

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 Thursday, 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 Abbot

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

Gordon Carr Tel: 0532 644568
1 & 3 Thursday, Bankfoot Cricket Club, Wickets Close, (off Cleckheaton Rd.), Odsal, 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

SEPT1991

No. 158

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

EDITOR: Mike "Nettlebed" Pedley.



Taking the Mountain Air.

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Try to make it interesting!

All contributions to the Editor

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Press Officer: Gwyn Thomas, Minories Cottage, Priddy, Wells BA5 3AU Tel: 0749 75294

Membership Sec: Peter Clark, 34 Oak Rd, Barton -U-Needwood, Burton on Trent DE13 8LR Tel: 0283 713209

Secretary: Ian Thompson, Glebe House, The Square, St. Columb Minor, Newquay TR7 3HD Te: 1 0637 872813

Rights of Way Officer: Tim Stevens, 101 Square Lane, Ormskirk, Lancs. L40 7RG Tel: 0704 894136

Treasurer: Tim Ley, 17 Heigham Close, Shelton Lock, Derby DE2 9QF Tel: 0332 704748

Editor: Mike Pedley, Nettlebed, Newsholme, Gisburn, Nr. Clitheroe BB7 4JF Tel: 0200 445657

EDITOR

Once more I am writing this editorial well in advance of publication date. The reason? I am off to the I.S.D.E. in Czechoslovakia with a gang of mad enduro riders in a converted bus! I'm taking the bike of course, but from the newspaper reports it looks as though we may meet some opposition from the local 'Greens' who have already succeeded in moving the venue from BRNO to a more obscure location on the other side of the country.

The poor motorcyclist and in particular the humble trail rider appears to have an almost world-wide evil reputation particularly amongst those who seek to 'preserve' our environment.

Take for example this headline from a local paper "Trail Riders haunt this walks wildlife and rambles." A full page article gave a pleasing and comprehensive description of a country walk where at one point "the air was rent by the screeching of track motorcycles tearing up the way - deep ruts were witness that this is not a new pursuit here. Two cars and a van are used as a base by the riders and their friends who risk safety without helmets." Sound like TRF members? No, not even irresponsible motocrossers out for illegal practice - just idiots who do not know any better and of course a reporter who who doesn't either for in branding them "trail-riders" he involved you and me and the whole of our Fellowship.

Several AGM's ago, I seem to remember our names being questioned. Should we perhaps drop the 'rider' bit from our title and become the Green Roads Preservation Society or the Historical Rights of Way Fellowship or what have you?

Or perhaps the leopard cannot change his spots and we will always be lumped-in with every irresponsible idiot whoever cocked his leg over a dirt-bike no matter what we call ourselves.

Clearly our name was carefully chosen by our founders some 20 years ago and, at that particular AGM, we obviously voted to remain Trail Riders - but that was then and this is now and the world has become 'greener'.

What would happen if we did change - what would we lose, what could we gain? Would for example the Pennine Bridleway Committee be more likely to consult a "Green Roads Preservation Society" (for we were just about the only interested body not consulted on this project)? Would we lose potential members wanting to take up trail riding rather than preserving green roads (or are the two now inseparably linked) and couldn't find us?

I have heard it said that we are already the best kept secret in motorcycling - it is easier to get information on the KGB than the TRF! (Well, at least everyone knows their address).

But seriously, the world is ever changing - do we change with it and and reflect that riding is not our only objective and that we too are concerned with preserving our environment or do we continue to seeth at every misuse of our name?

NETTLEBED

LETTERS

Not Nice

I am a lawyer representing Dave Barratt and the East Yorks Group, who have instructed me to issue a denial that the afforsaid persons are nice people, as suggested in the letter in the August Trail magazine from T. Medler of Norfolk.

My clients find that being classed as 'nice' is damaging to their reputation and demand a full written retraction of this slur.

Willie Eckerslyke QC

A Triumph for Thames Valley

Hello Ladies (a few) and Gents.(even fewer) of the Trail Riding fraternity, I have at last found my pen again after a week or three, (around seven years actually).

I've been meaning to write for years, what with the post office imploring us to write to everyone and now doubts being penned in the Bulletin regarding rider-agents, well the pressure is too great to resist.

The last comment was prompted by the reading of our July edition after attending the official opening of Chris Buckle's 'Roebuck Motor' rebuilt premises in Rayners Lane, Pinner. As those who have known the T.R.F. for a long while will be aware, once, the bike to have was a Triumph and if it was a Cheyne Triumph then you had reached the peak of technical appreciation. Not that I agreed with that view but it was the subject of much good natured bantering when perchance the guidance system failed and sent Chris into the hedge or even better, the deeper parts of some mud hole. Whichever 'misfortune' nature (aided by Two-Stroke owners) placed in his way, there was always a smile and even the odd chuckle coming from beneath the bike while we admired out loud the finer points of his preparation so conveniently displayed.

