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#### WEST YORKSHIRE

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#### WEST WILTSHIRE

Bill Riley, 141 Bath Road,  
Bradford on Avon. Tel: B on A 3811

#### WYVERN

Gwyn James, 18 The Spinney,  
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1st Wednesday. The Fox & Grapes,  
Chester Road, Hawarden, Clwyd  
(nr Queensferry & Mold)

1st Wednesday. Red Lion Hotel,  
Radlett, Herts.

2nd and last Wednesday of month  
(except December). Bell Inn,  
Cross Houses.

Last Thursday 8.00 p.m.  
Ruishton Inn, Ruishton, Taunton.

2nd Tuesday. Pied Bull, Farningham,  
Kent.

1st Wednesday. Epsom & Ewell  
Football Club, West Street, Ewell,  
Surrey.

3rd Wednesday. Priory Inn,  
Bishops Waltham - B2177  
(formerly the A333)

Contact John (every other month)  
4th Wednesday ie. Feb, April, etc)  
Hassocks Hotel, Hassocks.

1st Wednesday. The Station Hotel,  
Kirby, Near Stokesley.

3rd Monday. District Arms,  
Woodthorpe Road, Ashford, Middx.

Last Tuesday. Lansdown Club, Milton  
Trading Estate, Nr Abingdon.

1st & 3rd Thursdays. Scott Bader  
Club House (opp. Parish Church),  
Wollaston, near Wellingborough.

1st & 3rd Thursdays. The Hollybush,  
Gorcott Hill, Beoley, Near Redditch,  
Worcestershire.

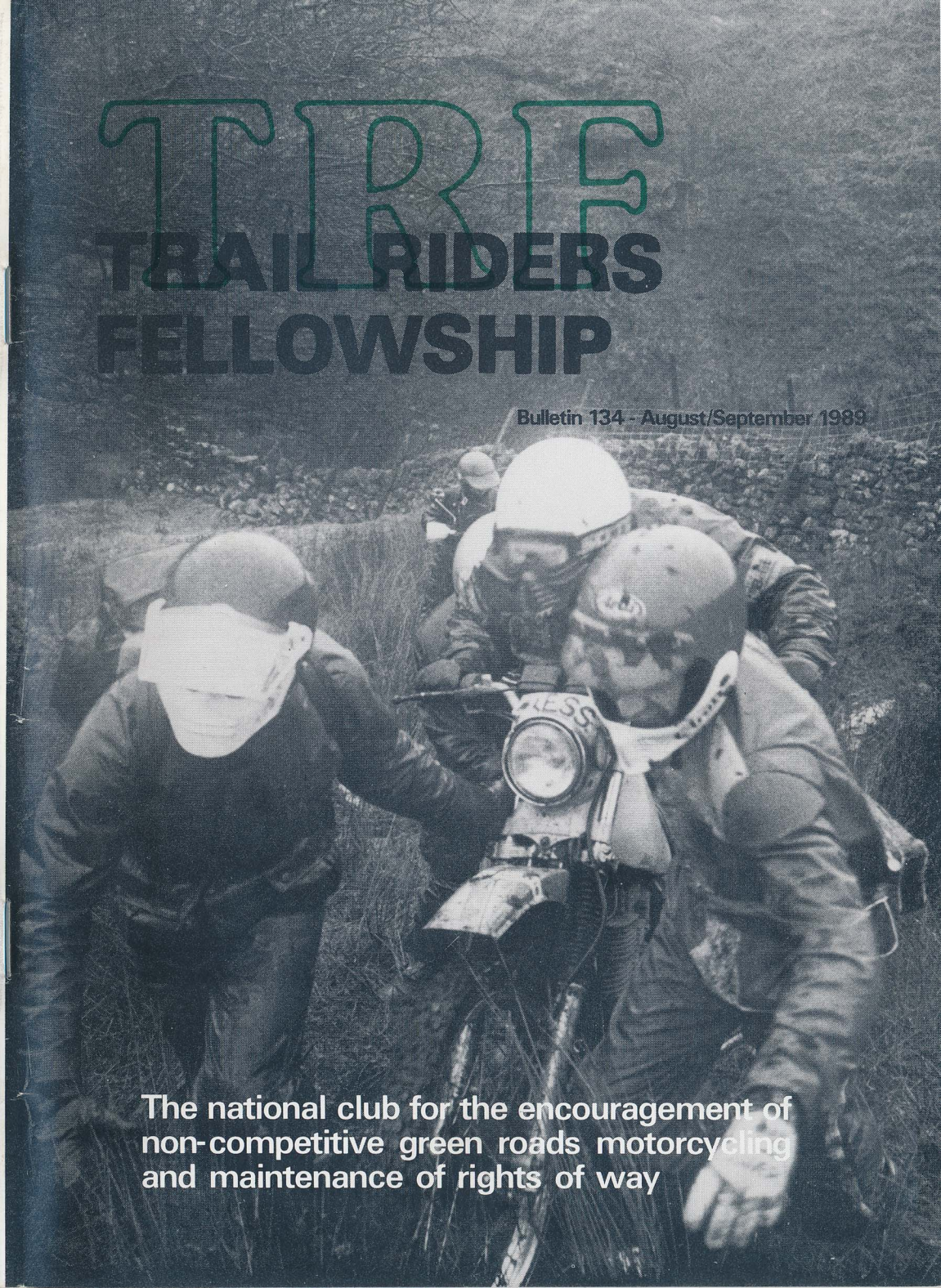
1st & 3rd Monday, Frizinghall  
Conservative Club, Off Manningham  
Lane, Bradford

Phone Bill Riley

Every Thursday 9.30 p.m.  
Hill & Cakemore Ex-Servicemen's Club,  
Victoria Road, Blackheath, W Midlands

# TRE TRAIL RIDERS FELLOWSHIP

Bulletin 134 - August/September 1989



The national club for the encouragement of  
non-competitive green roads motorcycling  
and maintenance of rights of way

## TRAIL RIDERS FELLOWSHIP

Bulletin 134 - August/September 1989

### FUTURE EVENTS

#### SEPTEMBER

23rd/24th Northumbria Weekend. Ride over the Roman Drovers and Rivers Roads across the Cheviots into Scotland. Ride the old Lead Roads of Hexhamshire. Well worth a trip up the M1. All tracks untouched by 4WD. For more details send SAE to Dave Vaughan, 15 Seaburn Gardens, Sunderland, SR6 8BT

Please contact your Group Rep for details of any trail rides in your own area. Addresses at back of Bulletin.

