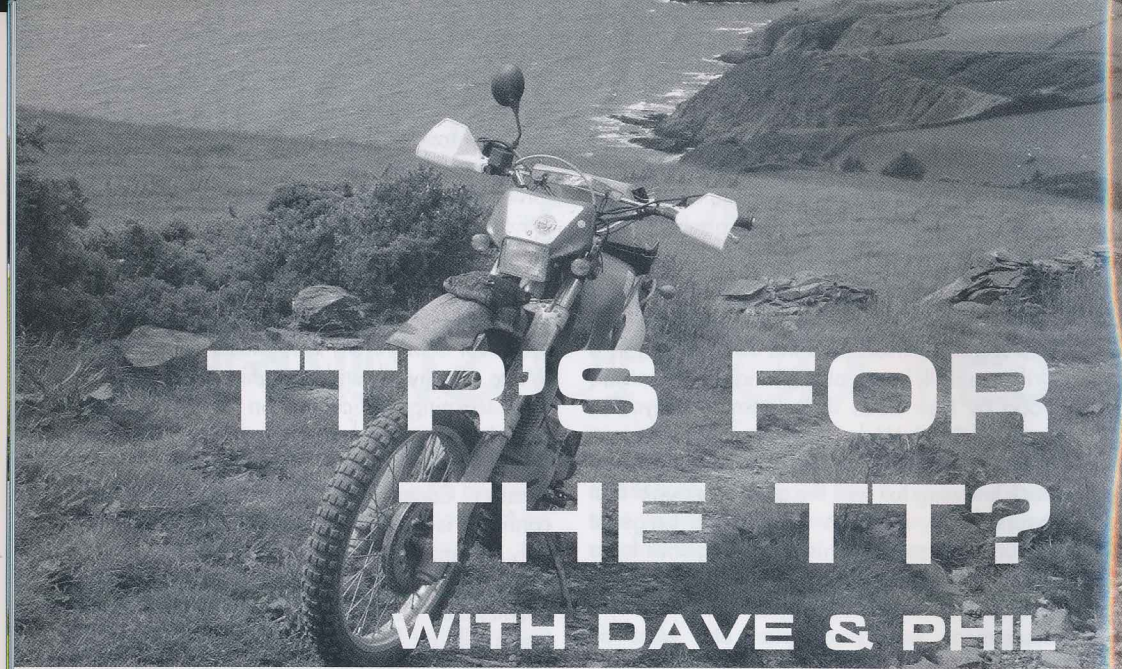
John Robinson,
T&NYTRF Group

group of motorcycle enthusiasts from South Wales, Cornwall and Yorkshire took people with learning difficulties on a trail riding experience around the forest trails in the Gwyddon forest with the blessing of the Forestry Commission. The "Clients" will all confirm it is the highlight of their year and their only question is when is the next one. They have sampled motorcycling, seen lots of countryside and pushed their achievements just a little bit further. As riders we can say it was because we made the effort and our reward is their smiles.

We have done this in South Wales for a quarter of a century and its high time the rest of the country made an effort also.

Mike Rees, (Welsh Beggar)





TTR'S FOR THE TT?

WITH DAVE & PHIL

The general plan was to set off on trail bikes for a few days camping on the Isle of Man and watch some of the TT racing, especially because we know Andrew Winkle who is the passenger in John Holden's sidecar outfit. With all the Ferries fully booked we managed to get a cancellation ferry crossing with a 5.30 am crossing from Liverpool.

We set off at 2am on Sunday 5th June on loaded up trail bikes from Stoke - just in time to catch the rain! But we soon got a break when we were pulled over by the Police at 2.40 am for a rear tail-light out on Phil's bike. Luckily they were sympathetic to our motorcycle cause and the need to reach the docks in time to catch the ferry and let us proceed. We gratefully continued on our way to find that our route to Northwich was dug up to fit a major gas line and our route was diverted around minor, very dark unlit country lanes and by now the rain was beginning to ease. By the time we got to the docks the tail-light was mysteriously working again! We made the ferry and arrived in Douglas by 8 am.

A short ride up the Prom to the race

paddock, where we were to camp for the next 4 nights. A quick brew with some friends we had arranged to meet, who were there as part of the support team for the sidecar, and then down to the serious business of trail riding.

We took the road out of Onchan to pick the first lanes up around Baldrine and then the long trail up to windy corner; then off to Ramsey for some chips and to pick up more lanes from the top of the Millennium Way. By the time we got back to the race paddock we were in need of some liquid refreshment, so got cleaned up and went to sample Manx bitter in the Rover's Return in Douglas.

Up and out early Monday to get a good vantage point to watch the racing by using the bottom part of the Millenium Way to get to Hailwood's Rise. In-between races we decided to move to Sulby, but on a trail between Cronkdoo and Ballacuberagh Plantation, Phil got a puncture in his back tyre. If you need to spend 45 minutes swapping a tube, the scenery in this area makes it one of the best places to do it, and I even topped up my tan! The rest of the day

went without a hitch and we managed to catch a bit more racing at the Crosby Arms Hotel. Got back to the race paddock about 8.30pm. Too knackered to go to Douglas so nipped to the Manor pub for a quick pint, but ended up watching George Formby's "No limits".

Tuesday's very enjoyable trails were across the west side of the Island. We called in for petrol at Kirk Michael and found the large house next to the filling station was showing off its large collection of vintage motorcycles so we spent an hour there and had a quick bite to eat. After lunch we set off to do the coastal trails close to Glenmoye and Port Erin. Ace trails, weather and bikes = absolutely brilliant day! Back to paddock, shower and off to the Rovers.

Wednesday - Race Day for the sidecar team and we promised to do pit boarding for John and Wink at Windy Corner. After 2 hours of waiting for the solo bikes' race that started and then got stopped, we decided to drop down off the mountain to eat our butties, whilst waiting to hear when the race would

re-start. It was raining so hard we took shelter in a bird-watching hut, until we heard on our portable radio that all racing for the day had been cancelled. This would mean John and Wink's race would be moved to Thursday - the day we go home, Aah Boo!

We decided to do a bit of trail riding in the rain and got back to the tent in time to watch the Red Arrows air show, before nipping off to Douglas to try some more Manx bitter in the Rovers (wet on the outside in the day and on the inside at night) - Mint!

Thursday - take tent down. Risk watching the start of the solos' race at the grandstand before a loaded up mad dash for the ferry. We later found out on the ferry that John and Wink had come first. A great result for them and a great few days for me and Phil! Can't wait to go back.

