

GROUPS

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Chris Braznell, Tel: 0121 421 3086
1 & 3 Thurs, 9pm, The Mitre, Church Road, Bradmore,
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George Pritchard, Tel: 01761 452606
2nd Mon, Warmley Community Centre, Deanery
Road, (A420), Kingswood

CAMBRIDGE

Richard Palmer, Tel: 01353 88344
1st Thur, Golden Ball, Boxworth

CHESHIRE

Nigel Hockin, Tel: 0161 456 8270
2 & 4 Mon, The Robin Hood, Buxton Road, High Lane,
Hazel Grove, Stockport

CORNWALL

Sally A. Madgwick, Tel: 01208 74411
Ring Secretary for details

CUMBRIA

Roger Harris, Tel: 01539 725198
2nd Tuesday, Derby Arms Hotel, Witherslack, Nr. Kendal

DERBYSHIRE & SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Kevin Marsh, Tel: 01246 237910
2 & 4 Tue, Enfield Arms, Broughton Lane, Altercliffe, Sheffield

DEVON

Richard Arscott, Tel: 01803 612950
2nd Tue, The Welcome Stranger, Bickington, Nr. Newton
Abbott

DORSET

Tony Summers, Tel: 01202 894419
1st Tue, Greyhound Inn, Winterbourne, Kingston, (Nr. Bere
Regis)

EAST MIDLANDS

Graham Chinnery, Tel: 01332 863433
2nd Wed, The Chequers Inn, Main St, Breaston, South
Derbyshire, J25 on M1

EAST SCOTLAND

Les Mollison, Tel: 01382 738530
2nd Wed, Glencarse Hotel, A85, Perth to Dundee Rd.

EAST YORKS

Dave Barratt, Tel: 01977 794143
2nd Wed, Kellingley Social Centre, Knottingley

ESSEX

Aelwood Finch, Tel: 01245 329118
2nd Wed, The Swan Public House, Great Eastern,
Nr. Dunmow

GLOUCESTER

Wayne Little, Tel: 01452 611735
1st Tue, Painswick Institute, Painswick, Glos.

HERTFORDSHIRE

Colin Adlam, Tel: 01727 875618
1st Wed, Coach & Horses, Newgate St, Nr Cuffly

ISLE OF WIGHT

Mick Holbrook, Tel: 01983 866361
Last Thur, Liberal Club, Landguard Rd, Shanklin, IOW

KENT

Jeff Hayward, Tel: 01322 863521
2nd Tue, Pied Bull, Farningham, Nr Brands Hatch

LANCASHIRE

Keith Westley, Tel: 01704 893215
1st Tue, Hindshead Pub on A49, Charnock Richard

LINCOLNSHIRE

Alan Wilkinson, Tel: 01529 60793
4th Thur, The Queens Head, Kirkby-la-Thorpe, Sleaford

LODDON VALE

Bernard Green, Tel: 01344 50289
2nd Thurs, Inn in the Park, Woodley Centre, E. Reading

NORTH MIDLANDS

Simon Lowe, Tel: 01298 24388
1st Tue, Stafford Arms, Bagnall & 3rd Tue, Cheshire Cheese,
Buxton

NORTHUMBERLAND

1st Tue, The Beamish Mary, No Place, Co. Durham

NORTH WALES

John Mills, Tel: 01477 534425
1st Wed, Hope & Anchor, Ewloe Place, Buckley

OXFORDSHIRE

Pat McGuire, Tel: 01844 238414
3rd Thursday, Duke of Marlborough, 1.5 miles North of
Woodstock

PEAK DISTRICT GROUP

Phil Sadler, Tel: 01332 344495
1st Thursday, 8pm, Travellers Rest, Ashbourne Road, Derby

RIBBLE VALLEY

Tony Broughton, Tel: 01200 423239
2nd Tue, Pendle Hotel, Chatburn, Clitheroe (off A59)