*Cover Photo -*

### NATIONAL COMMITTEE

#### Chairman

David J Giles, 22 Ford Lane, Allestree, Derby, DE3 2EW

#### Secretary

John Higgin, 197 Britten Road, Brighton Hill, Basingstoke, Hampshire.  
Tel: 0256 841350

#### Treasurer

Tim Ley, 17 Heigham Close, Shelton Lock, Derby, DE2 9QF

#### Membership Secretary

Tony Rose, 29 Anderson Drive, Kettering, Northants, NN15 5DG  
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#### Rights of Way Officer

Vacant

#### Editor

Tony Thew, 6 Glasslaw Road, Bitterne, Southampton SO2 5PE.  
Tel: 0703 476313

### EDITOR'S JOTTINGS

Many thanks to all those Group Secretaries, R.O.W. Officers, and members in general who responded to my appeal for articles and photographs. I now have plenty to choose from so can fill up the bulletin with ease.

A very special thanks this month must go to my wife, Pat, who has spent many hours at the keyboard, throughout the very hot weather, typing in more than 90% of what you are about to read! Several people have asked whether articles can be sent in on computer disc. The answer is yes, provided the disc is compatible with this computer. This computer is an Amstrad PC1640.HD20, using Wordstar 1512 software, and storing data on a Winchester disc and a 5.25" floppy disc. If you can understand all that, and have access to similar equipment, then I will be pleased to receive articles on you disc, which I can return once I have loaded it onto this machine.

I am sure that it will come as no surprise when I tell you that I am unable to continue as Editor after this issue. The reasons are many and varied, but mainly that the job is such a consumer of time that I am left with very little free time to enjoy my hobby of motorcycling. Coupled with increased responsibility at home and at work, I regret that I must resign. Any budding journalists, please step forward!

To those of you who have responded splendidly to my request for articles, a very big **THANKYOU**, there is now plenty of copy for the new Editor to carry on with.

### SHARING JULY 1989 - A personal appeal from our Chairman:

Here is the latest 'update' in a rapidly changing situation, things aren't bad just changing rather quickly, so that the whole TRF membership is going to have to get stuck in over the summer months, I will explain why in a moment.

Let me tell you of some of the good things if you haven't heard them already: an excellent standard of presentation by the contributors at the last Exec' meeting which focused on current ROW priorities, made it by general acclaim the best one yet. We learnt of:

\* The depth of research achieved by an 'ordinary' group and their significant success at County Review, from the Avon group.

\* The importance to the TRF as a whole the outcome of Bill Riley's appeal, as winning this appeal could mean a hell of a lot of green lanes becoming available for TRF use.

\* The actions we will need to make to enable us to Survive in the National Parks. It was suggested that we should:

Have a liaison officer for each Park

Ensure TRF representation at every Park consultative meeting

Get our leaflets into Park information offices

Contribute to Park Warden training courses

Liaise annually with all other motorised users within each Park

Participate in 'high profile' repair and maintenance activities within the Parks, and exploit the P.R.

\* The Ridgeways: Don't let our guard down in the Berks.  
It really is a battle in W. Sussex and they have had to take the TRF there very seriously indeed.

\* Wales: Is better than I had imagined. Co-operation with WTRA and the Cambrian Council, which co-ordinates motor sport, is a real possibility. Negotiation with Water Boards and the Forestry Commission gives reason for hope and must be pursued. We need an individual/team on this job.

Next good news: we have two excellent draft submissions for a Constitution which will take us into the '90s, and we have a working party of three members, under the chairmanship of Gwyn Thomas, that will highlight for us what is common and where we must decide upon alternatives.

John Higgins and myself have recently spent an afternoon at ACU headquarters speaking with Martin Elson, Oxford Poly, author of the 'Motorsport in the Countryside' Sports Council report, concerning future development of MOLARA - I think we made a strong input. It also gave me the opportunity to have quite a long chat with Gerry Coleman, Sec. General of the ACU, about improved liaison (remember that they are the official consultative body for motorcycling on ROW matters). That looked positive too.

The best news: Louise Braham phoned to say that the DoE had dropped their appeal on the Bill Riley case. Which means Bill has won!

So what is the panic implied in para' one ?

Well: we have three (4-Ed) very experienced officers to replace;

we must ease the work load of the existing officers. Be warned, the membership must take this very seriously.

we might well consider breaking jobs up into manageable tasks of say, 4, 8 or 12 hours per month instead of the herculean efforts they appear to be at present. We need more members involved at a level which they would personally consider acceptable.

we badly need a TRF information pack, Gareth Edwards has made a start on this and would like your contributions.

we need every member to participate in an 'Adopt a Lane' scheme, so that we remain the experts on what is happening to Green Lanes.

we must successfully repel an expected Autumn R. A. attack.

we meet each of those National Park requirements.

we must liaise with the NFU officers in each area.

we 'win' at Winchester!

What the hell is Winchester you ask ? Well I have been trying to break it to you gently, we have just one more demand placed upon us, we have to do all the above things so that they are the facts and not just the pious hopes before the beginning of October.

In a nutshell, Hampshire CC have tried to apply the law as it applies to the reclassification of RUPPS fairly and squarely on researched (by them) evidence, found far more than anyone expected and have now run into a storm of resentment led by published articles from Lord Denning.

Result: Edward Mason the County Secretary, has written two 'discussion papers

and now suggested a conference to be held in conjunction with the Countryside Commission National Parks and other interested bodies on 11th October 1989 at Winchester. Alan Kind has written two helpful replies to the earlier Mason papers - which were appreciated - and left room for manoeuvre, but its now escalating into something much bigger than the local 'Horse fair' where I had hoped that we could have used a 'flexible' response, as the local TRF group wished, to gain a fair and equitable outcome.

