

GROUPS

BRISTOL

Richard Tallon, Tel: 0249 715426
2nd Monday, Tennis Court Inn, Deanery Road (A420), Kingswood

CAMBRIDGE

Howard Biddle, Tel: 0223 232879
1st Thursday, Golden Ball, Boxworth

CHESHIRE

J. Johnson, Tel: 061 427 6963
2 & 4 Monday, The Robin Hood, Buxton Road, High Lane, Hazel Grove, Stockport

CORNWALL

Roger Fogg, Tel: 0726 67198
3rd Tuesday, London Inn, Summercourt (A30)

CUMBRIA

Roger Harris, Tel: 0539 725198
2nd Wednesday, Albert Hotel, Bowness on Windermere

DERBYSHIRE & SOUTH YORKSHIRE

David Bonsall, Tel: 0742 748688
2 & 4 Tuesday, The Old Crown Inn, Handsworth Road, Sheffield

DEVON

Martin Cooper, Tel: 0752 337491
2nd Tuesday, The Welcome Stranger, Bickington, Nr. Newton Abbott

DORSET

Pete Boyce, Tel: 0305 783210
1st Tuesday, The Royal Oak, Bere Regis

EAST MIDLANDS

Graham Chinnery, Tel: 0332 863433
2nd Wednesday, Three Horseshoes, Hemmington, Nr. M1 Junct. 24

EAST SCOTLAND

Les Mollison, Tel: 0382 738530
2nd Wednesday, Glencarse Hotel, A85, Perth to Dundee Rd

ESSEX

Neil Gamble, Tel: 0245 461643
4th Tuesday, The White Horse, Old London Road, Widford, Chelmsford

GLOUCESTER

Ron Carter, Tel: 045 382 2707
1st Tuesday, Painswick Institute, Painswick, Glos.

HERTFORDSHIRE

Alan Vincent, Tel: 0923 775263
1st Wednesday, The Coach & Horses, Newgate Street, Near Cuffly

ISLE OF WIGHT

Mick Holbrook, Tel: 0983 866361
Last Thursday, Liberal Club, Longford Rd, Shanklin, I.O.W

KENT

Nick Moon, Tel: 0322 862855
2nd Tuesday, Pied Bull, Farningham, Nr. Brands Hatch

LANCASHIRE

Keith Westley, Tel: 0704 893215
1st Tuesday, Hindshead Pub on A49, Charnock Richard

LINCOLNSHIRE

Alan Wilkinson, Tel: 0529 60793
4th Thursday, The Mall, Woodhall, Spar

LODDON VALE

Don Lewis, Tel: 0252 616359
2nd Thursday, The Lamb, Theale, Berkshire
NORFOLK & SUFFOLK - To be Advised
NORTH MIDLANDS
Ray Morse, Tel: 0785 661543
1st Tuesday, Leek Area - Contact group rep (above)

NORTHUMBERLAND

Dave Vaughan, Tel: 091 529 3202
3rd Tuesday, Ryton Rugby Club, Ryton

NORTH WALES

John Mills, Tel: 0477 34425
1st Wednesday, Hope & Anchor, Ewloe Place, Buckley, Chwydd

SHROPSHIRE

Steve Rodenhurst, Tel: 0952 244161
2nd & last Wednesday, The Bell, Crosshouses, Shrewsbury

SOMERSET

Nick Crocker, Tel: 093589 261
Last Thursday, The Globe Inn, Somerton

SOUTHERN

Pete Wildsmith, Tel: 0703 617582
3rd Wednesday, The Priory Inn, Bishops Waltham, Hampshire

SOUTH LONDON & SURREY

Brian Wright, Tel: 081 669 4214
9pm Every Wednesday, Epsom & Ewell F.C., West St, Ewell

SUSSEX

Bevis Billingham, Tel: 0243 585128
Last Thursday, Selsey Arms, Coolham, Junct. A272, B2193

TEESIDE & NORTH YORKS

Leo Crone, Tel: 0325 380117
1st & 3rd Wednesday, Station Hotel, Stokesley

THAMES VALLEY

Bob Williams, Tel: 0990 24958
3rd Monday, District Arms, Woodthorpe Road, Ashford, Middlesex

WEST ANGLIA

David Knight, Tel: 0933 313816
1 & 3 Thursday, Scott Bader Clubhouse, Opp. Parish Church, Woolaston, Wellingborough

WEST MIDLANDS

Dennis Hayter, Tel: 0527 23550
1 & 3 Thursday, Wilmcote Mens Club, Wilmcote, Nr. Stratford on Avon

WEST WALES

G. Jones, Tel: 0239 810255 - Meets to be arranged
WEST WALES (WTRA), Bill Kershaw, Tel: 0633 895241

WEST YORKSHIRE

Charles King, Tel: 0484 686383
1 & 3 Monday, Frizinghall Con. Club, Lynthorn Road, Frizinghall, Bradford

WILTSHIRE

Bill Riley, Tel: 02216 3811
1st Tuesday, The Toll House, Holt, Trowbridge

WYVERN

Gwyn James, Tel: 0902 763824
Every Thursday, Hill & Cakemore Ex-Servicemen's Club, Victoria Road, Blackheath



TRAIL

MARCH 1991

No. 152

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

EDITOR: Mike "Nettlebed" Pedley.