SHROPSHIRE

Lynton Powell, Tel: 01743 358423
2nd & last Wed, White Horse, Shrewsbury

SOMERSET

Peter Banks, Tel: 01749 860396
Last Thur, The Canal Inn, Wrantage

SOUTHERN

Russ McDermid, Tel: 01703 812371
3rd Wed, The Ship Inn, Oxtesbury, Nr. Winchester

SOUTH LONDON & SURREY

Brian Wright 0181 680 5734 Wed-Sat, 01797 363373 Sun-Tue
9pm every Wed, Epsom Heath & Football Club, Priest Hill
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SOUTH NORTHANTS

Trevor Gardiner, Tel: 01788 815927
2nd Mon, The Live & Let Live Pub, Harpole, nr. Northampton

SOUTH WALES

Stuart Dodwell, Tel: 01446 710851
1st Thur, Welsh Institute of Sport, Cardiff, 8pm

SUFFOLK

Richard May, Tel: 01787 374073
Last Wed, Manger Pub, A134 Sudbury Rd, Bury-St-Ed.

SWINDON

Pete Owen, Tel: 01793 750557
1st Wed, Jacobs Ladder, Stratton St. Margaret, Swindon

SUSSEX

Bevis Billingham, Tel: 01243 585128
Last Thurs, Ashing on Social Club, Rear of Red Lion, A24,
9 miles North of Worthing

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Leo Crone, Tel: 01325 380117
1st & 3rd Wed, Blacksmiths Arms, Swainby

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Don Hoaglin, Tel: 01474 813977
3rd Mon, District Arms, Woodthorpe Rd, Ashford, Middlesex

WEST ANGLIA

David Knight, Tel: 01933 313816
1st & 3rd Thurs, Scott Bader Clubhouse, Opp. Parish
Church, Woolaston, Wellingborough

WEST MIDLANDS

Dennis Hayter, Tel: 01527 523550
1st & 3rd Tue, Wilmcote Mens Club, Stratford on Avon

WEST SOMERSET

David Dyer, Tel: 01643 841139
2nd Wed, Anchor Inn, Exbridge

WEST YORKSHIRE

Gordon Carr, Tel: 01535 644568
1st & 3rd Thur, Bankfoot Cricket Club, Wickets Close, (off
Cleckheaton Rd), Odsal, Bradford

WILTSHIRE

Bill Riley, Tel/Fax: 01225 863811
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WYVERN

Steve Pighills, Tel: 01902 672479
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TRAIL

OCTOBER, 1996

No. 218

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

EDITOR: Michael "Nettlebed" Pedley.



Deryl Vaughan-Jones (Suzuki DR200) on The Isle of Man during TT Week June '96.

"A member of the South Wales Group brings a new meaning to the word Sheepwatch!"

Injured lamb found on hillside and carried a mile to farmhouse - on bike!

CONTENTS

Editor	3	LARA News	9
RoW News	4	Roads & Their History	10
Merchandiser's Report	5	The Baja Experience	12
Central Southern Reg. Meeting	7	Trail Riding The Hard Way	17
Group News	8	Letters	18

All Contributions to the Editor Please keep it short and sweet!
COPY DEADLINE: FIRST POST, 1ST TUESDAY OF MONTH

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The views expressed in 'Trail' are those of its correspondents and not necessarily of the editor or the T.R.F.

EDITOR

Your copy of TRAIL is of course 'put to bed' some two weeks before it actually drops through your letterbox, so I am writing this piece before our 1996 AGM but you will be reading it after the meeting has taken place.

It will have been perhaps the most significant AGM in our short history and I anticipate that, for once, attendance will be rather more than the usual 5% or so. Hopefully your Committee will have allayed most of our fears for the future of the Fellowship and we can now start to rebuild our Fighting Fund.

My own Group, the Ribble Valley, have asked members for a voluntary donation of £10 per head and I know many other Groups have made similar donations. These efforts will go a long way to restoring our funds and I urge all Groups who have not already done so to get involved. It is surely a small price to pay for the fun we get out of our hobby.