It's only fair to say that his comments on our deviations from the planned 'clean' were also quite memorable.

Chris went on with his enthusiasm to become probably the best source of spares and advice on his 'classic' Triumphs and spent a lot of money on his shop in anticipation of the new Triumph range. Unfortunately the effort was in vain as the decision makers decreed that Triumph enthusiasts do not go to 'classic' Triumph emporiums.

His concession now is centered around the Moto-Guzzi and Cagiva, whilst on the alter at the rear of the shop were two Triumph Twins and the spares racks were full. It seemed too cruel to mention the XR200 hidden away.

Chris. is a former Chairman of the Thames Valley Group and has put a lot into our pastime. I for one hope that his wallet does become heavier, with the recession and all of his investment, the stress & strain are likely to be much higher up than his pocket. He deserves all of the support suggested by the large turnout of T.R.F. members, other clubs and even the odd 'star'.

I realise that Tim's comments were not malicious, but sometimes its worth writing to point out that some rider-agents are still in existence.

Brian Crook. Thames Valley Group

Trail Trial Trophy Triumph

West Yorkshire Trail Riders' Tyke Trophy Trial on Bank Holiday Monday at Clerk of the Course, Gordon Carr's farm at Haworth was declared "Best Day of the Year" by some of the riders.

The kick-off was a special test hill to be ridden down and then back up again. This allowed ex club secretary Charles King on his old Army Bombardier to demonstrate the tactics he uses to avoid enemy gunfire. He got both wheels off the ground, and showed the whites of both eyes, as he

simulated being out of control going across the hill and over a dry-stone wall, performed a pirouette on the 1 in 3 grass slope and collapsed over the end card in a shimmer of blue smoke and Welsh invective. Not the fastest time of the day, but most entertaining! Sock it to us again Charlie boy.

33 riders rode 4 laps of 12 observed sections, with a mix of rocks, mud, water and gradient, most seemed to enjoy the challenge. Discarded riding gear around the hillside signified the energy expended from overheating bodies, but most wanted to know "When can we come again?"

The 1991 Tyke is Dave Thorner from Leeds, a most respected winner, by just one mark on his - wait for it - 1936 Panther 350 Sloper that looks like an old farm gate but weighs 3 cwt. He was followed home by a gaggle of Hondas in the four-stroke class. Best two stroker was a delighted Stuart Dawson from Bradford on another less abused Bombardier. A £48 contribution is on its way to the TRF Fighting Fund. Who'll be the 1992 Tyke? Entry list is open now.

Thank you all for your support. Most of you missed a great Green Lane run on Sunday.

Gordon Carr. Tel. 0532 644568

RIGHTS OF WAY LIAISON MEETING FOR LARA ASSOCIATED CLUBS

On Sunday 22nd September LARA are holding a meeting of as many RoW reps from member clubs as possible. The venue is to be the Alumwell Community Centre, Walsall, just off junction 10 of the M6.

The idea is to promote better liaison between local RoW experts from different organisations. It is a meeting for the workers to get to know each other and the problems different areas are having. LARA experts will be available to sort out and give guidance on problems.

The cost per person is £6, including a buffet lunch, with tea and coffee on arrival at 9.30 and again at 4.30pm. A bar will be available during lunch. Direction map and agenda will be sent on receipt of booking slip below:

.....

LARA ASSOCIATED CLUBS RIGHTS OF WAY MEETING 22ND SEPT 1991

ORGANISATION - TRF..... (Local Group)

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....Post Code.....

TEL NO.....

CHEQUE NO..... (£6 per person)

Send to: Mrs. E. Hurley, 109 Marksbury, Bath, BA2 9HP
(Please put LARA in top left hand corner of envelope.)

From time to time you come across ways of tackling maintenance on your dirt bike or if you prefer "Trail Bike". Some of the best tips have come from talking to other trail riders, or from magazines and trade journals. Here are just a few which I am sure will interest you.