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Try to make it interesting!

All contributions to the Editor

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EDITOR

Due to the absence of our Editor, Nettlebed, who has taken a month's holiday in the U.S.A. The editorship for this month's issue has been press-ganged onto myself.

Well here goes, my first attempt at writing an editorial. Did you spot last month's deliberate mistake? Yes, Feb's issue was printed with January's title on the front cover. I blamed the printer who in turn blamed the type-setter who then blamed the editor. So whilst Nettlebed is away it was his fault. As our Chairman says the TRF is all about sharing.

So here we are in March at last, hopefully the last of the winter weather is behind us and we can look forward to some warmer riding. Most of the local lanes are at the moment extremely wet which prompts an interesting point I would like to mention. A few days ago, whilst out riding a few local lanes with a small group, I paused while closing a gate and watched the group ride over a wet patch of ground. One rider on a DT125 with trials tyres was really struggling, lots of wheelspin, which resulted in leaving a thin black line on the surface. The next rider on a Suzuki RMX250 enduro fitted with knobbles, was riding up on the gears, hardly revving, yet gained plenty of grip and hardly left a mark on the ground.

Therefore, it brought home to me the point, it's not the type of bike or tyres you can use, but how you ride with the throttle. So if you're out and about the next few weeks in the wet, please take care with your right hand and try to avoid needless damage to the trails.

Brian Crabtree, (Temporary Editor)

NOTICE

WHO HAS RIDDEN IN HUNTINGDON AND PETERBOROUGH?

Reclassification of the numerous RUPPs in the area of the old county of Huntingdon and Peterborough is now under way. User evidence is most valuable in asserting byway status. If you have been riding lanes here for a number of years, please contact me so that I can give you details. DAVID EDGER (Cambridgeshire Group), 20 Ramsden Square, Cambridge CB4 2BJ. Telephone: 0223 426978

TRF OFFICERS

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LETTERS

1990 Vintage

Don't spend too long looking backwards may be excellent advice for any motor cyclist. But as an occasional armchair pursuit it has its pleasures.

I started trail riding nearly two years ago by joining the Essex group and have diligently kept a note of my ramblings in a diary. Looking back on 1990 shows how far trail riding fever has developed. I rode on 19 separate occasions spread over 24 different days. I travelled over 1900 miles in a mix of runs and solo outings through 12 counties with a visit to the Isle of Man thrown in for good measure. Runs breakdown into 4 weekend trips, 8 outings with 3 different groups and 6 solo runs. A full day's mileage averages out at 90 miles and the distance was shared equally between a Suzuki DR200 and a now decrepit twin shock Honda XL125.

Statistics never tell the full story. My 1990 recollections go back to diverse highlights and experiences. A two up picnic and rediscovering my Grand Father's farm. A beach blast. Countless rocky lanes in Derbyshire. The absence of real mud in Essex (thanks to another drought year) and surviving the death dust. There were sunny summer days over the downs in Hampshire, Berkshire and Wiltshire. Then the sheer variety of terrain and conditions in the Isle of Man. The challenge and eventual satisfaction of being run leader for the first time after our group leader suffered an enduro tumble, and delegated me to take a combined Essex/Lancs group of 8 riders on a day long run through many lanes I had never ridden previously. I must have made an impression upon the Lancs group as they christened me Plonker John, a name which has stuck to this day. (I have a good solicitor, Ed). I then took over Essex Run and undertaking a public enquiry appeal which would have sunk me, had not Alan Kind of LARA stepped forward with expert direction and participation. Thanks Alan. Discovering the old RoW files from the early 70's and encountering the herculean efforts of the late Norman Smith - long may his memory live on.

Altogether a rich kaleidoscope, topped off by the camaraderie of group trail riding and the vigorous humour of weekend trips. What did I do with my time before I took up the Trail? a neglected SR500 an absence of 1990 vintage racing programmes and a half abandoned restoration project are testament to my changed interests.

For 1991 I look forward to riding with more local groups and savouring the pleasures of a greater variety of lanes and experiences. My advice to those starting trail riding is get stuck in, and don't be timid - its a great pastime.

My thanks for a vintage trail riding year are due to the Essex, Loddon Vale, Hertfordshire, Cambridge, East Midland and Lancashire riders with whom it has been a pleasure to accompany and special thanks to the lads in the Isle of Man.

Here's mud in your eye

John "PLONKER" Fowler, Essex

The Border Raid

Look at O.S. sheet 80 (Cheviots and Kielder Forest). At the top left corner you will see a track named "Wheel Causeway" in ancient italics. Most people know of its course but everyone assumes it is ploughed out by the forestry. "Moirs" book Tracks of the Borders, now out of print, tells us it was a major route much used before the main A68 was built. Even Edward 1 used it on his travels. In August 88 I attempted it on mountain bike from the English side and got as far as Bagraw Ford before turning back. The path (blocked as a stile at the border) was clearly defined as a break 20 foot wide between the trees. In July 89 Ken Canham decided to have a more determined go at it.