Other happenings in the Rights of Way world seem suddenly insignificant but I know that with your help we will recover and live to fight (closures) again!

I am reminded of my Editorial in the July issue of TRAIL in which I proudly announced 'no doom and gloom...'. Please feel free to ignore the Editor's advice in future!

Finally, on a lighter note, if you need something to take your mind off our problems have a read at Frank Melling's experiences trail riding in the USA in October's Motorcycle Sport & Leisure. Dream on...

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INKPEN WAY

Archaeologists and historians are agreed that the old trackway which runs along the chalk ridge south of Newbury is a 'via publica' of very ancient origin. The Wiltshire part of this route has already been reclassified as byway but it is proving difficult to show that the section in Hampshire between the A34 and the A343 has vehicular status as hardly any of it appears on Inclosure Awards, Tithe maps or Finance Act maps. This section runs through 3 Parishes and unfortunately for us, they have been considered separately for reclassification. Thanks to many of you who wrote in response to Pete Wildsmith's earlier plea we were able to provide good written user evidence at the public enquiries for Burghclere, Litchfield Woodcote and Ashmansworth. The Inspector for Litchfield Woodcote was convinced and thought that the centre section should be a byway purely on the strength of the user evidence. The opposition challenged his decision in the High Court but it was upheld. The Burghclere and Ashmansworth inspectors, unfortunately, were not convinced and decided that the Litchfield Woodcote byway section should be sandwiched between two bits of bridleway leaving us with a right mess! Hampshire

County Council have found a bit more evidence which, although not conclusive, does tend to favour byway status and we now have to prepare for second enquiries for Burghclere RUPP 40, on 3rd December at Burghclere Village Hall and Ashmansworth RUPP 18 sometime next year. If there is anyone out there who has ridden these lanes (before 1991) and who has not already written in then we would like to hear from you now. To those who wrote in before we would like to see you at the next public enquiries. The Inspector for Ashmansworth said in his report "The user evidence with regard to RUPP 18 is more substantial and specific, with 10 statements that refer to use of the track by cars and motorcycles more than 20 years ago, in some cases in the 1960s and 1970s. ... it is unfortunate that none of those who made the statements were present at the Inquiry to substantiate and be cross examined on them". This suggests that had more supporters actually attended the enquiry the result might have been different. **If you can provide written evidence or attend the enquiries please contact Frank or Penny Page on 01703 777696.**

Penny Page, Southampton

Due to the circumstances in which we find ourselves at this time, when national funds are obviously being diverted to more important matters than providing funding for merchandise, various grandiose plans for the expansion of the range of items on offer are having to be cut back to realistic levels. Also, some duff information led to some incorrect prices on the order form in the August issue of TRAIL so please take this report as indicating current prices and availability of TRF related items. A revised Order Form will be available next month but you can butcher the old one. If necessary I can always give you a call to sort out problems.

SWEATSHIRTS

These are a high quality product, colourfast, very warm and long lasting, available in a range of colours, the most popular being Maroon, Bottle Green and Dark Blue, but Red, White, Black, Royal Blue, Sky Blue, Yellow, Grey, Emerald Green, Jade and even Pink is available to special order. As standard a sweatshirt comes with a TRF "Protecting Green Lanes" roundel embroidered on the left breast, mostly in gold with contrasting circles depending on the base colour of the material. Your choice of words, your name or your group's name, or something similar can be included around the logo at no extra charge. They come in sizes S, M, L and XL (which suits a 42" chest) at £16.00 and XXL at £17.00. They can be ordered singly or in quantities and the most suitable way of getting them to you is to include £1.00 for postage and packing, which is excellent value, because it actually costs £1.05 in stamps, let alone the cost of the jiffy bag and time, etc. Alternatively, I can deliver the item(s) to various meetings/shows by arrangement, although this is not as satisfactory for me as it was for Richard because I do not live close to the supplier as he does.