1. Removing old grips; Block up the bar end and stick an air nozzle down the other end hole, the grip inflates and leaps off.
Contact cleaner between the bar and the grip the rubber does not like the cleaner and gets very soft.
Before sliding down on the new grip spray the bar end with lacquer paint, the thinner in the paint lubricates the grip going on, then dries and glues the grip to the bar.
Competition riders wire their grips to the bar (remember your bike can fail an M.O.T. for having loose grips!!!)
Seal the grip with silicone to prevent water penetrating between the grip and the bar. Clear window seal or "shoe-goo" is good.
2. Roger Harris keeps a length of plastic tubing inside his bars in case one of the group runs out of petrol. An excellent idea but I don't think he glues his grips on!!
3. Sharpen the teeth on your foot pegs when they are worn, or better still to get surer footing is to cut an extra peg in half and weld the halves on to your existing peg to make them wider (Handy if you wear size eleven boots).
4. Footpeg sagging, a little bead of weld will straighten them out and help you ride better.
5. Back bleed the brakes if you are lazy by pushing a screwdriver between the disc and the pad, this forces the fluid and the air up to the reservoir and back bleeds the system.
6. For conventional brake bleeding, unbolt the caliper and hang it straight down so the brake hose is straight.
7. Safety wire the spokes where they cross. A short spoke is stronger than a long one and by doing this you are making your spokes half their original length.
8. If you have an aluminium rim lock in your European bike throw them away and replace them with rubber ones.
9. Remove the lock nut on your valve stem, it is part of a massive conspiracy to rip out your valve stem and make you buy more tubes.
10. Use a metal valve stem cap (if you can find any these days) with a dab of grease under them. They won't leak, better still use the ones with the valve stem remover built in.
11. You know the rubber band that goes around the inside of your rim. Use it to take your neighbours cat bungee jumping and cover the spoke heads with duct tape.
12. Coat the inside of the tyre with talcum powder (cornflour is just as good) to reduce the chances of pinching your tube when changing a tyre.
13. Liquid soap makes the tyre go on easily then gets tacky and makes them stick to the rim. Most people I know use Swarfega!

14. Warm tyres go on much easier so only change them in the sun when trail riding in Spain!!!!
15. The experts never clean parts in gasoline they use a parts degreaser or proprietary solvent. I usually use diesel.
16. Save bleach bottles, a belt run through the handle is an easy way to carry gas on a long run.
17. Coat the inside of your air boot to filter with grease before reassembly with waterproof grease (that's the white stuff available from marinas) to make a better seal.
18. Supertool!! A pair of needle nose vice grips is an extra shifter, clutch lever, and brake lever.
19. A clutch cable and chain make ten feet of tow rope. You still need to carry tools to remove them!!
20. A 21-inch tube will fit in a rear tyre. Why carry both sizes?
21. Nobody likes stuck throttle cables, wire up both ends with safety wire.
22. Water and fabric softener cleans your goggles. The same static cling that affects your laundry holds the dust on your goggles. Fabric softeners have agents that reduce this.
23. Run a safety wire from your rear brake pedal to your frame to keep mud, brush and small farm animals out.
24. Clean your helmet liner with shampoo.
25. Some of the pros wrap foam around the rear brake lever to keep mud from jamming things up.
26. Cracked engine cases usually can be fixed with epoxy resin, keep some with you in a tool box.
27. Paint the underside of your helmet visor matt black, the reduction in glare is amazing.
28. When you remove a greasy axle don't put it on the ground where it can pick up grit, instead, put it up your silencer!!!
29. Don't tighten clutch and brake lever perches too much they should be just tight enough so that they rotate on the bars in a crash and perhaps not break the levers.
30. Clean exhaust pipes with Navel Jelly and wire wool and it will look better than new.
31. Stick a cork up the exhaust when washing your bike.
32. Don't use Loctite on aluminium threads. The threads will wear out quickly. Use lock washers instead.
33. This must be the best of all.....
Fork seals weeping? Add a little rubbing alcohol to your fork oil.
That will make the seals swell and stop leaking!!!!!!

K.A. Lawson. Cumbria

Soon we will all be sitting in neat rows at the National Motorcycle Museum, setting the TRF on course for another twelve months. Twelve months of what? Rearguard actions to stave off disasters up and down the country, like we do now? Actions to rescue something from a garden here, a golf course there, a TRO somewhere else? Actions to collect up the broken pieces, smashed because nobody knew of our needs, our aspirations, even of our existence? This is what the TRF is all about, now. Need it be so? Should it be so? Might it be different?

How might it be different is what the AGM is about. What could we change to get the pendulum swinging the other way? It is too late to get formal proposals now, but that does not mean that it is too late to think how we can improve, to grope in the porridge of apathy and pull out the silver spoon of inspiration. Two ideas have been rattling about in the recesses of my mental void; perhaps if you think about them too it will help trigger your own novel notions:

A GREEN ROADS CHARTER?