David Harding

Ed: When I saw the picture of John Holden's outfit with the TTR's I foolishly thought he was there for the trail riding. Congratulations to John and Wink on their TT win.



Sweet Home Extremadura

Well it finally happened

After all these years trail riding, I have finally been stopped on the trail by the police. Not once, not twice but *three* times in 15 minutes, no less. This has to be some sort of record.

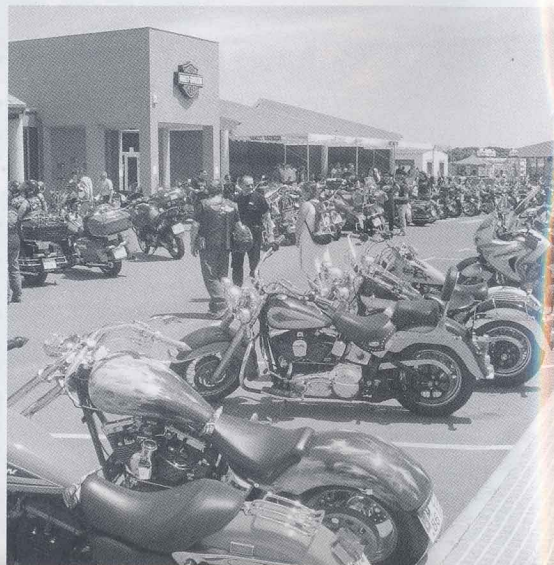
It was not in this country, I hasten to add, but in the wilds of Extremadura, in Spain. I was not even on a motorbike, but on a mountain bike.

Let me explain.

I had been staying at a friend's house in Merida, Central Spain and, not having a motorbike, had to resort to pedal power in the guise of a 50 euro mountain bike. Behind the house in the 'dehesa', an area of open scrubland, a number of trails used by farmers and shepherds, the long distance, 'Ruta de la Plata' runs, with granite markers to denote the route in yellow and also the Roman road in blue. Apparently, Hannibal came this way with his elephants, but on the day I rode it, it had been used by motorbikes, judging by the motocross tyre tracks. When I descended to a camino agricola (farmers access road), I met the first police car. The driver's window lowered with a blast of air conditioning and an arm came out to wave me down. I looked at myself in a pair of mirrored sunglasses and a torrent of heavily accented Spanish enquired whether I had seen any motocyclistas. I replied that I hadn't seen or

heard any motorcycles, but I had seen some tracks. He asked me where I was from and I explained I was on holiday from England. A knowing look passed between him and his colleague, since it was 40 degrees and even the mad dogs had retired to the shade. I suggested, helpfully, that if they wanted to find bikers, the best thing to do was to go to the nearest café and wait. I asked what the bikers had done and without a word the car window closed and the car drove off. Guardia, but not very civil, I thought.

Five minutes later another police car appeared and exactly the same thing happened again. I began to think I was trapped in some sort of 'Groundhog Day' experience especially when a couple of kilometres later a third police car appeared.



This time, I couldn't resist sending the police in the opposite direction to where I had seen the tracks.

I couldn't help speculating on why motocyclistas should justify this over-the-top policing. On previous occasions I have met with Spanish riders while out trail riding. They were at a total loss to understand the concept of trail riding as I understand it. Invariably, they ride full-on enduro machinery complete with motocross tyres and loud exhausts and wear body armour and helmets with face guards. Sound familiar?

Is the gentle pastime of low-impact enjoyment of the countryside on a motorbike a disappearing concept or what? If I had encountered the group the police wanted to find, would I have had any empathy as a lone mountain biker/trail rider? I suspect not. Strangely enough, the Spanish magazine, 'Motocyclista', this month printed a debate relating to the control of access to the countryside by motorised vehicles and whether this would be 'good news' for bikers.

The piece included a poll of readers as follows:

1. Do you support the plan to regulate access by motorised vehicles to the countryside in Cataluna?

52% Yes 48% No

2. Do you think other autonomous communities should do the same?

60% Yes 40% No

3. Do you think this measure will benefit the motorcycle industry?

40% Yes 60% No

Interesting that even fellow bikers seem to support controls on off-tarmac riding.

I suspect that, to a certain

degree, this is the same in England. Trail riding doesn't have many friends, including, it would seem, other motocyclistas. I can't say I am surprised by this revelation. This would seem to be an image thing. Most people, motocyclistas and non-motocyclistas alike, tend to see trail riding as a branch of motocross and hence inappropriate to public rights of way. I know I am going to get flak for this, but I think we are our own worst enemy in this respect.

The bit about the effect on the motorcycle industry is especially strange, since the Spanish motorcycle industry is almost exclusively Catalan, yet the movement towards control has originated in Cataluna.

It is on the cards that any motorcycle activity more than 5 metres from the road is to be deemed illegal. Tony Bou, Adam Raga and friends could become criminals overnight for a bit of practice. Welcome to our world.

One would expect Gas Gas et al to go on the warpath, but it is difficult when many open access areas, paths and trails exist



through custom and use, without any legal structure. Some things are more transparent in this country, but not many.

I once asked a Spanish policeman whether it was legal to ride along 'canadas reales', the ancient drove routes that cross the country. He said "no" in a, "the answer's 'no' now what's the question" way. I suspect he had little knowledge of the status of canadas and merely wanted me to leave him alone. A familiar story.

To return to my strange day out, on my way back I came across motorcycle oasis, a brand new fuel station, Harley Davidson showroom and theme café, Triumph and Ducati dealerships and marquee bar, kiosk and stage. Extremadura is the poorest bit of Spain and to find 'high end' places like this is a double surprise.

The café, all leather, glass and stainless steel, featured a V-twin Harley engine as a beer

pump (at last a good use for one - engine, that is) and some fantastic photos of Harleys from the 20's and 30's, not to mention industrial level air-conditioning. The tapas which came with the beers was the best I have ever tasted and no, they didn't come with bits that had vibrated off the bikes. The experience was a world away from standing in the rain eating a soggy bacon butty at Devil's Bridge. There were about 100 Harleys present, ridden by 'Hell's Accountants' and the festivities carried on into the evening with a live band and assorted biker entertainment. A chance of a gig for 'Dumpy's Rusty Nuts' perhaps?

I hope to ride my trail bike down for the Winter. It would be great to turn up alongside the gleaming Harley's. "Have you come far"? "1300 Km and you"? "5Km".