POLO SHIRTS

Again, a high quality cotton product, available in the range of colours with similar badging, etc., and unfortunately, a similar price from this supplier, but I am looking at others.

PULLOVERS

In crew neck or V-neck styles these are available in a similar range of colours and sizes with the same arrangements for the TRF roundel on the left breast and the price is dependent on the size and material.

Sizes S, M, L, XL, in Acrylic material - £19.00

50/50 mix - £25.00

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For XXL

please add £1.00 to the prices quoted and if you require the item(s) posted add a further £1.00.

T-SHIRTS

"Fruit of the Loom" or similar quality white T-shirts are available in similar sizes at a cost of £6.50 each but with a large green TRF "Protecting Green Lanes" roundel printed on the front. It will cost you just an extra 50p for postage. There are no more Green/Gold ones left now. I carry a stock of these in all sizes and take them to exec. meetings, etc. so if you want one tell your Group Rep. before he or she goes. I will be at the AGM - will you?

STICKERS

I am chasing various people who have small stocks of assorted old stickers, round ones, rectangular ones, green one and blue ones and will sell these on as they become available. Currently, thanks to their donation by Alan Wilkinson, I have a small stock of white rectangular stickers (roughly 5cm x 15cm) with the green roundel logo and the immortal words "TRAIL RIDERS DO IT NEC VI NEC CLAM NEC PRECARIO". That's fine for you to say and I just know that there are hundreds of Latin scholars out there waiting to translate it for me. On the positive side it certainly could be a conversation piece. There are two sorts, Type A to fix OUTSIDE the glass and Type B to fix INSIDE the glass. The price is 25p each and will be post free with another item, but obviously will cost 26p for postage individually, so why not buy 20 or 30 for your group, it will still only cost one lot of postage.

BADGES

Enamel pin-badges of the TRF "Protecting Green Lanes" roundel in green and chrome (approximately 25mm diameter) will be available very soon, unfortunately not before the AGM which is a pity. The price will be £3.50 and £1.00 of that will go directly into National Funds. Please order with something else or as per suggestion for stickers.

MUGS

There are no more of the last batch at £1.50 and the new batch will be more expensive. While I have great respect for the Royal Mail these items do not travel well as you can imagine. Collection only.

Other lines and replacements will be funded from the sale of the above so please spend freely, you know it makes sense.

Rob Sawyer

CENTRAL SOUTHERN REGION MEETING

Just a brief line to correct a wrong impression given in the last two issues of the Bulletin about the meeting of the Central South Region. The meeting was held as scheduled in the Carnarvon Arms, Burgclere, near Newbury, (an excellent place to meet and eat) and was a warm friendly meeting which got through the business in record time and even saw some of the Grand National. What was cancelled was the speaker - because the attendance promised was not very large and it was not fair to drag Peter Banks - or Tony who volunteered to come when Peter Banks had to cry off - many miles for the few who said they would come.

Since the Oxford Group did not wish to avail themselves of the experience and wisdom of their fellow members - or even wish to tell us their accumulated knowledge and since the Isle of Wight Group could not afford the fare to the main land the attendance was definitely lower than we deserved.

The next meeting will be held at the same place on Wednesday, 23rd October 1996 at 7.30p.m.

Could anyone who would like to come, telephone me for details and directions on Basingstoke (01256) 841350.

Happy Riding, John R. Higgin, Hampshire

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• GROUP NEWS •

SUFFOLK GROUP

It's been (or should have been) a bit of a variety pack this month. Firstly we (Steve and Dave) helped out Sudbury MCC by marshalling at their biggest enduro of the year - amazingly they managed to create a 15 mile course in well populated and cultivated (the land that is) area near Long Melford. Left with the kids, I dragged them along to watch, hoping for maybe one whinge free hour - 4 hours later we were still there and they were disappointed that it was over!

The following weekend there was another horse ride to marshall at Raydon Airfield, which I, as I've heard nothing to the contrary, assume went off OK.