Charters seem to be in the air, so it might be time for us to have one. It would say why green roads are important, for recreation, wildlife, & heritage. It would say what the threats are, from downgrading, ploughing, development, omission from maps, misleading 'definitive' status, ignorance, nimbyism & gentrification, mis-use, under-use & over-use. It would stress that they are impossible to replace. But it would also say what could be done to look after them, with codes of conduct for all users, for farmers, new residents, developers, councils, the quangos, the Ordnance Survey, and so on. For each of them it would list ways in which activities could be modified to help care for these golden threads in the tapestry of our countryside. The charter would have to be as universal as possible, to get the backing of as many groups as we could, and

would be submitted to Parliament, and all relevant bodies for action. Perhaps even to the Queen; they are her highways after all. What do you reckon? Just another idea to be voted in at the AGM and ignored from then on? It's up to you; if you don't care you need not do anything.

A TRF CONSERVATION OFFICER?

For me, much of the value of green roads is the wildlife I fall off into. I like the purple loosestrife, the meadowsweet, the lady's mantle, the ploughman's spikenard, the enchanter's nightshade, not only because each is a pretty thing, but so much of old England is wrapped up in the names alone. My favourite is trailing tormentil - yes, a special plant for us, doubly blessed because it grows beside tracks and even in Grizedale Forest. What a shame our editor abandoned the idea of wild flower of the month. Anyway, the point is, would it be a good idea if we had someone whose job it was to keep track of the wildlife and heritage interest of green roads? Much better, surely, when hedges are threatened, when the plough looms, to have a conservation officer to make a fuss, than for the rights of way chap or the press officer to jump up and down. And what an impression it would make to have the title in our list of officers! I cannot think of a better way to convince the doubters that we care for the countryside we ride through. It need not be a new person, better perhaps to have someone who already knows how the TRF works, so think about the advantages of creating such a job, and think if you might like to have a go at it. You won't need a doctorate in taxonomy but it might help if you know what it means.

Now to the news:

I rang the B&BT about the Barbon golf course, and they said "You have got one too, have you, they are springing up all over the place." Are any of your lanes under threat? Details please, and I will knock together a dossier for the Sports Council who fund many of these

schemes. Why should our money be spent by them to destroy our facilities? So far the Northern Sports Council chap sounds helpful about supporting a Byway claim in the Barbon case. We shall see if there is the usual cavil about nasty motorbikes destroying the countryside from other more pedestrian user groups.

A Mrs. Turner in Chesterfield is wingeing on about an alleged bridleway used by alleged trail riders. She claims that the TRF mark the route on their "official maps", and it is very irresponsible of us because sooner or later some sweet young fourteen year old allegedly in control of a horse is going to do something silly and it will all be our fault.

"Anyway we have stopped one of your members and we are going to prosecute so what do you say to that?"

What I say is "Please prosecute, let the magistrates decide who is right and who is wrong, on the basis of the evidence we both have. Then, if you are right, I will be pleased to write to every TRF member for miles around and telling them of the true status of the lane and that they should ride elsewhere. But if you are wrong, then all the world will know that your lane is a road after all, and one more word about stopping our lads and you will be in danger of an obstruction charge."

I do not intend to reveal how strong our evidence is, but I have had words with the member concerned and he has certainly been interviewed by a tall man in blue with a pointed head. Latest news from Mrs T is that she is not going ahead. I wonder why?

Meanwhile, in Shropshire, review of the so-called 'definitive' map goes on steadily. Geoff Brookes is doing his not inconsiderable bit for us in the area. If you have ridden there for any useful period, or have any other evidence that might be useful, send it to me and I will rev up a carrier pigeon for him. I nearly said kick start, but that would not be friendly. Not for the pigeon anyway, and we need all the friends we can get.

What a really wonderful ride Craven Old Road is. There is a rocky climb for about a mile, lurching from rock to boulder, from rut to gully. Then a plateau of walled lane on top of the world, with two or three sad old gates. The road follows the limestone outcrop to take advantage of the drainage, and away in the distance can be seen the winding walls of Danda Garth, and the green stripe of Monkeybeck Grains, and then the climb of Arden Gill and its viaduct. Then the limestone ends suddenly, overlain by glacial drift, and bog. Brown bog, green bog, black bog, and deep bog, for about two hundred yards. More limestone, a gate or two, and now we descend the flank of Whernside. What is all this? Duckboards down a mountain? Yes, this is part of the experiment I mentioned last month. Not just duckboards, here is a strip alongside covered with some sort of underfelt. This then is the bit they don't want vehicles to use. Here indeed is a stretch where the original route is wired off. Odd, that surely that fence is an offence...