Rodger Davies
Lancs Group

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APPEAL

Motor Sport in the Countryside is Under Threat Again

The Government has published an *Issues Paper* which states that motor sport events (sporting trials, moto-cross, etc.) give rise to 'significant concerns', and invites comments and views on changing the '14/28 Day Rule' under which most off-road sport is organised. Under the 14/28 Day Rule an event organiser does not have to apply for planning permission for the 'change of use' of the land, on the day of the event, from agricultural to motor sport. To have to so apply would be an enormous burden on clubs, farmers and planning authorities for no real benefit.

Haven't we been here before? Back in 2002 there was a Government consultation on restricting or scrapping permitted development rights (the 14/28 Day Rule) for motor sport. LARA carried out a survey of all motor sport events on one 'sample weekend' in that year, and followed that up with a survey of any problems arising from these events. Quite simply, the Government's consultants were confusing 'cowboy activity' and practice tracks with properly organised events. Following LARA's submission to the consultation the proposal was not taken further. Now it is back. The Government's paper has been issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government and is titled: *How change of use is handled in the planning system - tell us what you think. Issues paper. June 2011.*

This is available as a PDF download at: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/changeuseissues You can read the Minister's announcement at: www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1930564

LARA's advice is that everyone who has an interest in off-road motor sport should make a response at this stage, stressing that Permitted Development Rights are essential to the continued running of a sport that now has over 100 years of tradition in the countryside, with over 5,000 events a year in England and Wales, which run to strict safety and environmental rules, and which cause few if any problems. Simply, there is no evidence-based reason to change the current system. LARA has prepared a Briefing Paper on the issue and how to make a response. You can download this and other related papers from www.laragb.org (press releases)

For more information contact Alan Kind on laragb@mac.com LARA, PO Box 142, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 5YP.

The Government Paper:

Department for Communities and Local Government.

How change of use is handled in the planning system - tell us what you think. Issues paper. June 2011.

This is available as a pdf download at: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/changeuseissues

You can read the Minister's announcement at: www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1930564

What is being proposed now?

Nothing is being proposed yet. This *Issues Paper* is simply seeking comments, but it is the premise in the *Issues Paper*, that motor sport causes problems, that we have to tackle straight away.

Ed: While this does not appear to directly affect trail riding - who knows - it might at a later date.



TRF MEMBERS TAKEN TO TRIAL

A dozen Northern TRF members recently enjoyed a skills enhancement evening at Cowm Leisure. John, the boss there, was most impressed with the skill level shown by the boys and would be interested in offering similar opportunities (includes a tough enduro course) to any similar group. Telephone 07970 101879 or email john@cowmleisure.com for further details.



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TRAIL RIDING NEW ZEALAND

Things are different here can't just hop on your bike and hit the lanes as there are none (which I miss from the UK) unless you want to do the beaches which are OK but not that exciting. The main thing here is day trail rides which are normally run as charity events over private land run by rural schools or rural communities either 40 or more kilometre loops or one big day loop which are the best ones into the forests.

I do about six a year during the summer on my WR250F and have included some pics of a recent 100km loop which was a good one.

Looking at selling the WR to get something bigger like a DR650 to do some more adventure riding as there are lots of gravel roads through forests with great camping opportunities and a bit of a group of people doing this sort of thing here, there are things called paper roads which were set up before tarmac roads but don't have much legal status although most farmers will let you use them as long as you respect the farm, all have guns so

you have to be very careful!!!

Paul Kemp

Taken from the Devon Newsletter May 2011

NB For those who don't know, Paul Kemp is an ex pat & Devon trail rider who, despite moving half way around the world to Hawke's Bay, New Zealand, remains a paid up member of the TRF.



Floating the Titanic

Rich "XR" Bond Heads East

"I clucked like a chicken and moved my elbows in and out today in a café and got served pizza and chips. I don't have a technique for miming salad but would really like one".

10TH JUNE

Left Tony's at about midday, thought I had a world of time to get to the tunnel for my 5pm train but only just made it.

The bike only did 270 miles to a tank of fuel! Not sure if this is because it's pulling a hefty load in high winds, or if it's because I don't have reserve set on one of the lobes of the tank. Lobes - I think I got that word from an Austin Vince talk.

The main thing with the bike is that the seat is so uncomfortable, not to mention the awful drone and vibration from the engine. Anyway I'll have time to love it later.

1st campsite is not the most healthy. The drive from Devon yesterday and the driving today have been very wet and windy. I've been thinking all the way that I should have a neck warmer, and am a bit concerned about catching cold as my neck has felt the driving so far.

So, not thinking ahead I've stopped in a small lane for the night, which is very damp and I'm planning on sleeping out in the long wet grass. I'm only a short distance from the motorway, I saw this little grassy lane 90 degrees from the motorway on one of those little farm roads that always seem to follow along side it, and

doubled back to it. If I'm not discovered by dusk, I'll get in my bivvy bag in hope to sleep till dawn. Didn't take a photo of the mileage so will note it now. Distance covered 440.5 miles. Goodnight to me.

11TH JUNE

The Belgians have a thing for old jet fighters on roundabouts, who knew! So far the only near miss of the trip, I was too interested in the fighter to pay enough attention to the roundabout. On a similar note, I must be more careful and concentrate on the road and not the sat nav. No motorways today but gosh it was slow going this morning, picked up in the afternoon and also the sun shone for the first time since leaving Devon. Goodnight.

13TH JUNE

By chance, was the SatNav's doing, I crossed into Poland at the old checkpoint that I've used many times before ferrying students to Poland as part of my old job. It was a joy to drive past this place again. In the past it has taken 5 hours to cross into Poland here but I used this route because the main one could have you waiting all day. The border is a river bridge with the exit being from one side from Europe, the iron bridge as no man's land and entry to the former Soviet bloc on the other. How isolated it looks

now, all totally rundown and unused.

There's a huge open market on the Polish side. In the past we have all been too frightened to use it. A place from the imagination of a Star Wars set, enter here to buy anything and exit in only your underpants. If ever there was the scent of mafia, this was it. Now all gone, a hotel and shopping mall on the other side of the road changes the place completely.

So a couple of days R&R in Poznan and an early start, back on the road this morning. I've stopped after a reasonable days ride, its 1800hrs now. Still my main issue is saddle soreness. I got some baby bottom cream but it's no substitute for a decent saddle, boy do I wish I'd spent the money on a decent one.

Had an eye opener the other day. At my last campsite I picked up a sheep tick on my shin. Having never had one before I didn't manage to get it out in one piece. In Poland, don't know about the UK, they carry a very unpleasant disease. A trip to a friendly vet was organized.