Alan tells me Lord Denning is to speak, as is John Trevelyan and a couple of other 'Big Whigs', so this will almost certainly have national implications. They may well be trying to set the scene for trying to change the law; particularly 'Once a road always a road' as anachronistic; times have changed, requirements have changed, the countryside needs to be managed, etc, etc. When the DoE dropped the Riley case did they know something we didn't? It makes one think!

The TRF has no option, if it wants to succeed, but to achieve all the objectives outlined above plus ride and log the current state of all the popular lanes, country wide, so that we might put together a current report that puts the whole question of over-use and damage into a true perspective! And contrasts the waste of public money on a 'problem' that is for the most part a combination of NIMBY and unsubstantiated fears.

The TRF response must be to sell HERITAGE. It is vital that we retain and protect through use (not abuse) the heritage of our ancient byway system. After all motorcycles have been 'green-laning' for nearly 90 years! a non-competitive organisation like the TRF is simply continuing to explore as recreation the whole of our byway system, just like our grandfathers did. And

the TRF will continue to fight for the common law rights of motorcyclists to do so.

Our argument will be strengthened if other agencies, like the 'Parks' and the NFU say how helpful we are because of the work we have been doing.

**Dave Giles. National Chairman.**

### Postscript and Summary

My communication became much longer than I originally envisaged so to ensure that the vital bits 'get through' and action results, here are the headlines.

There is a lot of good news but developments are rapid.

One volunteer liaison officer is required immediately for each National Park to initiate the listed suggestions.

Work is proceeding to 'update' our constitution

The Riley case has been won; the DoE has dropped its appeal.

Please consider needs, tasks and realistic limited commitment in place of the traditional executive roles.

The production of the TRF information pack (which could be varied to its target audience). Please make an input.

Regain our expertise (knowledge is power) on 'Green Lanes' by an 'adopt a lane' scheme involving the total membership.

Prepare a factual survey of any lane known to be under attack so that we can provide quantifiable evidence to put 'damage' into its proper perspective.

To neutralise the influential Winchester Conference in October and the anticipated R.A. attack on vehicles in the countryside - we have little option but to achieve these targets and disseminate them before October.

We will attempt to gain the support of all our friends but we must accept responsibility for our own TRF actions.

**PLEASE VOLUNTEER** plan to meet the appropriate timescale and let me know through the group reps how it's going.

*With the forthcoming AGM and the election of new officers, the R O W position, vacated by Brian Thompson, needs to be filled. Tim Stevens has allowed his name to be put forward, and he asks that before the AGM, you take note of his views on how he sees the role. The following from Tim has not been edited.*

My name has been put forward as the prospective candidate for the post of National Rights of way Agent. As many of you may think of Tim Stevens as the bloke who messed up last years A.G.M. I would welcome the chance to explain what I could offer the TRF.

I have been riding green lanes since 1962, and during that period have acquired considerable experience of the ROW network and the byzantine web of regulations which governs our use of it. Much of my research and riding has been done in isolation; after becoming a TRF member very early on (I was at the inaugural meeting but only joined the club a month or two later) I became disillusioned with the way club business was carried out. In particular, I resented criticism for organising a four stroke only run in Hampshire in about 1970. I thought then, and I think now, that anyone who goes to the trouble to sort out and clear a route, and organise a run, should be able to invite whom he likes. This may seem a bit irrelevant as I rejoined in 1986, but it is because I have one or two firmly held ideas about our pastime that I am writing this. I want anyone who is inclined to support me to know what I stand for.

I believe we need friends. Any friends, and so we should be looking to the Quangos, the landowners, the farmers, the bicycle and horse riders even the walkers, and saying 'What can the TRF do for you? Can our knowledge of ROW help you? Perhaps we could run an event together...' After all you don't kick all your friends in the teeth. Much of our problem in the countryside is born out of fear, and that fear is based on ignorance. Ignorance of who we are, how many, how loud, how inconsiderate, how irresponsible, how loutish we are. So we must get out and meet these people; support them, go to their events, seek out the motorcyclists in their ranks, and make friends. Because friends are made they don't just happen.

I believe that trial riding is just an odd form of motor cycle touring. Just as many walkers seek to leave the pavements of our towns and cities, we seek to leave the tarmac and explore the old roads that were forgotten when the steam rollers came round. We have outgrown the juvenile urges to be the fastest, to be first. Instead, we enjoy the wayside flowers, the forgotten traces of the hand of man in his efforts to carve a livelihood from six inches of dirt, and the feeling that we follow the wheel and hoof marks left by earlier travellers.

I believe that every lane which they have left us should be usable by us. We are the guardians of the network - in fact in some areas we may proudly claim to be the only guardians - and we should not let one green lane slip through our fingers and into oblivion if we can help it. Green lanes are not being made, and we cannot make them as walkers and horse riders can. They are being lost by being tarmac-covered, and built over, they disappear under motorway, bypass and plough, they are afforested, obstructed, and extinguished.

But there are still lanes out there that we do not use, that nobody uses, from Devon to Durham, from Cumbria to Kent. We owe it to our fellow members, to the many other sportsmen who need who need old roads now and to those who come after us, to make sure that all these lanes are discovered, recorded, and if possible used.

I believe that far too many TRF riders ride too much. We all ride the lanes we know and like, naturally, and some of them are getting a bit dog eared in the process. As well as riding the neglected lanes, we should ALL spend time doing the other things which need doing. We need people to attend meetings, to look at old maps, to decipher ancient documents, to drain bogs, to rebuild walls, to cut down undergrowth and to lop overgrowth, to write letters, to plan routes, to design leaflets, to visit shows and exhibitions, to put up and man stands, to attend courts and public enquiries, to visit MPs and Ministers, to ask questions at parish and district councils, to attend liaison committees, to write articles, to transport members, bikes, and display materials, to mark up maps, to report obstructions, to make sandwiches. This list is not exhaustive; but in the last 112 months I have done all these things, and I know I am not alone in this. But I do believe that all of you could do more. If you want me to be ROW officer you will want me to do more. Don't vote for me unless you too are prepared to do more.