"Do tell me how you got permission to put a wire across the highway."

"Oh, that bit is not the highway."

"But surely it follows the fence down the hill?"

"We are sure it doesn't."

This is from a body who don't even know if it is a road or not, and yet they can pin down the route within inches across a waste of peat in the middle of nowhere. Something else that is odd, too. There is no evidence at all of an increase in motorcycle use, rather the opposite. So why lie? And to put the tin hat on it there is no need for voluntary restraint. All they need is a pair of signs asking us not to ride across their underfelt. We can go round, there is half a mountain of room. No worry about trespass, the road is foundeorous so we have a right to deviate. And if they are really worried about trespass why have they wired off the original route?

See you in Solihull!

TIM STEVENS

Not the Road to Wigan Pier...

It was on the final leg of our journey along the Ribble Way that the decision was made. "So when are you going to start this racing thing then?" "Now - or another season will have gone - I'll have to use the Trail bike". It's at times of adversity that some of the most brilliant of decisions have been made - but after a week of blisters, heat and other adverse type things - this was all I could manage.

THE OBJECTIVE - to start road racing, after several years of "I'm gonna....", on August 11th, Preston and Districts second meeting of the year at the Three Sisters race track at Ashton in Makerfield near Wigan, Lancs. Classes entered - Single Cylinder and up to 250cc Racing Class (yes, really).

THE BIKE - a Suzuki TS 250ER of 1980 vintage. Preparation - aided and abetted most skillfully by my friend, walking partner and race team manager, John - was simple. Most bearings and bushes in the chassis were replaced, engine was presumed okay (it ran) and racing legalities such as minimal lock-wiring and drain bottle etc.were attended to. A bit (lot) of friendly advice from John Carr Motorcycles (Brock, Garstang, Preston) led me towards making a single seat from foam and duct tape which was used as a backing for the side-mounted race numbers. Front plate was fastened via headlamp cowl mounting brackets. Renthals were shortened 1 1/2 " either side. Mudguards were removed completely. Wheels involved the only serious expense (see class. ads): An 18" rim moulded round the front hub by Rossendale Wheelbuilders, (highly recommended) for £60.00. It should have been £70.00 but he took the trials tyre for his newly rebuilt Triumph; & £130.00 for a pair of Avon AM Series tyres. This is unavoidable as regulations require a minimum of H (130mph !) rated tyre. After a plug check we decided to have a look with the head off; John: "Is that a dent in the top of the piston or just a shadow ?" Me: "I can get my thumb in it." John "Is that right then?" Both "No." Yep, this was the Saturday before the Wednesday practice before the Sunday race and we had to fit a new piston and rings - forget the re-bore, there's no time to run it in. Re-built, it started immediately after the seventy third kick, with the throttle jammed wide open and the new parts bedding in nicely at 7000rpm. 100 road miles confirmed that a) it probably wouldn't blow up and b) it really handled quite nicely, considering.

Wednesday Practice arrived without John due to work commitments. Seven other bikes there and no-one looking even nearly as nervous as me. Gear on, start bike and let it warm up. Then on and out - if I wait any longer I won't do it. Second turn - streuth it doesn't look this tight from the Paddock - tight esses then into long right hander before straight (!) then fast right hander before going hard right alongside the pit lane. Five laps later and I'm laughing deliriously in my helmet. I feel like I haven't been upright since leaving the paddock and there's nothing coming the other way! Back to the Paddock for some air, a chat with the chap with the very pretty Ducati and the arrival of Fred, our printer - a man with a watch.

The next session confirmed my fears - we were well off the pace. What pace? Well the pace of the little ***** TZR125 for one thing, which was four seconds a lap quicker at 70 seconds dead. The final session saw four clear laps on Freds watch at 72 seconds and with both tyres getting very sticky on the edges and footrests and boots down on most bends (this is not as heroic as it sounds - trail pegs, while high, are too far forward) this seemed to be about it.