He gave me a device for pulling them out, twist it twice he said which way was my first thought? He also furnished me with a scalpel but stopped short of cutting the head out for me. As I'm as blind as a bat my friend had to cut it out, which took a bit of an age! Now I have to keep an eye on it and make sure it doesn't go a funny colour. With that in mind, tonight's campsite is a bit of a disaster. Sore bottom forces me to pull over into the Polish woods, but it's alive with mosquitoes and no doubt more ticks. To be honest, I'm hiding in my tent! Although I made a cup of tea I'm not braving the mossies to cook dinner, cold sardines it is. Out of here in the morning and into the Ukraine.

16TH JUNE

Crossing over into the Ukraine, about an hour and a half. The border guard had watched the 'Longways Round' and liked Ewan and Charley! And on that note I had a great sense of relief. Maybe, and I say this with eternal hope, the days of faking enthusiasm at English or Scottish football players are over, replaced with nods and thumbs up for the intrepid duo.

Having travelled in odd places before, I know from experience that football is a universal language, which is a shame because I know nothing about it and similarly have no interest. But there have been many times from drunken foreign squaddies on trains to drug gangs in the growing fields of Morocco, that the shaking of hands and exclamation of national pride players has greatly eased and settled the air.

I had mistakenly thought the Ukraine would be western-ised, not so different from Poland but no. The border was just like crossing into Poland 15 years ago. The same iron bridge and barking Alsatians. The guards however were friendly and helpful. Advising me which petrol stations had reliable quality fuel, to travel only by main roads, to stay in only quality hotels and not to camp for my own protection. On me leaving he said, "Welcome to Russia". Which I thought was very odd and a bit unnerving.

Just on the other side there were some scabby looking kiosks, but even though I had no currency, I wasn't changing any here. Not telling anyone here how much I'm travelling with.

18TH JUNE

I always knew it would be a slog down through the Ukraine, with Russia to come. Limped the bike into a 3 star hotel last night. My chain had started chewing teeth on the rear sprocket so 1st of the maintenance jobs to be done. I figured that the hotel cost would include a clean environment for the task in the morning and if there were problems there would be help nearby.

Just as well, the front sprocket was a mare to get off. BMW tell you to remove the rear swing arm, where do those service dollars go? The socket ratchet that I've had for almost 10 reliable years springs open like popcorn never to turn another bolt again. I broke one chain link fish and over stressed the 2nd one, I only had the two of them. Going to try and get a dozen more at the next opportunity, it seems I've lost the means to get them attached satisfactorily.

It was will power alone that got me to leave the hotel, another night's stay and rest was calling, not to mention the swimming pool that I hadn't had the time to use.

I didn't get far before I was stopped by the 1st stunning location I'd come across. The river Had to stop for a swim. Introduced myself to a family riding a 1953 Ural. They were very pleased to share their BBQ with me, wild boar he had shot himself. Once I had introduced myself I was a welcome guest but I think if I hadn't then they would not have spoken to me. Perhaps Ukranian people are happy to give you your space even if you are a bit unusual.

19TH JUNE

The river here is very beautiful. In places looking tropical, (it's hot enough). However there are very few places you can get to, a lot of reeds and not much river bank. You get the lay of the land. Where there is access to the river there is a town or city and so lots of people. I haven't camped by it for this reason. When I turned south at Kiev there was a sign of a loaf of bread which I took to mean that this was the agricultural region. Very much so but that does mean that the campsites to date have been remarkably uninteresting and difficult to spot. Tonight's is relatively mosquito free although I have managed to get stung and bitten.

Communication here is also pointless. I clucked like a chicken and moved my elbows in and out today in a café and got served pizza and chips. I don't have a technique for miming salad but would really like one.

It's so hot here and it doesn't get any cooler until well after the sun has gone down. Riding in full bike gear is just asking for heat exhaustion, so have cut the lining out of my trousers and was riding in a T-shirt today, something I would never do back home. An R1 type sports bike went by me today at well over the ton and he didn't even have a helmet on! My general speed is around 45mph, which is as I expected.

21ST - 22ND JUNE

Volgograd in the pouring rain, when it rains here you get wet, of course, but you also get black with all the spray from the trucks. 3 hours or so looking for a bike shop and managed to find the only one. Spare chain fish and a new one fitted, a socket tool and the bike cleaned, no charge. I've asked them to change the tyres over to the deserts, I should leave it a day or so, but may well get the maintenance all out of the way. I'm sure they must charge me for this, we will see.

I asked about a hotel and they told me there is a biker's house and to stay is no charge. Ok, so why not? The manager of the shop drives me to the bikers' house. It is a palace, the family home of a local businessman. The garage is set up with swimming pool and dining table for 10, bike paraphernalia everywhere. I sign my name on the wall next to the Huabusa and the Can-Am, a 160mph 3 wheeler! It's a home of luxury and opulence in a Muslim style. The son aged 17 or so speaks good English and tell me the Can-Am is his. They are an Azerbaijan family of 5 with visiting uncles. I'm fed and we look at maps, photos and bike videos. I'm clean and the idea of riding out to the desert from this comfort seems as remote as it is.

I pay 18 Dollars for the tyre change and am very happy not to have done it myself. TRF stickers are given to all the bikers at the shop, all wishing me well. I have to say that Russian biker hospitality is a bit overwhelming. The young Can-Am owner gives me the tourist tour of the city on his mean machine with Russian Rap for a sound-track. I leave Volgograd just as the skies open and am soaked within 5 minutes.

It's easy to be frightened of Russia but everyone I've spoken to has been honest and upfront. Trying to hide from the rain I pull into a café for food. 4 vodka drinking lads are doing the same. It seems that Russians don't introduce themselves and they are very stony faced, there's no nod or acknowledgment. Feeling intimidated by this I stand-up and go shake hands and offer my name, they all do the same and everything is relaxed.

I DONT HAVE WATERPROOF TROUSERS, they

tore on the 1st day, leaving Devon. Having had enough of saddle soreness and a wet backside, I don't get far out of Volgograd before I pull over and pitch an early tent. It's not raining now but it sounds like it is. The rhythm on the outside of the tent isn't rain its mosquitoes! I could have taken a hotel tonight but my tent was packed away wet and needed the airing. You have to be desperate to leave the tent and risk letting any more inside. It might seem like an arduous holiday but I'm on an adventure which in my mind starts the day after tomorrow.

FRIDAY 24TH

It seems I never have enough time. Two days ago, after leaving Volgograd and I manage about 50 miles. Dodging the thunder storms by stopping at cafés for coffee I finally give up on riding and make camp quarter of a mile into a field behind some trees. It was probably the most remote of camps so far but I was woken in the morning by angry shouts in Russian. It was the farmer who's land it was, he wasn't angry, just a grumpy old man. All he wanted was to say hello and see who I was. Riding the quarter mile back over the field and by the time I'd reached the road I had a flat tyre and no air in the rear air shock.