Finally, I think I can offer one or two things you haven't always had from your National ROW agent in the recent past. I will try always to be hopeful and to give you the facts, straight. So, I am for co-operation not conflict with others, co-operation and not competition with club members, plus the new ingredients, optimism and objectiveness. But if you really want to spend every weekend rushing about leaving brown grooves all over the threadbare patchwork of green lanes, find someone else to do your dirty work.

Tim Stevens

**From Dave Greenslade, Dorset Group:**

Many thanks for the bulletin number 133 which arrived yesterday, I always find them a good read. I would like to put my views on a few points raised.

Brian Wright's letter about riding outfits was amusing and reminded me of the first time I started riding outfits some seven years ago.

As Brian, I started on a Beamish trials outfit which we used for M.C.C. long distance trials, we always finished but never got an award, but I always enjoyed 3 wheels more than the solos. We also found that the difficult things like steering and stopping were quite a problem, but with a good passenger there's nothing like a quick climb up a steep lane in an outfit to blow out the cobwebs.

However I soon found that the two stroke motor on the Beamish had its limitations so I fitted a XL250S (Honda) motor into the existing frame which made life a little easier (well some of the time).

Fitting the four-stroke engine wasn't that straight forward but I think it all worked out O.K. in the end. Other modifications carried out, longer swinging arm from XL250S, engine bored out to 290cc, sidecar widened by 100mm and toe-in 10mm (this made a big difference to handling), crash bar fitted around speedo to stop it smashing every time it turned up side down (note that since fitting the crash bar the bike has stayed up the right way, (to date!)), plus other small modifications to numerous to list.

I would like to fit an XL500 motor one day, so if any one knows of one going cheap, or making any other sound please let me know.

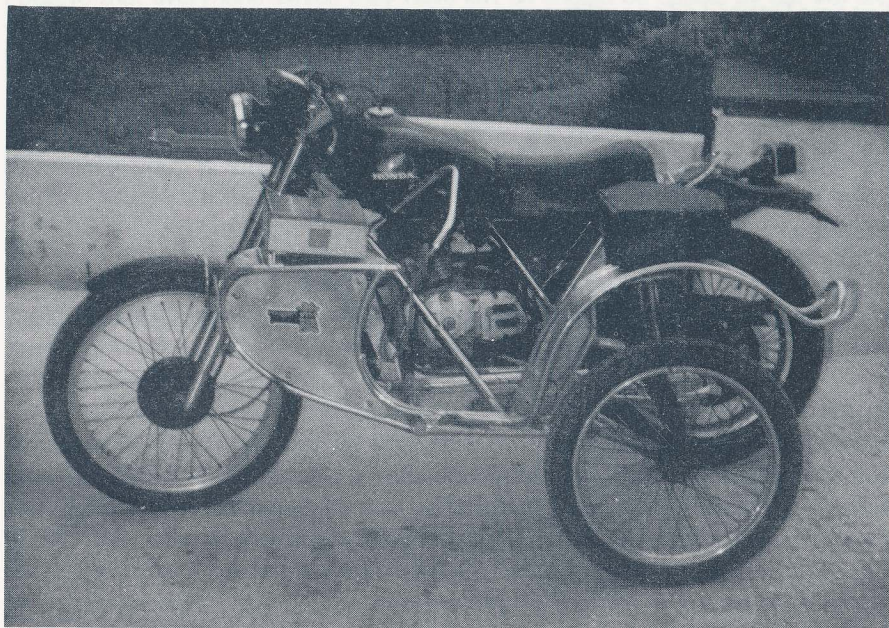
Tips on riding outfits, well as far as I can tell steering at all but very low speeds is done by body lean (mainly by the passenger) and with the back wheel using the throttle. Stopping, I make that up as I go along.

We have a number of outfits in the Dorset group, myself with the Beamish, our chairman Norman Howard has two, one with out an engine (seems the safest sort to have really - Ed's wife), and another would you believe based on a RM500!

Wally Cheshire our local BMW dealer (C & W Motor Cycles Dorchester) has an 800 BMW based outfit (very nice except for the right hand pot which gets in the way - (what of? Eds wife)), one of C & W's mechanics, Bob, has an XS400 outfit and we have had a Kawosaki Wasp from Weymouth out with us on one run. There is also a Beamish Suzuki in the group, but this has not yet been seen by me on the trails.

One other member, Phil, has a sidecar but no bike to bolt it on too, but given time I'm sure he'll find one.

So far I've had 6 different passengers in the sidecar, one being Ann my wife, who came on a group run to Exmoor last November, also I've had two goes recently in the BMW outfit as a passenger which I must say was great, and made a change from driving.



Peter Wildsmith's views on tyres seemed to me to be a little inconsistent, if he is worried about damage to lanes why use a RUDDY GREAT XL600.

I use trial tyres in the summer and motor cross tyres in the winter, mainly because in the summer most lanes are dry, and in winter more damage would be caused by spinning trials tyres than by a motor cross tyre of the same size giving constant drive.

That's my view I look forward to seeing some from other members

D J Greenslade  
Assistant Rights of Way Officer Dorset Group.

\*\*\*\**Lots of entries received from Dorset this month — Thanks, Ed*

Dear Tony

I'm not sure whether I should be writing to Mr Thew or Tony but the TRF is a fellowship so Tony will suffice for the moment.

I received bulletin 133 today and thought at least I could do was to put daisy wheel to paper even though this is unsuitable for publication.

I am sorry to hear that there is so little response to the bulletin but recount my position herein and some suggestions/queries.

I decided that I would like to go trial riding next time I visited Scotland and to that end went out and bought a totally unsuitable bike as a dual purpose machine. The dreaded XT500 of my youth. I didn't even know that the XT600 existed. Tenere sounded like a holiday resort. There in my yard was this single beast that I tried to kick, and succeeded until discretion overtook valour, without using the decompressor.