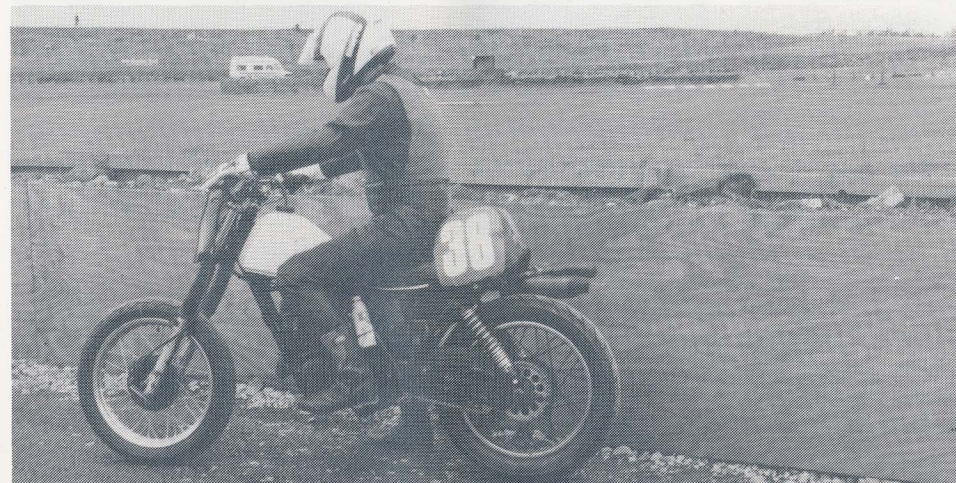
THE DAY - Overcast at 6.30am. Collect John and we arrive at the circuit for 8.00am. We were both well aware that the bike could possibly be marginal in several areas - so the scrutineers "pass"

stickers are followed by a jubilant tea and toast in the circuit cafe. Our races are four, eight, eleven and twelve. But first there's practice. Ever been frightened? Worried on Walna Scar ? Dangerous on Dandra Garth ? Forget it. This is real fear - 30 bikes and twenty nine of them know exactly what they're doing. I want my mum. Four laps though and I'm getting the hang of it; hanging into the bends hanging off the bike - should be able to get inside that GPZ 600 at the hairpin - then too much front brake, locked wheel, grass and straight into the Kawasaki. We both stay on but it was a bad moment - I've had enough practice to last me a lifetime.

Our paddock neighbour with the immaculately prepared Moto Guzzi Le Mans Forgotten Era racer informed us that we were down to seventy one seconds - But the 125's and quicker MZ's were three seconds better. Did I have anyone to race against?

Yes, Rancid Tom Nelson from Manchester. A latter day hero on a multi coloured MZ and the meanest racing line West of Wigan.

Two races flash by and I'm waiting in the pit lane - the third race finishes and I'm out on the track. Slowly circulating, a serious procession, the calm before the storm - a cold, considered, controlled calm - already the fright of practice has been left behind.



Modified TS250 with worried Steve Griffiths waiting in the Pit Lane.

I start at the back, by choice, and as red goes to green I nearly flatten an RS125 struggling with its tall first gear. Into the first corner and it becomes crystal clear - I'm not going to come from the back of the grid in my first race and win. But I might catch Rancid Tom. And I do, three laps later I went past him as if he had stopped (it later transpired he missed a gear coming out of the hairpin) and I wasn't last.

Two laps later and three real racers came past me - on the edge, into the right hander by the paddock and in a different race. These boys are serious - you'd better be ready for them and let them by, they've places to go. One more lap and it was over, my first race and I'd survived - I was on top of the world (ish).

After watching a couple of races it was time to prepare for race eight. We doubled the size of the pit crew by bumping into British-Bike Tony - He of the home-brewed, bright yellow, Norton Rotary Cafe Racer - built before the ludicrously priced F1 factory version was available. Then, in the pit lane where nobody but nobody is allowed, Fred the printer brandishing the biggest telescopic lense you've ever seen. "Keep still and I'll get you for the mag...."

Same procedure as race 4 - but Rancid Tom had got wise. This boy missed no gears, missed no apexes and had the only seven foot wide MZ in the world in front of me for five and 3/4 laps. It had to be in the long right hander; slightly faster, slightly wider then footrest slightly digging into tarmac and I'm under the bike sliding backwards across the track with these Oh-so-quick boys behind me braking hard to avoid a points-losing contact.

No harm done and after a compulsory check over (Ambulanceman " Did you lose the front end or the back end ? " Me " Sort of all of it really...") I started to wheel the bike back to base for repairs when realisation dawned. The leathers! My wonderful made to measure, brand new racing leathers may be harmed! A quick check reveals a few scuffs but



Rancid Tom about to be stuffed by our Steve

nothing worse. (You may wonder at the logic here, but they cost more than the bike...) Machine damage was minimal - throttle, easily repaired - footrest, large hammer always carried - and silencer, off and staying off until a bracket could be re-welded.