When I get two problems at the same time my strategy is to ignore the difficult one and fix what I can. Turns out that the garage that changed tyres only did up the tyre clamp a cursory amount and fully tightened the valve nut, resulting in the obvious torn valve from the tube. I can't blame the Russian garage totally as I've had my bike back from Ocean BMW in exactly the same condition. I should have known and checked everything before I left. However I have never been any good at multi-tasking and my mind was occupied with the good will shown to me.

The farmer insisted I change the tube at his farm where he would make some tea. He also insisted that I repair the tube; the word vulcanizing convinced me that some man in the direction I was going had some. I opted to fit a new tube, not trusting enough in a valve re-glue that wouldn't have me removing the wheel

again in the too near future. At this time it came to pass that my pump decided to give up the ghost. Seems like every tried and tested tool I have is rebelling against the Russian air.

Someone from the nearby village was summoned with a pump, how I have no idea, the grumpy old farmer didn't have a mobile I'm sure and there was nobody for miles. So maybe the cows here are clever enough to know the green cross code. Tyre refitted and attention turned to the shock, for ease I fitted the elbow bend from the wheel to pump up the shock. The shock held the air, so I can only assume that the valve on the air shock had gone and the secondary one is attempting to do the job. The shock is losing air slowly and I will have to see how things go in the coming days. I've praised the BMW shock and suspension in the past but out here it is woefully inadequate, at best it is wooden and poor.

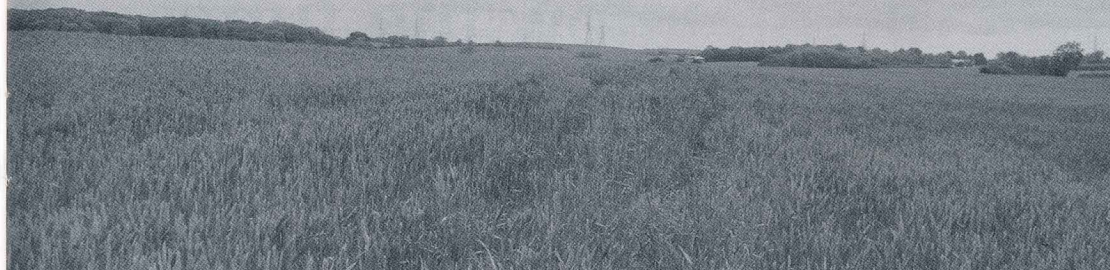
The idea struck me that Mongolia might be littered with fallen touring KTM's and I could pick up a spring for the back. Reality strikes and I realize that finding a nice white power shock out here would be like finding intelligent life on another planet. My optimism tells me that it's only the valve it might be a standard fit.

Got pulled by the Russian police again on my last day here. They were Mongolian Russian police this time. They also had the toy radar but decided not to book me. Instead it was the football chat that got me off the ticket, and I thought those days were gone! Football the international get out of jail free card.

I crossed into Kazakhstan last night. Even though it's noted as a boring country to ride, the enthusiasm it inspires is very welcome. The landscape changes at the border and is so different from Russia and Europe that you know that nothing ahead will be normal. The roadside is camel land and 1950s oil wells, not easy to find a campsite. Looking forward to a hotel, a hot shower and some bike maintenance time.

To be continued...

Byway & Bridleway



Somewhere in this crop is a byway open to all traffic. And it is not just any old BOAT. The English Army marched north along here on their way to the Battle of Flodden in 1513. Henry VIII would have put someone's head on a pike for this, but nobody seems to care anymore. The full story is in issue 2011/8 of Byway and Bridleway, and you can subscribe free of charge at www.bbtrust.org.uk. Go on ... you don't know what you are missing.

Alan Kind

COPY FOR TRAIL

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HUMM Along

...if you know the tune

PART 1

by Stephen Nash & Co

Introduction by Austin Vince

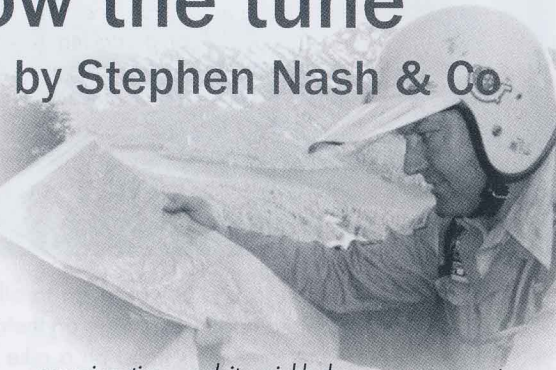
After Mondo Enduro back in 1996 my friends and I were keen to start off-roading. Amazingly, to readers of this journal, I only discovered 'trail riding' per se in 1999!! I had no idea such a thing existed!

Instead, in the late 90s, my brother Gerald and I used to organise ridiculous trips for our mates out to the deserts of Almeria. There, we would whizz around the valleys made famous in For A Few Dollars More etc. After three years of this we read an article in TBM about trailing in the Pyrenees. We launched a flamboyant recce out to Andorra and discovered almost zero trail riding. Dispirited that our impetuosity bore no fruit we realised we would have to actually 'prepare'.

Back pedal to the early 90s; whilst launching schoolboy mountain leadership expeditions to the Sierra Nevada in Spain I had inevitably come into contact with the 1:50,000 maps generated by the Spanish Military. These were satisfactory but not amazing but that didn't stop us buying twelve adjacent sheets that covered the area around Tremp and Sort in the Spanish Pyrenees.

Laboriously we worked at the huge group craft tables in my school's Art Dept. Owning the maps was one thing, knowing where the trails were was another! It took about twenty hours with draughtsman's pens over marking the maps so as to highlight the 'through' trails that splendidly connected one mighty valley system with another.

Eventually, in the summer of 2000, me, Gerald and six buddies loaded the transit van and hit the Pyrenees with our maps. We had an



amazing time and it quickly became apparent that the self navigation, at times challenging, was at the heart of our axis of fun!

Over the subsequent years I raved to any friends that would listen about the thrills of tough map reading combined with killer trails. Remember, we're talking about doing 30 miles at a time between tarmac liaison sections!! I searched my brain for a way to get all my TRF friends out to the Pyrenees en masse. I tried giving away pre-marked maps but that just took ages. Around this time I was courting Lois Pryce and teaching ITC at my school. After doing a fairly complex year 8 publishing project involving scans, inserting photos and text boxes I suddenly had the light bulb moment!