We managed to take up two tables at the meeting instead of the usual one, without the help of Essex this time. John's new Bandit was on view - looks very tasty but could be a handful in the mud. Unfortunately John is threatening to join the list of ex-members - can you have a three man committee? Yorkshire ex-pats, Phil and Bradley made their debut and also their first appearance.

It was our intention to send two riders to marshall and 'sweep' for a mountain bike event at Shrublands Park (famous 60's scramble track near Ipswich). Unfortunately, on the eve of the event, the organisers decided that they couldn't insure us. Hopefully this can be resolved for future events.

Our run was the same day as the mountain bike event, the silver lining being Dave joining me and new-boy Phil at Bury station. 'Go west...' and all that, so we did, covering three counties. After some usual morning resistance - 'we don't like motorcycles', 'we don't want them round here', 'motorcycles and horses don't mix, did you know that eight horses were killed on the road last year'????!!!, 'we shall fight this byway order' - things improved. Pointing out that we marshall at horse rides was satisfying, but there's no swaying these people from their stand. We reckon that they sit in their houses, boots on, waiting for us to come by once a year, but only in the mornings, after their Sunday Lunch they can't get out of the chair. In contrast we met many horse riders who all smiled and said hello. One old dear went further, as she approached she asked us to keep talking, to her or the horse, any old nonsense and to remove our helmets 'so the horses would realise we were human!' Phil had to give the horse a sweet to reinforce his case! The roads were very dry with not enough water in the fords for us. There was no evidence that we'd passed by, in fact hardly any surface damage anywhere, just a few tractor ruts. The Red Lion at Kirtley were biker friendly and after initial disappointment of a ten quid Hobson's Choice Sunday lunch, they came up with the required plates of sarnies.

It's the Edinburgh Trial next for me, then some of us should be visiting Essex Group to get well oiled by Castrol. We've got a run on November 3rd and horse events on November 16th/17th and November 30th/December 1st. It would be nice to see some more faces, new and old, now that it's getting nicely cold and wet and Castle Acre will be getting deeper.

RoW Question: Do TRO's have to have signs at each end to be enforceable?

Richard May

LARA News

BHS OPENS TRAINING DAYS TO LARA

The British Horse Society have invited motoring users to take an active part in their Rights of Way Training Days for 1996. Five mid-week meetings are planned, in Llandrindod, Taunton, Wetherby, Reading and at Stoneleigh, during the months of September and October. LARA has been helping with the planning of these sessions and we are pleased that in this, as in other ways, closer ties between user groups are producing good results for those involved. Rights of way workers who wish to be considered for one of these Days should contact LARA HQ at this address: PO Box 9, Cannock, Staffordshire, WS11 2FE.

SPORTS COUNCIL ENDORSES LARA FORWARD PLAN

In parallel with the 1996 LARA conference, we have been working on a Forward Plan to guide LARA activities into the next millennium. The plan, created with the assistance of Sports Council personnel as well as LARA members, has now received final approval from the Sports Council. LARA Chairman Christopher Belton said 'We are all keen to build on the progress we have made so far, and we are very pleased to know that our ideas and our way of working have once more been given this seal of approval'. Copies of the plan are available from HQ; please send an A5 sae.

TEESIDE & WEST YORKSHIRE AGM

on November 20th, 1996

Be There!

Raffle
with
bumper
prizes

Roads & Their History

This letter is being written for a variety of reasons. I have a genuine interest in roads and their history. I hope TRF members find the information both useful and interesting.

The term 'road' did not mean the track or surface that we use. The 'road' meant a right of passage. Under the medieval system the duty of each parish was to preserve the rights of passage (road) for the king and his officers. Surveyors of Highways, an unpaid duty, were appointed for one year. The Surveyors duties were defined by the statute of Philip and Mary 1555. This was a temporary

enactment which was made permanent by Queen Elizabeth in 1563 (no rush in those days!). There were several new Acts of Parliament until The General Highways Act of 1835, which was in force until the end of the century.