We chose one of the hottest days of the year and managed to man handle the mountain bikes through to Bonchester Bridge. We made a small error which we later corrected but we were very happy to open up a road.

The opportunity to use it with motorbikes came on the Northumbrian weekend we held last September. I took my group the first three miles into the forest but the fallen trees blocking the route made the going very slow. As lunch was approaching we decided to leave via a forest road back to civilisation. (P.S. thanks to the other group leaders:- Brian, Willie, Alistaire, Arthur, Steve, Ken and Andrew).

Next club meeting everyone wanted a try even though it would be a real test of endurance. A few phone calls and it was go for remembrance Sunday. A look at the maps and a big loop using other old roads was decided on. A quick ring to Dave Young produced an account of his Scottish Trail Riding from 1973. His route was a bit further West - (see next installment!) but they used road bikes - Matchless and Velocettes! On the ads page of the TRF Mag was an AJS twinport engine 1930 £5. Add a couple of noughts to that now.

Sunday arrived and the numbers grew. We met at Lewis Burn on Kielder Water, but the car park was padlocked, so we unloaded at the side of the road. Charles McKenzie and Andy Campbell drove down from Edinburgh to join us - who said 13 was unlucky - sure was for Spike, his bike retired after one mile - aftermath of drowning it the week before.

Our first trail was the Coal Road via Bloody Bush. This was a private road built to carry coal from the mines in Plashetts, Kielder, to Scotland. It was awarded as a public road on the 1st edition O.S. The track winds up Lewis Burn and turns into a green lane a couple of miles South of the border. The track crosses a couple of deep ravines via bridges. These have become derelict and care is needed as one is only a foot across in the centre.

The border is marked by a 15 foot high obelisk giving details of the owners - Captain Swinburne and tolls for horses (2d) etc. The name Bloody Bush is from one of the many minor skirmishes from this area's troubled history. The green lane winds down to Dyne Byre. Today we met a large group of ramblers who seemed pleasant enough. Next, a bit of road past Hermitage Castle one of the finest border forts. This was used in Monty Pythons film 'Search For The HolyGrail' - no killer rabbits today though!

Our next road was nearby and has the name Thieves Road. A stoney track follows the stream to derelict Braidlie Hope, via a couple of shallow fords. The road then climbs up the hill and eventually meets the forest. As we ascended the mist became thicker but we managed to find the holloway and the gate into the plantation. This was the easy bit. It would be 2 hours before we reached tarmac again! The Thieves Road was just that. Raiding parties of Scots used to drive stolen cattle, sheep, wives etc. back from their forays in England. Probably the English did the same. After the Act of Union this became one of the many drove routes traversing this beautiful and unknown part of the country.

The route from the gate follows the stream down the valley and up the other side to Dod. Everyone fell off at some stage. I think I was first putting a foot in a ditch with no bottom and falling down the stream bank head first. Ray did a flying 'W' front wheel stuck in a ditch. Back wheel up in the air to the balancing point. Then very slowly, bike one way, rider the other. Owch! It is easy to follow, but hard going.

We then decided to find lunch. A quick trip to Hawick (pronounced Hoik) was cut short after a domino effect with parking the bikes caused Geoff (manners for meat) to have a close encounter with a Toyota Bonnet. We found a good pub a bit further out (Geoff knows them all!).

Refreshed and refueled we set off for Wheel Causeway. The route is not marked on the O.S. map but starts at Cleugh Head, just below Bonchester Bridge and follows a farm track for a couple of miles and then crosses open moor to the corner of Wauchope Forest.

When I used it last September it was very boggy. Now after a couple of wet months conditions had deteriorated and knobbly tyres were essential. The route is easy to follow apart from the fallen trees - I'll take a chain saw up next time! By the time we passed into Myredykes Forest the light was fading and terminal fatigue was setting in. A navigational error saw me leading us down a stream instead of the causeway, but a correction via Fire Break finished me off. Ditch hopping is pretty exhausting, but ever tried it at night with a glowworm enduro style headlight. That last couple of miles took ages. And I was not the only one to expire!

We made it back to tarmac, what a good days ride. There is still a stile above Deadwater Farm - although marked as a bridleway on the O.S. maps. A job for Northumberland Rights of Way Officer, Brian Thompson.

Next year watch this space for further adventures in the Scottish Borders - The Captains Road, Kirk Road, Minch Moor Drove Road, Sundhope Drove Road, Thiefs Road, Glenesk Road and many more.

Would you share an inflatable tent with Alan Kind surrounded by Germans?

Dave Vaughan, Northumberland

Continental Touring

Our secretary has just received a bundle of stuff from the French equivalent of the TRF, called the Club de la Randonnee Tout Terrain (CRTT). They are not quite the same as us, because they hold events which are slightly competitive. I gather that the degree of competition depends on just how competitive you want to be. If you want to pootle(?) along and enjoy the countryside you can do so, but the opportunity to go a bit quicker is there, some of the routes may be flagged and there is medical back-up(!).