And it was this: If Lois and I rode a load of trails on a given map sheet, laid out metal dog tags each bearing a different serial number as 'checkpoints', photographed them all and scanned the map, then using the computer I could create a checkpoint booklet, one page per checkpoint.

A few weeks later Lois and I were discussing what we were going to do on our honeymoon in the summer of 2005. I went into charm mode and said; "Sweetheart, I've got this idea for an orienteering dirt-bike event in the Pyrenees. However, for it to happen we've got to get out

there and set it up." It was obvious that I had mated for life when she smiled at me and said "I'm in".

"We ran a pilot 'dry run' with some mates and then went straight to Grant and Susan Johnson at Horizons Unlimited, the legendary motorcycle travellers' website. We pitched the idea to them and they agreed to run and host the event whilst Lois and I kept producing a 'new' map each year thereafter. We christened this DIY spectacular; The Horizons Unlimited Mountain Madness, known very quickly thereafter, as the HUMM.

We were living the dream ..

First afternoon in the HUMM going for our first checkpoint. Except we weren't. We were lost, in rather gnarly terrain, on a Spanish mountain which looked as if it could only get steeper. To make matters worse my team partner was having second thoughts about the whole endeavour. "I don't think I can do this" was not what I wanted to be hearing, within the first hour of a 3 day off-road event I spent the best part of a year preparing for.

So how did this all come to pass. Well, a few years ago I had the good fortune to ride past Lois Pryce and Austin Vince as they made their way down the M3 to Southampton. They were off to catch a ferry to Spain to organise HUMM 2008. I followed them into a service station and introduced myself. I have to admit that despite being a huge fan of Austin and Mondo Enduro I recognised Lois. (I actually had her book in my tank bag) and even when she said, this is Austin I didn't twig she meant the Austin rather than just an Austin. Doh! I'm so sorry Austin. They didn't take their helmets off. I didn't even know they were married!

Anyway, I got my children's school to invite Lois down to speak about 6 months later and whilst visiting she enlightened me on the HUMM (Horizons Unlimited Mountain Madness). It is a 3 day off-road event around the Pyrenees. An out of season ski hotel is taken over and Grant and Susan Johnson (round the world travel gurus) along with help from Austin and Lois organise the whole thing. Teams of 2 to 4 riders have to reach as many



checkpoints as possible over the 3 days. No sat-navs, just road books and maps. The more check points found the more points you get.

Having done a number of road tours I was definitely looking for a big adventure but it would mean selling my beloved FJ1200 and loads of planning, training etc, etc plus, more importantly, using a huge amount of brownie points with the family.

Well it went to the back of the things I ought to do pile and then I had a conversation with a work mate about us doing it together. Colin and I had trained together 20 years ago and he had become a keen motorcyclist like me. We were starting to think that this could be more than a pipe dream when a few weeks later he dropped the bombshell that he had bowel cancer. 5 months later he died. Colin was 42.

Well, what do you do? The following September I was looking around the internet when I saw that entries were being invited for HUMM 2010. My brilliant wife got out the diary and said, when is it? OK, if you can get us set up on the family holiday you can do it

and then join us down in Cornwall. The plan was to ride down on my own, rough camping through France Mondo Enduro style, and then hook up with a team at the event. The Johnsons will sort this out.

Which bike?

The bike really found me. My off road experience consisted of 1 day's taught trials riding on a 125 Yamaha trials bike (loved it) and a weekend at the BMW off road school on a GS1200 and then a F800GS (the 800 is better). I broke my elbow during the course but only realised when I got home they don't give you body armour which strikes me as a bit daft, though the training is excellent. I was fortunate enough to have Tamsin Jones (British Dakar heroin 2010) as one of my instructors.

I then had a weekend at the Suzuki off road school in Totnes where I discovered the excellent DRZ400e. A day on the indoor motocross course and another green laning was a blast.

You can see a theme here smaller = better in the bush.

Well the weeks passed and I hadn't found a bike. I had looked at CRF230s a bit too wee. BMW F650s a bit too big. A CCM a bit scary quick, and then walking into a local car garage, leant against a wall with a rug thrown over it at the back of the workshop was a very yellow Suzuki DRZ400e. It looked a little sad and unused and I discovered after a quick chat with a mechanic that it belonged to the garage owner. It was 7 years old but had only 1500 miles on the clock. It had been bought to do enduros but a divorce had got in the way of that little dream and so here it was. Just MOTd with new tyres and left at the back of the garage waiting for me. A few haggles later and the yellow peril was mine result.

Prior to getting the DRZ I was not the sort of motorcyclist who could strip his engine on a Friday night and have it rebuilt by Saturday teatime. My FJ despite having loads of work done on it was always trotted up to the FJ owners club and the legendary spanner twirler Phil Doc Hacker. I think the most

mechanical thing I've ever done to it was an oil change and fit the rack. I knew things would need to be different with the DRZ. Number 1 - there is no similar DRZ club on my doorstep and number 2 - when you're stuck out in the bush on a broken bike there's no AA man to come to the rescue.

So I joined the Devon TRF (what they don't collectively know about trail bikes isn't worth knowing) and Clymer manual in hand and lots of scanning of the thumper talk website, I started to bring the DRZ up to HUMM / adventure bike standard and discover my hitherto unused mechanical talents. First up were the general recommendations. Rental Dakar high bars, MT43 rear tyre, stainless steel front and rear wheel spacers and gear shaft spacer, new wheel bearing and seals, chain and sprockets, new air and oil filter, manual cam-chain tensioner, brighter bulbs, new rear disc and front and rear pads and split-fire plug. Re-route the breather hoses into the air box, fit engine and radiator guards (frame and sump guards already fitted).

Then my own personal preferences. I value comfort on a bike very highly and the DRZ is built for comfort like Gordon Brown is built for love. I find it hard to comprehend that bike manufacturers spend squillions getting an extra BHP here or fitting the latest anti-wheel spin, engine mapping, ABS gizmo there and then they shout into the stores room for a



saddle and Billy nips down to Jewson's and gets the cheapest, roughest, narrowest plank of wood available. As I was going to be doing long hours in the saddle this had to be sorted so a quick visit to the local upholsterers and an extra inch of foam all over plus a nice tan leather cover was added. This helped but it still wasn't long hours comfy so a 2nd hand cruiser gel pad off e-bay plus a sheepskin saddle pad from www.lambland.co.uk and I'd cracked it. Suzuki please take note that's how to make a comfy saddle.