The modern tracks were a legacy of the Dark Ages (5th to 11th Century), which were in turn a legacy of the Roman Times. Some Roman roads were 'lost', as they sometimes required detours. One explanation is that the culverts under the road became blocked. A small pond would form and the marsh would regain a foothold. The area would become impassable, and a new crossing would be sought. Travellers would now find the nearest driest possible crossing. An example of this is on the Great North Road. Ermine Street (it's Roman name) crossed the Welland about a mile and a half to the west of the present crossing. The 'new' town of Stamford grew up around the new crossing place.

The 'Turnpike Roads' of the 18th Century were open to misuse, abuse and mismanagement. Consequently, by the turn of the century, the 110 trusts had a debt of £7,000,000!! Turnpike is a literal term. Originally the 'gate' consisted of a large spear (pike) balanced on a vertical post. The Toll Master/Gate Keeper would 'turn' the 'pike' to close or open the road.

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The Turnpikes had their problems! In 1842 there were riots against the dishonest toll-houses, even though a previous Act had tried to change matters.

The 1835 General Highways Act repealed 'service in kind'. This was a requirement, by law, that each borough or parish was obliged to provide labour, free of charge, to repair roads. The 'Act' still left the power in the hands of about 15,000 'highway parishes'. The 'Mid 19th Century' was a good period for the turnpike roads. However, railways were making an impact on transportation. Road travel cost 6d/mile @ 10mph, rail travel cost 2d/mile @ 30mph!! The turnpike roads were

gradually 'run down' and the last toll was levied on 15th October 1895 on Telford's Shrewsbury to Holyhead road on the island of Anglesey.

The Local Government Act of 1888 set up the County Councils to help administer the money granted by the Exchequer. Main roads were the responsibility of the Councils, secondary and subsequent roads were the responsibility of the Boroughs and Parishes. The motor vehicle put extra pressures on road maintenance. Legislation and mechanical carriages were uneasy partners in the late 19th Century. The 'Red Flag' Act imposed a speed limit: 4mph (country) and 2mph (town) on 'road locomotion'. Unfortunately the Act never specified a flag size! Henry Hewetson (an English Benz agent) had his son carry a 1 inch red ribbon tied to a pencil in front of his car! The bicycle received some hostility. To avoid further conflict it was declared by statute in 1888 that the bicycle was a carriage and had the right to use the 'road'. No wonder they are not allowed on footpaths!

Every time you venture on to the green lanes of our country you cannot escape its history. It is also our heritage and we must preserve it!

Alan Hodson, Manchester

POA

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THE BAJA EXPERIENCE

Most readers will be familiar with the incredible USA enduros run in The Baja, that Southern section of the Californian peninsula that is actually in Mexico. Well, Andy Deighton of the Loddon Vale Group, a software engineer presently coming to the end of a two year stint in San Diego CA, in his letters to the group expressed a desire to ride The Baja. Being a 'nut-case' he did it! Here's his story.

Hi Bernie,

Well I made it! I actually got through three days of the most incredible exhilarating, painful and best ever riding I have ever done in my life! Below is my account. Feel free to share! *Andy*

We covered around 450-500 miles of Baja in one large loop. Most of our trails were part of the Baja 500 and Baja 1000 races. On day one we had tried to blaze a brand new trail (something that is rarely done in England!) over the hills, but were hindered by tyre piercing cactii. On day three we tried the same thing, and partly succeeded - laying a new trail for others to follow. Nick Peltzer, "Trailmaster" summed up the trip - "This is a true story Andy and you're in it".

DAY ONE

The trip started on Thursday 15th August. Nick "The Trailmaster" Peltzer of B.O.R.A., turns up at my house in a large nine seater van towing a six bike trailer fully loaded with XR600Rs and gas. Two of the bikes were for guys we were to meet in Baja. Three were for myself, Nick and the other rider Alan. The fourth was a spare. We crossed the US/Mexico border at San Diego/Tijuana and headed down the coast to our first night's stop in Ensenada.