The next step was to find out more about the game. I bought a couple of MCN's, for the first time in years, and eventually telephoned them and was put in touch with the TRF. I had to buy a couple because I expected to see some form of regular publicity. I wondered how many people look but don't know how to locate the TRF?

Anyway I joined the TRF and eagerly awaited my bundle of goodies that would introduce me and my girlfriend, to fellow trial riders all over Scotland - and Bucks too. My sample issues arrived and .....nothing. Try Darlington. For the Thames valley try somewhere near Croydon! For upper Thames try Abingdon (Surely Purley is Surrey or South of the Thames and Abingdon nearer the Thames Valley?).

Disheartened I visited a good book-shop and found loads of Ordnance Survey Maps. I found books on walking and hill climbing books. I found books on every subject to do with traversing land. Finally I found 'Exploring Green Lanes'. Hurray. I bought a copy. Scotland does not what ever the author may think start and end at Jedburgh. What about the locks? What about Scotland proper. Where are the meetings held in Scotland. What routes are in Scotland? How does Scottish law differ from English law? What a dismal waste of time.

During this period I serviced the bike. A few weeks later I realised that the thought of meeting a few fellow trial riders in a pub by Glen Orchy and exploring the area was just a dream. The following week I advertised the bike in the Thames valley trader, it covers Purley, and sold it to break even including the service to someone riding the rattiest two stroke I had ever seen who intended to rebuild it and take it all over Europe. So I still receive my TRF magazine until my subscription expires at which time I won't and when someone asks me about the TRF, should they ever, I will tell them about my experience.

Constructive. What about 'requiring' a set of areas holding local group meetings to contribute to the magazine by writing reports. Not every issue. Say four or five small articles. Introduce some new characters. Welcome new members since the last report. Invite readers visiting or living in the area to make the effort and come to a meeting? How about widening the scope of the TRF to include other users of off road areas. They don't have to take over the TRF they may have something useful to add.

What about putting some non TRF stuff into the magazine. Surely members must have some interesting and/or amusing comment to make on other matters as well as TRF membership and stories of muddy trials on XT/SP etc. What about trying to locate personalities who are members of the TRF, if any, and explaining how they see trial riding. Whatever happened to Ian Anderson of Jethro Tull. Years ago I remember reading anecdotes and stories about him in 'BIKE' magazine when Williamsd was involved and it was witty, informative comment about motorcycling and the world in general.

This letter has dragged on for far too long and has probably quite wrongly attached many of the sacred cows and aims of the TRF and the magazine. I know too well that it is easy for people to sit on the fence and criticise the work of others - people do it to me all the time which probably accounts for all the lumps of fried potato on my shoulder.

Seriously I wish you well and the TRF. I know that this has at least increased your post bag. I won't be renewing my membership to the TRF as I see no point. I would renew my membership if it included a subscription to a magazine which was a good read when it appeared (I don't mean that as nasty criticism). Perhaps because I don't see myself setting the trial or riding it I would like to laugh a little at matters as well as trial riding - maybe even a cartoon.

On a more serious note I would like to know more about the costs of setting up and producing the magazine - is it produced in house or by someone connected with the TRF or is it simple hived off to an entirely profit motivated outside printer.

With sincere best wishes.

Paul Todd

*Thanks Paul. I accept your criticism, sorry that you feel your membership has been a waste of time. Can the Group Reps for the areas mentioned throw any light on what went wrong? ED.*

## TWO WHEELS - GOOD; FOUR WHEELS - BAD ?,

There has been so much talk about 4WD vehicles on green roads in recent months that I began to wonder if there was something in it?

The number of four wheelers on green roads is on the increase. I know this for a fact. I saw a Renault van on the Salisbury turnpike only three years ago, and then two months ago I saw two (yes, two!) Rovers on the same green lane. (The Range Rover had dug itself in up to the differentials and the Land Rover could not find enough grip to pull the Range Rover out of the hole.) Yes, personal experience showed that the number of four wheeled vehicles on green roads was definitely on the increase!

Not being one to miss out on a trend, I set out, hot foot, to see what was behind the dramatic increase. I decided that it was a new generation of four wheel drive vehicles from Japan that needed investigation, so I rushed to my nearest Suzuki dealer to try one out.

If you want to borrow the manager's personal jeep, it seems that all you have to do is ask.



I left my motor-bike on the garage forecourt and climbed into the cab of an SJ410 with 14 000 miles on the clock just nicely run in.

I was given a handful of glossy leaflets for all the technical information and several pages of advertising flannel. The SJ410 is powered by a four cylinder petrol engine of 970 cc, which produces maximum power of 33.5 kw (45 hp) at 5500 rpm, with maximum torque down at 3000 rpm, I read.

It was capable of running on unleaded two star, which was nice, but I was advised to use three star, because it was happier running on that.

Transmission through a five speed box, with a two speed transfer box available for use when in four wheel drive. Two wheel drive was to the rear wheels only.

Suspension of the live axles was by leaf springs with telescopic dampers.

Fuel consumption was quoted at 30.4mpg for the urban cycle and 32.8mpg at a constant 56 mph. No figures were quoted for constant 75 mph because they couldn't be obtained. (I.e. It couldn't go that fast.)

So much for the bare facts. The engine was small, but the transmission gave fifteen different combinations. you could certainly play with that sort of gearbox. The suspension was ancient in design and the fuel economy acceptable, but hardly anything to boast about.

The 'advertising speak' was entertaining. 'The GJ410 Sport is as much fun as you could possibly have on four wheels.' To a cynic this meant if you wanted more fun you should use a trail bike, I suppose.

'Fold down the hood and head for the hills or take off for the beach.' Now, fold down the hood..... Yes, well, it didn't seem quite that easy. There were an awful lot of poppers and zips and bits of velcro and steel struts. Anyway it looked as if it would rain, so perhaps it was best to leave the hood up, just for the time being.