For my overland adventuring I already had a pair of the excellent Andy-strapz expedition panniers so a tool roll and wolf man handlebar bag, Enduro tank bag and inner tube fender bag were added. I also changed the M6 bolts that hold the rear side covers in place for stainless eye bolts to assist strapping and hauling.

After much experimentation the sprocket choice was 15 fronts, 47 rears for the event and 41 rears for the road trip down. It takes less than 20 minutes to split the chain and change the rear sprocket and is easier than messing about with the front sprocket. Last, but not least, my daughter's 'Gnasher' know which side of the road to ride on device was added. This is a piece of Velcro that goes across the handlebar brace pad and the head of Gnasher from the Beano on another piece of Velcro. Depending on what side of the road you should be on you move Gnasher to that side simply brilliant. The number of times in the USA or France when having had a pit stop I've

pulled out onto an empty road only to find myself a few miles later happily whizzing down the wrong side of the carriage way into oncoming traffic means this device is a life saver!

Team Revs!

You are supposed to enter the HUMM as a team but they will take solo entrants and match them up. In fact this year second place team were one such pairing (one from Exeter) and had it not been for them dropping a bike over a cliff and spending 2 1/2 hours getting it back they would have won. I mentioned through my work motorcycle club that I was going on the HUMM and unexpectedly one member put their hand up. Well they did more than that. Dave phoned me up and said I've sold my bike, bought a DRZ400S and am coming with you. Team Revs was born. Dave did a sterling job of blagging cheap kit from Ghost Bikes of Preston, recommended for all bargain off road kit - and spent hours fettling his bike so it would be up to the task. He also tried to discover the secret solution to a comfy DRZ saddle but went for the more professional approach of recovering with gel pad insert. I told him to get a sheepskin but alas it never materialised and it came to pass that his bottom was to suffer mightily. Unfortunately, whilst his bike was ready to do the Dakar Dave hadn't prepared himself to the same standard. This was down to lack of opportunity. I live in the TRF heaven that is Devon and he in Lancashire. I had done some training plus test weekend trips, he hadn't. I am used to riding long distances 400+ miles a day, he wasn't. If you plan to do the HUMM:

- (a) get some professional training rather than ride a bit with a mate and;
- (b) start doing some distance work because for distance you need to know what it feels like physically and mentally.

I should have been more switched on to this as I think it stopped him really enjoying himself. A few weeks before the off Dave visited me (that was his longest journey to date - 225 miles) and I took him on some of the lanes north of Tiverton for 3 hours. He had an off on the first

lane which really shook him and when we had finished he acted as though he'd just won the British Moto GP. Lack of proper training just made the whole experience a bigger challenge for him both mentally and physically but, all credit to him, with a little white lying from me about how far we had to go each day, and loads of encouragement he kept going to the end.

D-Day

D-Day arrived with the usual rush of stuff still to do. This was not helped by the fact that work was busier than a bee hive at the busy honey making time of the year and that I had to fulfil my part of the deal and get the family camping holiday set up in Cornwall. The night before set off the electrics failed on my bike. I could turn the motor over but there were no lights. I spent an hour trying to solve the fault then a quick dash to K&M motorcycles in Willand. They traced the fault to a simple chaffed wire and 20 minutes later I was ready to roll, phew! All power to them, fitting me in at 5:00pm on a wet Thursday at 5 minutes notice. Next day a sprint down to Truro with caravan and tents and 4 hours later I shot home to get changed and catch the ferry.

At 7:30pm with a cheery send off from my family Team Revs rolled off down the A396 to Exeter then onto Plymouth and our Ferry. Bikes safely stowed a couple of beers and I slept like a log. Pre-trip nerves hit Dave and he slept like a twig. Dawn in Roscoff and a 900 mile journey of D-roads lay before us to reach the HUMM start line at Hotel HG La Molina.

Fuelled with a coffee and croissants Team Revs rolled into France wearing pretty much everything we had brought with us as it was a tad chilly. Just before we disembarked we bumped into HUMM entrants Nick and Ian. They were on 650 X-challenge BMWs and planned to do the whole of France in just two days (we were taking 3). Nick and Ian proved to be absolute stars and you couldn't have met two nicer, hardcore bikers.

Up over the Brittany Mountains south of Morlaix then the D769 to La Faouet for the first fuel stop and more coffee. I know this village

and headed for a café on the square. Within moments of stopping we noticed water pouring out of Dave's bike. The café owner came out with a vast tool kit but further inspection revealed a pin prick hole in a hose.

Just as the gaffer tape was about to come out the café owner announced that he had phoned his mate 1km down the road who had a bike shop and he would sort us out. 5 minutes later we were in Michael's workshop. He pulled the lawn mower off the ramp and started working on the stricken Suzuki.

Despite the engine being red hot he got the hose off, drained the radiator and then cut a replacement item from a mound of mower spares. He fitted the new hose, boiled the radiator up to ensure no air blocks et voila. An hour after hitting the café with a dead bike we were rolling again. He advised we get an OS part fitted when we got back but to be honest the part he fitted was better than OS and it never gave us any trouble the rest of the trip.

The miles rolled on as we crossed Brittany and then crossed into the Loire. The roads were perfect and we hardly saw another vehicle. I had promised Dave that we would hotel the first night as we had such a big mileage to cover on the first day. We were booked into Route 66 just south of Poitiers. This now meant we had to ride quite hard to get there at a decent time; stopping only at tank fills (90 miles) every hour and a half. At 8:00pm, after 13 hours in the saddle we rolled into the court yard of Route 66.

It proved to be the perfect stopping point. Excellent food, great rooms, huge soft beds, cold beer (though 4 Euros a pint!) and good company, other bikers on their travels. Harry, who runs the place, was an excellent host and 4 pints later I had become an excellent guest.

Day 2

Next morning Dave took a medicine chest of pain killers to cope with the bottom battering his saddle was about to give him. I had another day of D routes planned but skipped the first 120 miles opting for the faster but more boring and costly A road. This was to allow us an earlier finish in Castelnaudary

(home of the Foreign Legion) and to save bottom wear. A roads are not the place to be on a 400 single, loaded with spares and kit but we made good time. Turning onto the D roads just north of Toulouse we were then back into the glorious French countryside. Sunflower fields on either side of the road magical. A chance meeting with a fellow Brit (resident in France) at a petrol station got us to the municipal campsite with the minimum of fuss and to celebrate day twos 280 miles I treated Dave to a slap up meal at the Petite Cassoulet. Unfortunately, I misread the menu and instead of Cassoulet I ended up with sausage and chips! Dave had decided not to bring his camping stuff which meant the Nash tent was pretty snug that night but no matter; Team Revs pushed out the ZZZs. Day 2 down and closer to our goal.