Reprinted below is a list of events for the coming season, for further details send for "la fiche technique detaillee" for the event which takes your fancy, to C.R.T.T., 55 Rue Liancourt 75014 PARIS. Mention your TRF membership in your letter.

- 6/7 Avril: Cevennes 91 (randonnee Auvergne sud)
- 27/28 Avril: Raid Patrick Pons 91 (raid sportif Ile de France-sud)
- 8/9/10/11/12 Mai: Corsica 91 (raid-balade en Corse)
- 19 Mai: De Paris a Evreux (randonnee Ile de France-oues)
- 1/2 Juin: Raid Limousin 91 (randonnee region Centre-sud)
- 22/23/24 Juin: Transnormandie 91 (raid-balade de Paris au Mont St Michel)
- Du 8 au 13 Juillet: Transpyr 91 (raid dans les Pyrenees d'est en ouest)
- Du 5 au 10 Aout: Verdon 91 (raid-balade Alpes de haute Provence)
- Du 19 au 24 Aout: Verdon 91 (raid-balade Alpes de haute Provence)
- Du 19 au 24 Aout: Transpyr 91 (raid dans les Pyrenees d'est en ouest)
- 14/15 Septembre: Ardeche 91 (randonnee vallee du Rhone)
- 29 Septembre: Raid de l'Aiglon (raid sportif Ile de France-sude est)

If you fancy more informal, do it it yourself, trail riding in France or Spain, secretary Ian Thompson has some experience and may be able to offer advice. Ian is keen to expand TRF knowledge of European trail riding. He would be very interested to hear from anyone who has ridden or is planning to ride green lanes on the European mainland. His address and phone number are in the front of the magazine.

Ian Thompson, Newquay

Tunisia 91

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On Rights of Way and Knuckledusters

Firstly I'd like to thank 'Nettlebed' for a very professional looking mag. which, looking so good, can surely do the TRF image no harm whatever.

A few comments of the content of the Feb. '91 issue 151, (which had Jan '91 on the cover). Firstly on the subject of signing the lanes. In Hampshire, most of the lanes with vehicular rights have been labelled simply "RIGHT OF WAY". All users seem to accept this and very little hassle is met on the lanes so labelled. This is in direct contrast to lanes in Dorset, where most lanes are labelled as "BRIDLEWAY" and we are lucky to escape an ear bashing at least once every run.

Secondly, Dave Tilbury is right when he says that we need to get together. There is strength in numbers. These other user groups have members with expertise on rights of way just as we have. I know Dave puts in many hours of research at the records office and has undertaken to put in two Byway claims for every lane lost by closure. We need people like him on our side.

On to Tim Stevens bit. With regard to map marking. IT IS a good idea to have centrally held records BUT it is not a good idea to release the information to all and sundry. Some lanes are in very sensitive areas. Therefore, local guidance should always be sought when visiting an unfamiliar area. My advice is to contact the local group well in advance and, if going alone, join a local group run, and if going as a group, request a local run leader.

BIKE RACKS. I use one bought from BMS Developments in Bournemouth. It works very well on my Citroen BX which of course can be lowered to make loading and unloading easier and also has self-levelling suspension. I would recommend using one, especially in the winter cold, when the ride to far off runs can be quite numbing. A couple of things to watch though. BEWARE of the weight being put on the towbar. Every car has a weight limit. I do overload mine but I do drive cautiously on rough roads. ALSO headlamp aim is likely to be upset. Do adjust them BEFORE you leave home. (Or buy a Citroen).

Another recommendation now. KNUCKLE DUSTERS. No, not to punch out that irrate rambler. My Knuckle Dusters are mounted on my handlebars. They do a very good job of (i) protecting the hands against the trees. (ii) stopping the front brake or clutch levers from being applied, by trees, when pushing through those over-grown lanes. And (iii) I have never broken a lever, despite numerous spills, whilst the Knuckle Dusters were fitted.

Keep up the good work. Good Riding.

Howard Millichap, (HAM88) Hants



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GROUP NEWS

At our recent AGM the Somerset Group decided to scrap group membership fees. Therefore, since run fees were discontinued some time ago, it costs absolutely NOTHING to be a member of the Somerset Group. Provided you pay your £12 National subscription and live in Somerset you now automatically become a Somerset Group member with a regular top quality newsletter and at least one organised run a month. What a bargain! "how can this be done"? I here you say. Well, we hope there should be enough income from lane clearing projects and the marshalling of horse events. If not, fees can always be reintroduced at a future AGM. So Somerset Trail Riders we don't want your money just your company, enthusiasm and help.

'Too many indians, not enough Chiefs'. We've all heard that expression. Very much the case here in Somerset. At the AGM I tried to stand down as Chairman and Group Representative only no one else was prepared to do the job. I will therefore continue in the post although I will be doing less than I used to do in the past. Delegation will be the 'order of the day'.

I'm sure anyone who has ever led a run will agree that a day can easily be spoilt by an unpleasant altercation on a lane. We all know the scenario. An holier than thou' walker foolishly jumps in your way insisting that this unpaved vehicular right of way is a 'footpath'. The inevitable and predictable discussion/argument commences. how do you avoid this situation? Simple! Go trail riding when its raining, snowing or freezing. During these inclement conditions most rambles stay at home.