I was given a few practical driving instructions before being let loose by the garage. Since this was not the latest model Suzuki, the drive had a little foible that needed to be explained. If you wanted to swap from driving the rear two wheels to four wheel, you had to get out and turn a little knob in the centre of the front wheels. These lock the 'freewheel' hubs. Putting the hubs in 'freewheel' disconnected the front wheels from the engine to cut down drag and wear in the drive train.

Once the little knobs were turned and the hubs locked into 'drive', you could swap from four wheel drive to two wheel drive using a stumpy second gear lever in the cab. This lever also controlled a second gearbox which allowed you to select 'high' or 'low' ratio when in four wheel drive. Like the early Japanese trial bikes of the 1970's, this gives a choice of ten speeds in four-wheel drive 'to keep you on the move no matter what' as the brochure phrased it.

The owner's manual in the glove box advised taking corners gently since the Suzuki has a higher centre of gravity and a narrower wheel base than the average car. This has caused major problems for the company recently with adverse publicity following serious accidents where Suzuki rolled over, injuring the occupants. I took it gently round corners and found it satisfactory, but it was not a vehicle to hurry on the tarmac.

The steering seemed rather vague, perhaps 'less taut' is a kinder phrase than the Renault 5 I was used to driving on the road. It was safe enough and I soon got used to it.

The brakes were good. They were servo assisted with discs at the front and drums at the rear. The light body helped when braking as there was not very much car to stop. The brakes were reassuring.

You needed lots of revs to produce any sort of performance from the 970cc engine. Speed was not this vehicle's strong suit. take it steady. Sit back on the firm but comfortable seats and enjoy the view from the perch above the ordinary cars.





With the heater keeping my feet warm and the fan cooling my face, the radio cassette playing a happy tune and the intermittent sweep wipers keeping the drizzle from the windscreen, I found this a thoroughly civilised jeep. I could be lulled into preferring this form of transport to my winswept old trail bike.

Now then. What was it like off the tarmac?

My first little excursion showed it to be totally hilarious!

I took the family out for a picnic. I chose a gentle dirt road, well used by other four-wheelers. It was the sort of lane where you sit down and relax on a bike. You enjoy the view and look at the gaps in the hedges for a more challenging turning off. On a bike it seemed smooth, with the odd puddle forming in pot-holes every now and then.

'Excellent ride comfort over any surface has been achieved by the supple suspension', says the brochure.

We were doubled up with laughter as the GJ410 bucked and bounced and lurched its way from pothole to pothole. While our seatbelts worked hard to hold us in place in the front seats, my eight year old bounced about in the back like a dry pea in a tin, desperately grasping for hand holds. I checked the speedometer. We were doing less than 10 mph.

We slowed to walking pace and things calmed down. I had felt fully in control when we had been leaping about. The steering was light and sure, even though the suspension couldn't cope. However the slower pace did make life easier for my passengers.

This was supposed to be a family picnic and we did enjoy being able to take food and a flask into the quiet countryside. The Suzuki was so small it could be parked unobtrusively at the side of the lane, just in case another vehicle came along, while we went for a stroll after our meal.

Later on we tried a lane which was more taxing for the bike. It had a ford and a steepish climb over loose stones. The lane was doggy on a bike unless you had some off tarmac experience. The ford was hub deep and could wet your feet unless your boots were waterproof. The loose stones could have you off if your one wheel lost grip. Paradoxically this proved an easy lane for the jeep.

A look under the bonnet showed that the airtake for the high-mounted engine was tucked up so that fords up to four feet deep could be tackled. You would get wet feet in fords more than three feet deep, since, unlike Range Rovers, the doors were not sealed watertight. (I read a nice story about a Range Rover floating away while trying a ford on Strata Florida.) This little ford was hardly noticed from the driving seat, nor did the water seem to make any impression on my brakes.

I selected four wheel drive before the loose climb, but here again the Suzuki made effortless progress.

Further tests followed. It all went well, if occasionally sideways in surface mud. Two-wheel drive proved adequate for most green road circumstances. The tougher the going the better the Suzuki liked it. I drew the line not when I thought the Suzuki could not cope, but when I felt the lane had had enough. On soft surfaced lanes we left heavy imprint to mark our passing and I was not happy with this. The Suzuki could not tiptoe like a trial bike.

A whole jumble of good and bad points came to my notice, which I had not really thought about before.

Horses were far less upset by the jeep than by the motor bike. Horse riders are nervous in the presence of bikes, but I suppose horses become accustomed to cars on tarmac and so are not startled by the jeep on a green lane.

In a narrow lane passing is impossible. Even with the very narrow Suzuki, hedges brush the wing mirrors. Meeting another lane user meant reversing until a passing place was reached.

The wheels tended to hunt for ruts. Since the Suzuki was narrower than the land rover which I presume made the ruts, we tended to to drive with one side in a rut and the other riding high up on the centre ridge. This is not a recipe for comfortable progress.

There was no problem with ground clearance on the lanes we tried. The differentials were offset to avoid the central ridge in the lane. There was very little overhang front or rear, the wheels were very much at each corner, which is where you want them for rough going.

The high centre of gravity made cambers a worry. The handbook advised taking steep gradients square on, but this is not always practicable on a green road.

The roll over cage was dangerous. It looked inadequate should we roll over, but we did not test this! It was a pressed steel section which joined the door pillars just above and behind the front seats. It was unpadding and had unrolled edges jutting out for and aft. For the driver, hunched over the steering wheel, it was not obtrusive but for a tall passenger, sitting in the back to enjoy the view, it proved very painful, being a bare few inches from the back of his head. Passengers should be advised to wear crash helmets.

After two days, I returned the Suzuki and collected my bike. We did have one mishap on the second day, when one wheel clipped a rock while tootling

along at walking pace. This chipped a hole in the tyre (tubeless. Replacement cost over seventy pounds). Fitting the spare tyre was straightforward, but explaining to the manager what had happened was rather more difficult.

(A couple of weeks after this I heard of an identical incident involving a Land Rover and a rock on the Mendips. I have never heard of anything like this happening on a bike.)

My conclusion, after this short but fascinating glimpse of four-wheel drive green laning is yes, there is a place for vehicles like the Suzuki. It offers the civilised fittings of a modern car heater, radio, comfortable seats and so on. It is fun for a family outing on gentle green lanes. It can give a taste of green laning to the wife and kids who wonder why you spend so much time trial riding.