Re - scrutineered and into race 11. Carefully. Starting at back again and no Rancid Tom. Two laps later and I notice something different - power. That Royal Enfield and the TZR aren't getting any further away and everything feels cleaner. The silencer must have been strangling the engine. End of race and straight into the pit lane for race 12 - a quick re-fuel and we're ready to go - except the throttles jammed wide open and it won't clear before the gate closes - and that's it. My racing finished for the day.

We watched the remaining races, me full of confidence and explanations about racing lines and braking points now that it didn't matter. Tony and John full of an idea about resurrecting an old A10 grass track outfit and modifying it for road-racing. And Fred full of an idea about me writing an article for the magazine using one of his photographs. A full day.

THE RESULT - Be Serious....

THE VERDICT - Really, mission accomplished. John's fears vanished after scrutineering which neatly summarised part of the exercise. Could a virtually standard Trail Bike be made suitable to race? Yes. Could it be competitive? At that circuit, yes, to a degree. Did I enjoy it? Next race 14th September.

If anyone is silly enough to be interested in doing something similar I will be more than willing to help with any information. Now I wonder if I can get my RD350F2 fitted with a 21" front wheel & trials tyres before the winter sets in.....

Thanks to John for all his help, Fred and Tony for being there and to Nigel Mellor - He of the very successful CR500 Motocrosser - cum - road - racer who gave me the idea in the first place.

Steve Griffiths. Lancs.

(Your magazine typesetter - the man who didn't want January to end this year.....).

INFORMATION

Required

Information is vital stuff. Without it no organisation can function. The TRF needs to update information on local groups. We need to know who to contact about national events, local shows, rights of way, all sorts of things. The secretary tries to maintain a record of who does what. A Questionnaire went out in May to all local group reps. A follow up letter went out to all those who had not responded by early July.

If you live in Cambridge, Gloucester, or North West London, you may be surprised to hear of the demise of your local group. Your representative, or the last one we have a record of, has failed to respond to our request for information. Loddon Vale group rep. tells me the group no longer exists though there are lots of active trail riders in the area. Does your group still exist? Please let the secretary know. The East Yorkshire group advertised runs in the July magazine, but outsiders couldn't get in touch. East Yorkshire were not listed as a group on the back page of the magazine. We are a national organisation. We need good communications. We can't contact the local group unless we have the right name. Help us to keep our records straight. It's a small chore for someone in your group, but it could make the difference when it comes to saving a local lane which we know is under threat and you don't. Is your group listed on the back page? Is the information correct?

Information from the questionnaires : 21 of the 29 groups responding said they helped at horse events! This is 72%! We need to make more of this. Tell us how.

6 of the 29 groups (21%) are actively involved in lane maintenance. Is this good enough? Are you clearing lanes, but not telling us. Facts and figures are powerful weapons. Help us to use them in our favour. Tell us what you are doing.

2 groups admitted helping at exhibitions. 5 groups have weekends away. 3 groups organise social events like barbecues. Northumbria holds an annual Toy Run. Teeside and North Yorks Group give lectures. What do you do? Replies tell us that we have rights of way workers looking at the following counties: Avon, Berks, Bucks, Cheshire, Cleveland, Clwyd, Cornwall, Cumbria, Derbys, Devon, Dorset, Durham, Essex, Glos, Gwent, Hants, Hereford, Herts, Kent, Lancs, Leics, Lincs, Northants, Northumberland, North Yorks, Notts, Powys, Shropshire, Somerset, Southern Scotland, South Yorks, Staffs, Surrey, Sussex, Tyne & Wear, Warks, Worcs, West Yorks, Wilts.

Is your county covered? Do you know your local rights of way officer's phone number?

Information is vital stuff for any organisation.

We need to tell others about what we do. We have published a set of handouts to do this. Copies were sent to your group rep. some time ago. More are available from the Secretary. Each handout is aimed at a different audience. Some are ideal for prospective members, some for passing walkers, some only for those who have paid their subs. Use them.

Two thirds of the original stock have already been sent out. We need to know at the AGM in October whether to reprint and how to improve. We need information back from you.

We should have posters available shortly, to complement the handouts. Richard Tallon of the Bristol Group is co-ordinating this.

A personal plea for information from the Secretary. Does anyone know about Holland? Do you have any trail riding contacts in the Netherlands. He is visiting North Germany on business in late October and wants a spot of trail riding on the way back to the Hook. Can anyone help or advise?

Final offer - lots of folk now seem to have tasted France. You should try Spain. The Secretary has some useful information for first timers, and would like to hear from anyone who has been.

Ian Thompson. Cornwall

GREECE

RAMSBOTTOM GAY BIKERS TRAIL RIDING TOUR OF LESBOS 1991

Now that I've captured your attention let me hasten to assure you, dear reader, that the O.E.D. definition of 'gay' applies here ie. 'cheerful, lighthearted and colourful'.