Nicholas Crocker, Somerset

AN EXCERPT FROM A BRISTOL PAPER SENT IN BY BOB SOMEBODY

VOLUNTEERS from a West conservation group braved the snow and cold at the weekend to clear away a dead elm hedgerow. The group, based in Patchway, near Bristol, have been given an Operation Windfall grant to plant a new hedge at the site.

Volunteer Lucy Hamid said the group worked all day to clear the dead wood on Patchway Common and then burnt it on a bonfire. "It was jolly cold so we were glad of the bonfire to keep us warm," she said.

Operation Windfall was set up by the Western Daily Press to help replace some of the trees blown down in last year's freak storms.

Conservation groups who want to replace dead elm tress or hedges may also be eligible for cash help.

Grants of up to £250 are available from Operation Windfall for tree planting or surgery in locations to which the public has access or areas that form local landmarks.

Application forms can be obtained from the Western Daily Press or from your county council's designated contacts. They are:

AVON: Alister Rankine, Woodlands Officer, Avon County Council, P.O. Box 46, Middlegate, Whitefriars, Lewins Mead, Bristol, BS99 7EU.

DEVON: Michael Hatt, Head of Environmental and Planning Services, Devon Country Council, County hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, EX2 4QW.

DORSET: David Pain, Trees and Woodlands Officer, Dorset County Council, County Planning Department, County Hall, Annexe, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XJ.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE: Geoffrey Wyart, Assistant Land Agent, Gloucestershire County Council, The Estate Office, The Malthouse, Standish, Stone-house, Glos. GL10 3DL.

GWENT: Richard Godefroy, Forestry Officer, Gwent County Council, County Planning Department, County Hall, Cwmbra, Gwent, NP44 2XF.

HEREFORD & WORCESTER: John Atkinson, Forestry Officer, Hereford and Worcester County Council, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester, WR5 2NP

SOMERSET: Gerry Andrews, Forestry Officer, Somerset County Council, County Hall, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4DY.

WILTSHIRE: Steve Russell, County Forester, Wiltshire County Council, County Hall, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8JD.

ONLY YESTERDAY someone famous said how important it was to make sure that dictators did not extinguish the rights of others. Never mind who it was, it is a sentiment that TRF members can agree with one hundred per cent. They were talking about events in the cradle of western civilisation, and the dictator in question will be known to all of you.

What about the man who tries to use his power to extinguish my rights? Perhaps not a dictator in the strict sense, but often not really answerable to those whose rights are threatened. Perhaps, too, after several sips of amber liquid even I might admit that our rights are marginally less significant than those of the Kuwaitis who lost everything. The principle is the same though. It is with some forboding, then, that I will be defending our rights next week, at the tiny Welsh town of Presteign. It will all be over by the time you read this, but this is only the first of a series of extinguishments planned by Powys Council. Unfortunately these lanes have not been used a lot. They lie outside the normal clump of lanes used by everyone in Mid Wales, and they involve a bit of tarmac going to link them up. Net result is that it is going to be difficult to show that they

are really necessary. So what if we lose them? Just this - when they decide that the well used lanes are too well used, and put a TRO on, or tarmac them, where will you ride?

I have come across this argument before, even here in the north-west, where little used lanes are neglected because they are a bit off the main routes. I am not sure how to answer when someone on a run says - "I thought this was supposed to be trail riding, so why are we on this tarmac then?" Certainly no way to encourage run leaders! Any ideas?

The Pennine so called Bridleway rumbles on. My latest letter to the Countryside Commission points out that the proposals simply do not comply with the Act under which they have been prepared. This is because they are required to state the status of every bit of the route, and they have not done this. They have stated the "Definitive" status, but as we all know that is often not the highest or true status. They also claim "No Legal Status" for roads set out as roads by Act of Parliament, because they haven't bothered to seek out the evidence or to ask us. Before this business is all over we will need to do a lot

more work in Record Offices, and Dave Marchant, Cliff Brown, and Leo Crone should be congratulated on their efforts so far. They should not have to do it on their own, so plans are afoot to help you to get to know how to help. Watch this space, and if you do want to help, please write in and I will make sure your needs are included.

A Competition!

Now for a bit of light relief. Sitting on my mantelpiece is a full year's membership of the TRF and the local group of your choice, and all you have to do to win it is this: Write to me naming the one tool which is of most use to all trail riders. It should not cost more than twenty quid, and you should explain in less than 100 words why you think you are

correct. Replies will be accepted until May 1, so get cracking.

Finally, it rather looks as though LARA will be getting its act together shortly and actually sending out some information about rights of way changes. I have been lumbered with the job of making up a complete list of all RoW workers who need the details. Some counties are no problem, because there is a well established group with a worker we know about. However, some counties have no group. There may be someone there who could usefully keep an eye on changes and flag up those which threatened trail riding routes. If you are such a person **PLEASE WRITE IN**. Counties so affected include Oxon, Beds, Bucks, & Humberside; I look forward to your news.