Day 3

The next morning I rustled up coffee and porridge on the camp stove before hitting the road. After a quick Van Gogh moment amongst the Sunflowers we headed to Foix and the looming Pyrenees. The weather had turned a mite chilly, windy and overcast so a mega coffee and toasted jambon sarnie was in order before a last fuel stop and heading upwards towards the Spanish border. Dave announced that his backside had passed away somewhere amongst the twisty mountain roads. I expect it was the altitude. I cheered him up by reminding him that if it was dead at least it would no longer feel any pain and he'd save a fortune on NUROFEN.

The tunnels through the mountains were something else over 5km long. And then there we were, Spain - sun shining, sky blue and road signs incomprehensible. Yep this was Spain. 45 minutes after crossing the border we were winding our way through the deserted streets of La Molina. Normally a buzzing ski resort but for the next few days base camp for the HUMM 2010.

Pulling up at the hotel LG Molina we met Tony and John camped out in the car park with their delightful families. They had motored down in vans and were sleeping in the hotel but eating around the vans to save on the dosh. They



would be riding KTM 400s in the competition. After a quick introduction and an offer of a bike stand and tools we had the DRZs unloaded and the wheels off and sprockets changed to the bigger 47 rears. Gear stowed in the amazing 5 star, double height bedrooms, hung my tent to dry on the curtain rail and promptly washed all my smelly kit in the shower. Dave and I found the local corner shop and purchased a slab of cold beers. This was for Tony and John as a thank you.

As we stood in the sun and shared a beer, riders from all over Europe started to roll in. The BMW GS1200s, F800s and a small herd of XT660 teneres. More interestingly 7 DRZ400s arrived on mass and our friends Nick and Ian. Basically, you name a bike and it was there KTMs, Suzukis, Yamahas (TTR250s, WRF450s), Kawasaki KLE500s and monster Honda XL 650s, Transalps and Africa twins. The exotic stuff and the unexpected. There were even two Honda C90s with knobbies on.

Well 3 hours later we staggered back to our rooms 24 empty beers cans and a cooling barbeque to show for what was supposed to be a quick thank you to the car park dwellers. Phase 1 was complete. We had made it to the start line. As I fell over my panniers and collapsed onto my bed I couldn't help smiling. I was actually here. Who knew what tomorrow would bring besides a monster hangover.

To be continued.....

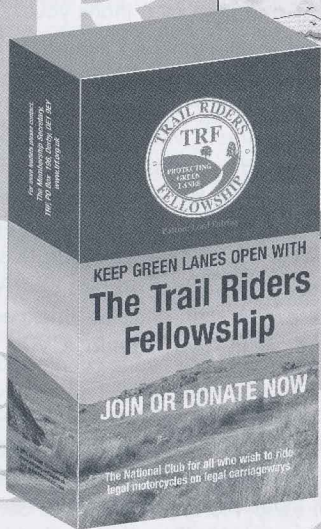
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BLACK COUNTRY John Oseland, Tel: 01902 656011 1st Tues, 9pm, The Longford House, Watling Street, Cannock.

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CORNWALL Adam Hedley, Tel: 01579 349217 3rd Thurs, 7.30 - 8.00 p.m., The Borough Arms, Bodmin.

CUMBRIA & CRAVEN Roger Harris, Tel: 01539 725198 2nd Tues, 7.30pm, The Gilpin Bridge Hotel & Inn, Bridge End, Levens, Nr. Kendal LA8 8EP (on A5074 at junction with A590).

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DEVON John Heal, Tel: 01626 366860 2nd Tues, 8pm, The Dolphin Hotel, Station Road, Bovey Tracey, TQ13 9AL.

DORSET W. John Williamson, Tel: 01929 553640, Mob: 07850 727873 1st Tues, 8pm, Greyhound Inn, Winterbourne, Kingston, Nr. Bere Regis.

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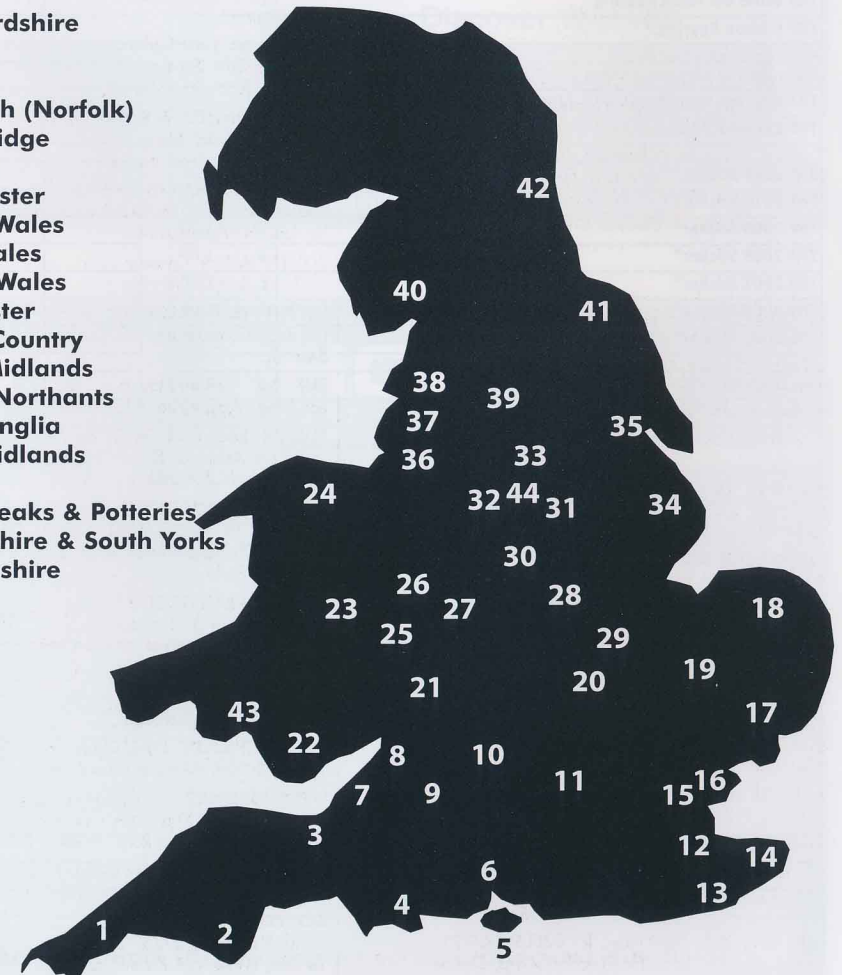
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