As a serious challenge to a trial bike for long term green laning it is a non starter. It is too big to get down very narrow lanes and too heavy to use on many soft surfaced lanes. Its impact on the environment is too great, to coin a phrase.

As the Range rover driver said to me, while waiting to be towed out of the hole that he had dug in the lane, 'It can be great fun, if you know what you are doing.'

*The above, from Ian Thompson, gives a different view of Green Laning, any other member experience of similar activities?*

*At the risk of being accused of sponsoring a 'one-author' bulletin, the following article on foreign travel is included as promised last time.*

#### **British Bike in Brittany — Ian Thompson**

I have often wondered whether there were green lanes in Europe. I had read several reports about trail riding in France, but was not sure how to go about it.

It seemed that you needed to know someone who knew the lanes already, and I didn't. Know any one that is.

Living in the West Country, my nearest bit of France is Brittany not the Pas de Calais. This is a disadvantage and an advantage. The disadvantage is that no-one I contacted, even the French, seemed to know about green lanes in Brittany, although they could help me with lanes near Calais. The advantage was that Brittany is a far more interesting bit of country than the boring landscape of the north-east French coast. Brittany offered mountains and moorland, as well as a small population with strong and ancient links with West Britain. After all, its called Brittany because its inhabitants came from here in the Dark Ages.



All you need to ride green lanes in France:

A bit of courage to get you across the Channel.

An IGN (Institut Geographic National) map instead of the usual Michelin maps. Michelin are unreliable on green lanes.

A few words of French - not essential, but a tremendous help.

The final vital ingredient is the knowledge that France belongs to the French. This may seem obvious until you stop and consider that England does not belong to the English. The French grabbed their country from the King in the French Revolution. (The English took their country as well - Oliver Cromwell and all that - but being good sports we gave it back to the King again!). In England we are allowed to use the Queens Highways, as her loyal subjects. In France, the French can use any track they like because it is theirs. It seems simple.

There are exceptions to this basic rule, in National Parks and State forests for example, but you tend to find large and very official notices telling you that you are not allowed.

The trouble is you can't just go poking your front wheel in looking for an entrance. You need to know if it leads anywhere other than into someone's front garden.

The IGN maps show 'cart roads' as well as footpaths and mule tracks. French 'cart roads' are English green roads. There are other things on the map which may or may not turn out to be useful green roads, but this is a good starting point.

I booked passage on the Plymouth to Roscoff ferry for the Easter weekend. I hoped my 1981 Yamaha XT250 would cope with the rigours of the French lanes. My companion for the trip, Roger Fogg, rode his HT 350 Ariel. The only failures were to my bike. I broke a connection to the diode when loading on my luggage. The battery failed to charge and I lost all but my headlight on the way to the ferry. Fortunately I was able to do a bodge, and the holiday was unimpaired.

Using the IGN 1:100 000 sheet 14, I found a superb looking lane which ran from the outskirts of Morlaix into the Monts d'Arree 10 kilometres away. This proved to be an old railway line, smooth surfaced and well used, but reserved exclusively for joggers. Clear signs at every tarmac road junction warned off all the motor vehicles, so we left it alone.

We looked around for other lanes shown as cart tracts on the map. After three frustrating dead ends and an encounter with a local trout farmer, convinced we were poachers, we found success in the Monts d'Arree. A real green lane led us up to the ridge for a magnificent view. Another lane took us over the ridge to the southern slopes.

We found clean cheap accommodation in an hotel in Huelgoat, and we spent the afternoon following the Nantes to Brest canal. A green road follows the canal most of the way and much, though not all, is open to vehicles. Once again, where vehicles were not allowed was made very clear by large signs and by barriers.

Easter Sunday was spent in the Montagnes Noires. These are not really mountains, but a high ridge of hills, with a good, green lane running along the back, between high banks and hedges. The French have a network of long distance trails called Sentiers de grande Radonee (GR's for short), aimed mainly at walkers, but open to all who can get along them. GR signs came and went, but we relied more on the map than the signs. One GR led us literally up the garden path of a new house. I'm not sure whether it should have gone on past the back fence and had been poached by the builder or the map was wrong.

On our way back to Huelgoat in the evening, we followed a series of forest roads. I had thought these would be closed to us, but they were clearly open to all. Nothing challenging here, but a very relaxing way to travel in the quiet of a sunny day.

Our final outing on Monday took us past the nuclear power station and across the open moor of the Parc Naturel Regional d' Amorique. Here again we were able to follow well-used and well sign posted tracks, to enjoy some challenging going, especially for the Ariel 350, on some long green lanes in magnificent open country.

We didn't seem to be treading on anyone's toes or trespassing where we should not have been. I think we were lucky to be able to find such open country in the north of France. Brittany is fortunate in escaping both heavy industry and prairie farming. There were farms everywhere, but we needed the more expensive 1:50 000 IGN maps to sort these out. I bought one, but the shops were all closed on Monday, so I couldn't pick up any more. The smaller ones are hard to get in England and are even more expensive.

My advice to anyone contemplating French green lanes is to go ahead and ride them.

Buy the IGN 1:100 000 sheet for your chosen area and plan out a route. Pick up the more detailed 1:50 000 sheets when you are in France.

Now I have told you about France, is there anyone reading this who has inside knowledge of other Continental trail riding? I want to try Germany and Spain, Italy and Belgium, Scandinavia and the Netherlands. Someone must know. Tell me how to get started. Please write to the editor who will pass it on to me, and to every one else who would be keen to know.

*If it's as interesting as this article it would certainly be published for all to know — Eds. wife.*



**Trail tips from Lee Wildsmith, Southern Group.**

#### **TIP 1 MUD WRESTLING**

You know what its like after a really thick muddy ride, on the way home on the road your mudguards feel like they weigh 90 lbs. each and now and then great

lumps of dry mud fall off and explode on impact with the road, and your mate behind gets a mouth full of dirt. To avoid this problem, on the morning of the next muddy run (not for a while yet eh!) try squirting WD 40 under both mudguards, this way lessens the build up of mud under there. You could also try this on your engine. Another (but more expensive way) is to run a couple of strips of Duct tape under both mudguards, and before you ride home rip off the tape remembering to dispose of it properly, best place is your mates pocket, HA, HA! Then no more lead mudguards.