Trail Riding in France

Following our successful venture to the Diois last Easter, I have been asked to put on another trip. This one will be in late October 1991, to the same area on the edge of the Alps. We stay with a farmer in the mountains, and he promises to come out with us when he can. If you are experienced on steep and narrow routes, and you enjoy real food and real wine, this week could be the holiday you are looking for. Please ring or write NOW if you want to know more.

BRITISH HORSE SOCIETY EVENTS

& THE T.R.F.

These are one or two day Horse Events comprising Dressage, Show Jumping and Cross-Country. The TRF is becoming increasingly involved in these mainly for the purpose of collecting Judges Score Sheets from each JUMP on the Cross Country Course, but also as general messengers between the other two activities and the Score Keeper and the Public Address.

The purpose of this sheet is to tell you the technique which has been developed over the past 10 years by two old timers at the job. It is interesting to note that EXACTLY THE SAME technique was developed by both persons QUITE INDEPENDENTLY.

1. Charge the Horse Event a Donation to the TRF of £25 per 2 bikes per day, plus a contribution towards petrol, plus free access to the Beefburger Stall, by the back door, ALL DAY. We have found that the Packed Lunches often supplied are quite inadequate for a person who is working quite hard ALL DAY. (Hot Food is essential). Unlimited, free Soft Drinks/Tea/Coffee. Obviously free entry and car pass's are needed. (Take the Missus & Kids). Their Public Address to advertise the TRF by transmitting our Standard Blurb at least 3 times per day. If time is available, a mention in the Program that the TRF is doing the Score collecting (Use the Standard Blurb).

2. Get there in time to do a survey of the course and talk to the Jump Judges. You can either stop to collect the Score Sheets or, with a little practice, collect them on the fly. Tell the Judges what you are doing and ask them to fold the Sheet in half before giving it to you. If collecting on the fly, tell them which hand you will collect it with and therefore which side you will pass them. Tell them that you MUST take a Sheet even if it contains only ONE Horse because this keeps the sequence. Plan your route to avoid crossing the Horse Route if possible.

3. If possible arrange with the START for someone to bring the START/FINISH Cards to you when you appear (to save you getting off the bike). Same at the Scorekeeper if possible, and any other Collection/Delivery point you are lumbered with.

4. Wait at the FIRST JUMP until 5 Horses have gone, then set off, collecting the Score Sheets at each Jump. The other rider will take your place at the first Jump.

5. After the last Jump go to the START and collect the START/FINISH Cards. (Usually Green). I collect the Sheets & Cards either into a Side Haversack or my Left Hand Jacket pocket. Take them to the SCORE-KEEPER and hand them over as a clean but untidy big handful. They will sort them out. Make certain you have collected from EVERY Jump.

6. If you are doing other things fit them in now. If its a BIG Event you may need another Bike. (Not a bad idea anyway in case of breakdown).

7. Main points to remember are that you must keep your eyes and ears open AND KEEP OUT OF HORSE'S WAY, ride with decorum, avoid falling off, keep well away from Joe Public and realise that you are demonstrating the responsibility, expertise and efficiency of the TRF in particular, Motor Cycling in general. Your job is to get the scores to the Scorekeeper WITHOUT UNNECESSARY DELAY. If near a Horse then STOP.

Help/Advice etc from:

Colin Patient 0734 696783 South of Birmingham
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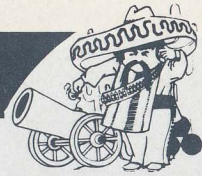
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'Where do we start from?' I asked.

'Chihuahua' he said. Only visions of little dogs appeared in my mind so I had to buy a map and locate this town and learn more about the area in which I was to ride.

The ad which had caught my eye offered 'Trail riding in Colorado or Mexico - Kawasaki KDX 200s supplied' - Mexico sounded great and November was just right for me to get away. I wouldn't even have to get used to a different bike.

It seemed a long summer waiting for November to arrive but at least it gave me a chance to ride regularly and keep fit. Super weekends were spent with the West Midland group in Wales, Yorkshire Cleve Hills and the Peak District as well as many southern and local runs. I tried to anticipate what the going in Mexico would be like - loose roads and lots of dust I thought. Last summer we found some like that in England!

Suddenly it was November and I was still wondering whether to wear my Motocross boots on the plane or find room in a case for them. Nobody complained except myself, inwardly, for making the first choice. They really do get too hot if worn under trousers for 24 hours!

I was really glad to get them off in the Motel at El Paso, Texas on the border with Mexico. I had time to spare before the ride so took off for a week in a hire car and visited relations in Arizona.

The desert was a marvellous surprise. I had not expected it to be so beautiful. The variety of cactus and other plants with their own unusual and particular beauty was fascinating. I learnt to treat them all with great respect, every plant is guarded with thorns or stiff prickles and I was greatly relieved to leave them behind on my way down to Mexico. Falling off into any of those would not be recommended.

After a weeks tour I returned to El Paso - not a hitching rail in sight, far less any cowboys. It's a very lively, fast-growing and busy American border town and quickly dispels any preconceived romantic visions.