This year two thirds of the founder members of the R.G.B. went on a family holiday to Lesbos, the third largest island in Greece (about 28 miles across). As well as indulging in the usual holiday pursuits such as swimming, sunbathing, drinking to excess and slagging off the Germans, we decided to hire motorcycles so that we could explore what pass for roads on the island. We were very impressed to find so many hire firms offering a wide range of well maintained bikes, many of which are not available in England,*!*! it!. DT 200R's, NX 250's and XT 250's as well as peculiar Yamaha TW 250's with fat trail tyres and leccy starting. Ignoring all this exotic machinery (OK so I forgot my licence) we plumped for Yamaha 'Town Mates', the ubiquitous placcy, for about £6 a day. There were cheaper bikes on offer but I drew the line at asking " could we hire two Chappies?"

As responsible bikers protective clothing was worn at all times, consisting of official pink R.G.B. T shirt, flameproof Bermudas, Frank Thomas racing flip flops, Elastoplast knee sliders and authentic Lesbian muleteers headresses made from gingham tablecloths. Thus equipped and with the strains of Steppenwolf's 'Born to be slightly naughty' ringing in our ears we set off to find the first trail, which is not difficult since all but the three main 'A' roads have not received the benefit of Mrs. Macadams son's attention. Apparently the atrocious roads in and around the home town of Mike Dukakis were going to be surfaced if he became President of the U.S. He didn't so they weren't!

Dusty, stony roads are the norm in Lesbos and are used by cars as well as bikes. What we consider a trail is a 'B' road in Lesbos. We did come across a chap on an NSR 250 on one such road, which proves machine suitability is all in the mind! Not surprisingly, since there were lots of mules tracks, many of which would cause Steve Saunders concern or at least to drop a gear or two, but then he doesn't ride a Town Mate. You can tell when you are nearing a village because there is a sudden outbreak of tarmac or concrete. One particular village, Stipsi, reached by a very steep winding path from the back of the hotel, contained numerous bars all full of scrofulous old men intent on reducing the ouzo lake, not surprising since a half tumbler full of ouzo or Metaxa, Greek brandy, only cost 15p. In fact you can buy half a bottle for 65p! The locals were very friendly, probably because we were such big spenders.

To me the thrill of spending the morning trail riding and arriving at a quiet beach for a swim, or at a tiny fishing village where part of the mornings catch could be eaten for lunch (the local delicacy is Red Snapper in a Lesbian sauce!) cannot be beaten. However, the down side of such motorcycling is the large number of riders who fall off due to inexperience or long lunches. One German family at the hotel all fell off the same bike but at different times, something of a record, I believe. Injuries ranged from severe gravel rash, a broken elbow and tendon damage, to a broken ornately painted finger nail (which seemed to cause the most angst).

Lest we should seem to be biased towards one form of transport, we did conduct a four way 'shootout' in best "Cycle" tradition between Town Mate, Fiat Panda, donkey and pedalo. The Panda coped with most of the roads incredibly well and found favour with teenage daughters standing on the back seat with shades and reversed caps looking like Ernst Rommel. The donkey part of the test consisted of riding for two hours in an evening over a very steep winding path to get to a

secluded cove, a barbecue of lamb chops, salad and wine and a soak in a very hot thermal spring. The ride back in complete darkness was quite an experience, especially when all the animals bolted. Most of the donkeys would easily meet forthcoming E.E.C. noise regulations but not noxious emissions. Rock climbing abilities are exceptional but comfort leaves a lot to be desired, due to low tech suspension. Apparently Clive received scars due to poorly sited buckles on the saddle but nobody would volunteer to apply the Savlon.

Strange thing, but at one particular beach resort the bars were full of females with short hair and tatoos. Half were Dutch (who mentioned Dykes here) and the other half were from inner London councils. We decided they must be Brians (strange chap Brian, high voice and soft bits). Peculiar method of greeting too, no shaking of hands, they just groped one another. Vive la difference I say!

I must thank our beautiful Airlink rep, Carina, for putting up with us and pretending to be amused and the people of the Theophilus Hotel for allowing us to corner the market in sunbeds.

If anyone is interested in becoming an R.G.B. send an s.a.e. for a copy of t'constitution to:-

*Rodger Davies, 9 Woodford Copse,
Chorley, PR7 2ER.*

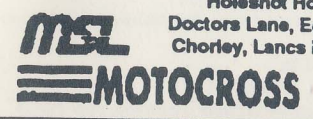


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