## TIP 2 GETTING A GRIP

How many times when attempting a tricky manoeuvre, in the wet usually, like riding over a couple of logs, a steep climb or just picking up your bike, has your left handlebar grip become loose or better still come right off. Therefore you end up in the next field or sat in the mud 50 yards from your bike, still with the grip in your hand. To help stop this (rather than wiring which takes a while and sometimes cuts through the grip) remove the grip, and make sure the bar and grip are thoroughly clean. Then squirt some aerosol paint onto the bar and up inside the grip, (try not to paint your tank as well) and slide the grip on while twisting. Leave for a couple of hours and no more sliding around. Another but longer way is to give the bar and the inside of the grip a squirt of WD40. This way the WD 40 vulcanises the rubber of the grip to the metal handlebar, (steel or alloy). It's best to leave it for about 5 days to make sure it sticks. Just think no more left hand twist grips!

## SMALL ADS.

**TRAIL RIDING HOLIDAYS IN MID-WALES.** Farmhouse accommodation, up to 10 people, room for trailers, undercover parking, workshop facilities and spares. All mod.cons, B & B for members £10, with evening meal £15. Guided tours by request, also instruction. Dick Sutton and Ann Weir, Pen Rochell Farm, Dolau, Llandrindod Wells, Tel 059 787 200.

**LAKE WINDERMERE, B & B,** Lock-up yard for 12 bikes. Ale house 20 yards, ample parking, all rooms colour TV, and tea-makers. B & B £10 mid season (April-October incl) out of season £9. Brendan Chase, College Road, Windermere, Cumbria LA23 1BU, Tel: 096 62 5638.

**BRECON,** Detached Georgian Guest House, standing in its own grounds with ample parking for trailers and bikes. B & B, Evening meal. Family, twin and double rooms. Some en-suite, all rooms with tea-making facilities and central heating. Bob and Margaret Smith, The Grange Guest House, The Watton, Brecon, LD3 7ED. Tel Brecon 4038.

**TRAIL RIDING IN MID-WALES?** Be assured of a warm welcome at the Cornhill Inn, West Street, Rhyader. Comfortable accommodation, covered parking for bikes. Good food, real ales, guided tours if required, Landlord Motorcycle enthusiast. Tel Barbara Fraser or Bob Buck 0597 810869.

## TRAIL RIDERS FELLOWSHIP

### Group and Group Rep

**BRISTOL**  
Richard Tallon, 5 Danvers Road,  
Corsham, Wiltshire  
Tel: Chippenham 715426

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE**  
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Cambs, PE17 4DS  
Tel: 0480 67094

**CHESHIRE**  
Mr M J A Johnson, 39 Hawk Green Road,  
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**CUMBRIA**  
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**DERBYSHIRE & SOUTH YORKSHIRE**  
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**DEVON & CORNWALL**  
Oliver Cook, 35 Drakes Avenue,  
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Tel: 0395 270104

**DORSET**  
Norman S Howard, Dairyhouse Farm,  
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Dorset, SP7 0HQ. Tel: 074788 615

**EAST MIDLANDS**  
Graham Chinnery, The Orchards,  
Doctors Lane, Breedon-on-the-Hill,  
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**LANCASHIRE**  
Keith Westley, 6 Briars Lane, Lathorn,  
Ormskirk, Lancs. Tel: 0704 893215

**LODDON VALE**  
Don Lewis, Ladybower, Dogmersfield,  
Basingstoke, Hants. RG27 8SS  
Tel: 0252 616359

**MENDIP**  
Gwyn Thomas, Minories Cottage, Priddy,  
Nr Wells, Somerset. Tel: 0749 75294

**NORFOLK & SUFFOLK**  
Andy Bedwell, 5 The Woodlands, Corton,  
Lowestoft, NR32 5BZ Tel: 0502 730899

**NORTHUMBERLAND**  
Dave Vaughan, 15 Seaburn Gardens,  
Sunderland, Tyne & Wear, SR6 8BT  
Tel: 091 5293202

### Local Group Meetings

2nd Monday of the month 8.30 p.m.  
Tennis Court Inn, Deanery Road,  
Kingswood, Bristol

1st Monday of the month.  
Golden Bull, Boxworth. Off A604  
North of Bar Hill

2nd and 4th Mondays. The Robin Hood,  
Buxton Road, High Lane, Hazel Grove,  
Stockport

2nd Tuesday. Feb, April, June, etc.  
Golden Lion, Market Place, Kendal.

2nd and 4th Tuesdays. The Victoria  
Hotel, 248 Neepsend Lane, Sheffield

2nd Friday each month. Rising Sun,  
Woodland, Nr. Ashburton. Just off  
A38 (grid ref. 789698)

1st Tuesday of the month 8.00 p.m.  
Stable Bar behind the Drax Arms,  
Bere Regis

2nd Wednesday. Three Horseshoes,  
Hemington, Leicestershire

2nd Wednesdays. Kettingley Social  
Centre, Knettingley

4th Tuesday. White Bear,  
Stanford Rivers, Nr Ongar, Essex

1st Monday. Contact Group Rep for  
meeting place.

Tuesdays. King's Head Hotel,  
Pontnewyd, Cwmbran, Gwent

1st Wednesday. Red Lion Hotel,  
Radlett, Herts.

1st Tuesday. The Hind's Head,  
Charnock Richard, Chorley, Lancs.

2nd Tuesday. The Lamb, Theale,  
Nr Reading, Berks.

Hunters Lodge Inn, Priddy, Nr Wells,  
Somerset (ring Gwyn for meeting date)

1st Wednesday. The Blue Lion,  
North Pickenham

3rd Tuesday. Ryton Rugby Club, Ryton