Jack Gilbert from Star Mountain Adventure Tours arrived, with two Kawasakis on a trailer towed by his Dodge 'Suburban', after driving a long way from beyond Dallas, Texas. I think it was lucky that I had come all the way from England as the other riders originally intending to join us had dropped out for a variety of reasons. Jack wasn't about to let a 'Limey' down so in the end just he and I had a 'private' tour.

We left next day for the long drive to Chihuahua. There is a town of that name but it is also the name of the largest state in Mexico. We were to go well beyond Chihuahua town and on to CREEL, a small logging town on the edge of Copper Canyon country and the local centre of the Tarahumara Indians.

Despite the noisy arrival of a large group of American trail riders at the same hotel we slept well and were ready for the first days ride straight after breakfast. This was trail riding at its best, unmetalled roads, twisting and turning up and down steep pine clad hills, scary bends and frequent water crossings - and this was the ROAD! It was even better when we struck off the road and on to forest and river valley trails to locate a couple of Indian villages to whom Jack had promised to take some clothes. He had been before and was anxious to distribute some 'cast offs' to the very poor villagers. We rode through magnificent country miles from civilisation following faint tracks through woods and mostly dried up river beds eventually arriving at a scattered collection of log cabins roughly set in a wide circle around small fields.

The Tarahumara are an ancient Indian race who have preserved their culture by maintaining their communities and culture in remote areas. They are consequently shy and our reception was not

exactly ecstatic. Fortunately Jack was no stranger to them and was able to converse and although their nature did not permit them to show great emotion they made us understand that they were grateful for our gifts. My most treasured souvenir of the whole trip is a simple cooking pot which one woman gave to me from her cabin and which I know she had made herself.

We rode on to another village near to a large overhanging rock face on which were drawn ancient hunting scenes and animals. We asked the village leader how long ago they had been drawn and he gave the best possible answer - 'before the old times'. The ride back to Creel gave ample opportunity to reflect upon the vast difference in life style between our two cultures and I doubted the wisdom of such a superficial visit.



There was no time for philosophical thoughts, however, during the next day - survival was the uppermost thought in my mind as we negotiated the long mountainous track through Copper Canyon and down to the small community of BATOPILAS at the end of the 'road'. I still cannot believe that this community is serviced by infrequent cars, lorries and even occasional coaches using this route. For the majority of its length, about 90 miles, it is unsurfaced with deep ruts, loose stone, protruding rocks and terrifying bends with drops of hundreds of feet to rocks below if one slid off the road. I had foolishly sat down hard on a footrest before leaving and the base of my spine was being constantly jarred by the bad surfaces. It was a pretty terrifying and uncomfortable journey and we were glad to get to Batopilas by late afternoon. Our arrival coincided with the local school childrens celebration of the 80th anniversary of the Mexican Revolution and provided some entertainment for us that evening.

We felt better for a nights rest - my rear end did not hurt so much and it didn't seem quite so bad riding up the mountains as it had down. We made a diversion off the road up an even worse track, which had literally been hacked out of the mountain, to visit a Tarahumara mountain village school.

We arrived as about 30 small children, mostly in traditional dress were having their 'flouride' treatment. All were lined up outside with mouths open receiving treatment from their teachers using 'swab sticks' containing the flouride. There didn't seem to be much complaint and most of them looked well fed and happy. We stayed for a while and then rode on finally reaching the outskirts of Creel and what felt like the best bit of road in Mexico. The difference in surface made 'boy racers' of both of us and we just went mad for about five miles with heads down, throttles wide open, swinging through beautiful bends. Perhaps it was a good job that a lorry was on our 'racing' line through a bend and forced us to slow down - the magic was broken and we covered the last few miles at a safer and more sensible pace.

Dick Smith, Glos. West Midland Group

Would like to know the price of the trip - ED



RIDING TECHNIQUES

The riding techniques you use on the road are all useful on the dirt, but you need to develop others. Most of the new skills will come naturally with practice (and falling off when you get it wrong), but here are a few clues.

Ruts: the worst ruts are narrow, hard, and in deep grass. You can't see them so there's no warning, and once you are in one you cannot steer at all. Result: over you go. The faster you travel, the less likely you are to fall if the ruts are fairly short, but the more it hurts when you do. All you can do is keep an eagle eye on long grass.

Another problem is crossing ruts, especially the wide ones left by tractors which are just the right size for a bike's wheel to fall into. What happens next can be very beautiful, with your feet describing a graceful arc, to be followed quite often by the back wheel. To prevent this, you must either be going slow enough to stop in time or fast enough to leap the rut -- and the one just after it, and possibly the two after that.

The thing to avoid if you possibly can is crossing ruts at an angle. This makes the rut wider in effect, and your bars are sure to be knocked onto full lock as you hit the far side.

One problem I have yet to solve, and it ought to be simple: how do you choose the right rut? I always seem to choose the one which gets deeper and deeper until my footrests touch both sides -- very embarrassing if they don't fold! and my rut always has the deepest water and the least grip. One useful tip for slippery ruts on hills - the one with water flowing in it has the most grip, I suppose because the water washes out the clay leaving grippy stones.

To the serious practical stuff -- how to cope with water.

Sooner or later, and it's sooner if you are on one of my runs, you will have to cross a ford. There are several snags with riding through water, but they boil down to keeping the machinery dry and keeping yourself dry.

Modern motorcycles are very submersible. I have known a trail bike to be completely submerged save for one handlebar end sticking up out of the water, them to be pulled upright, and for it to continue to tick over throughout! I have also known others that needed a certain amount of wringing out and turning upside down before being persuaded to run again. But they all did run, sooner or later.

With a proper waterproof plug cap you can drive into water until it laps at the entrance to the airbox, which on most trail bikes is about level with the tops of the tyres. For a ford, that is deep. But to avoid getting water everywhere you must go slowly. The slower the better, which means bottom gear and slipping the clutch. Water offers a lot of resistance, so you will need to be careful to avoid stalling, too.

If it is really necessary to get across and you are afraid that it might be too deep, it is better to push the bike across with a dead engine. A four-stroke should be set on top dead centre on the compression stroke so that the valves are shut. On a two-stroke it is better to block the exhaust pipe and inlet with rags.

Wherever the piston is you could still get water into the crankcases. If you are unsure about the integrity of the inlet system, whip the carb off and block the inlet tract. Oily rags are more waterproof than dry ones.

If water does get in, the quickest way to clear it is to have a tow. First, though, you must remove the plug and turn the engine over several times to prevent a hydraulic lock in the cylinder.

Water is not at all compressible, so the alternative is a bent conrod (unless you have a manual valve lifter or decompressor, of course).

Drain the carburetor float bowl if it was that deep (at last, an advantage for four-strokes), and if you still rely on an ignition system that bashes bits of metal together, blot the contact breaker. Water conducts electricity quite well enough to stop Mr Faraday's excellent law from having the desired effect. Furthermore, resolve to get a proper ignition system soon, and blot the plug to make sure it sparks before screwing it back in. Four strokes which have been submerged may have water in the oil. Check if the dip-stick level has risen - if so drain the water from below the oil by loosening the drain plug BEFORE starting the engine. To remove traces of water left in go for a good blast on tarmac to get everything warmed up really well, that will evaporate it.

There are three ways to tell how deep a river is. You can wade through it, poking in front with a stick if you can't see the bottom. You can watch someone else do the same, or watch them ride through it, but one day it will be your turn to go first.

And you can look at it. If the stones on the bottom are no bigger than your head, the surface will be disturbed unless the water is more than hub height. For those of you who languish in the balmy south, where the water looks like school cocoa and the bottom is mud rather than rock, you'll have to use the stick.

Remember always that the proverb, "Still waters run deep" applies more to rivers than to people and that the shallowest route across is often not the straightest. Try to arrange your route so that you are going with the current in the deep bits, so there is less of a wave.

Finally, if the river is a solid mass of writhing water, go round. Or be prepared to go back the next week for the remains of your bike.

Keeping yourself dry is simply a matter of having tall wellies and keeping your feet on the rests. I have seen riders tape their plastic leggings to their boots to produce a waders effect which can be very effective.

In the winter it can be disastrous if you get really wet. One trick I have used when it looked as if I might spend the rest of the day with wet feet is to remove my socks before starting to cross, and to roll my trousers up as far as possible. Yes, even in the snow. Wet feet and wet wellies can be dried off sufficiently in no time when you are across, but wet socks stay wet all day.

If you do walk it first, take all your spare clothing, loose kit, maps, camera, binoculars and so on, and leave them on the far bank. That way, if you do fall off it won't cost you a fortune as well as a wet arm. It also helps to firm up your resolve when you can see your lunch waiting for you on the other side.

White water motorcycling is great fun. Practice when you can, for you never know when the skills you learn could be useful on tarmac, too.

Tim Stevens

A WAYSIDE SCRAP

Brogger:

A licensed traveller whose business was buying wool from farm or shepherd and selling it at market.

Brogg:

A distinctive stick or branch used as temporary waymark in marshy ground, or on an over-sands route.

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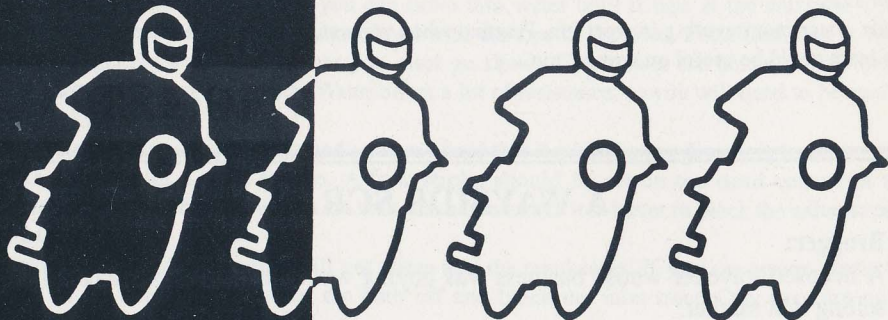
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