Nick turns out to be a young-ish (36) family man, whose main 'occupation' is growing Christmas trees and palms. His family were one of the first in Southern California to grow and sell Christmas trees that were comparable to the ones you could only previously buy up north in Oregon or Washington state. His part-time occupation, running Baja Off Road Adventures, keeps him busy for the other ten months of the year! From the first second, he come across as being a great guy - full of incredible stories spiced up with even more incredible expletives! "You're not one of those born-again Christians are you Andy?", referring to the fact that I can expect lots of boyish behaviour on this trip (ie swearing, tall-stories and beer drinking).

A couple of hours later, we're in Ensenada. One thing to remember about

Mexico and especially the Baja peninsula, is that it is incredibly poor. How anybody makes a living is anyone's guess. The main towns (Tijuana, Ensenada, Rosarito) thrive on tourism and cater well to (young) Americans looking for a good time. The towns themselves are dumps, but pretty good for Mexican standards. There is a smell in the air - a mix of sewerage and Pemex, the state run gas company whose gas is of a pretty poor quality. Our first night is to be spent in a hotel. By Mexican standards, at around \$60 per night, it's expensive. I share a room with young Alan. We take a dip in the pool and I get a chance to talk more with Nick and Eddy, the as of yet unmentioned chase vehicle (the van) driver.

The other two riders turn up at the hotel. Mike, a 50 year old Vietnam vet and Jim Raider. Both have done the Baja 500 and 1000. We all get drunk in several bars, hit the sack, dreading the 5am wake up call...

DAY TWO

The 5am wake up call turns out to be a 4.30am wake up call. Mike has worked the 4am shift for over 25 years and this is the time his body is programmed to get up 365 days of the year. Nick had warned us the day before that Mike would be pacing up and down the corridors of the hotel, banging on our doors at 4.15am. It turned out to be 4.30am. I had the shakes pretty bad. Drinking in excess before riding in Baja ain't a good idea I can tell you.

We all finally surface around 5.30am. We stumble into the van and look for breakfast. The local "Denny's (an American chain of 24 hour restaurants) is closed. So we find a Mexican 24 hour food place instead. Just about everyone has burritos or tortillas stuffed with refried beans and meat! How I stopped myself from barfing I have no idea. I settle for three pancakes and plenty of coffee. I still have the shakes.

After breakfast, we get back in the van. Nick's annoyed because the whole idea of getting up early was to start riding before the sun got up so that we could avoid the inevitable heat. It hadn't happened the way he planned and now it was about 6.30am and we were still 30 miles from where we were to drop off the bikes and start the riding. To cap it off, we get stuck behind an 18 wheeler hauling the most overloaded trailer full of trash you have ever seen. This is Mexico! If it were Europe or the US, that truck would have been banned from the road.

We finally get to Ojos Negros - this is where we are to unload the bikes, gear up and get riding. The scenery has already had its effect on me by now. All I can say are things like, "Wow!", "xxx", "Jeex!" and "This is incredible!". It really is that amazing.

So, the time has finally arrived when I experience exactly how heavy an XR600 is! Just rolling it off the trailer I can tell this is going to be a handful. Add to that the fact that Nick has added long-range gas tanks to them all.

I don my riding gear - brand new, unbroken-in boots, body amour, CamelBak drinking system, bum bag loaded with drink and PowerBars and of course

trousers and shirt!! By this time, the sun is beating down on us all and Nick is still cursing the fact that we didn't leave earlier.

I clamber upon the XR and after a little tuition from Mike the War Hero, I kick it over. Wow! It's just like starting a 250. I was expecting vicious kick-back but it started in 2 easy kicks. Out here in Baja, noise doesn't really matter. Neither does a riding license, insurance or a helmet. My XR roars into life. Nick had obviously added several bolt-on goodies to get more beef out of the stock power-plant. Mike and Jim have super trick XRs. Both have enormous headlights, digital enduro clocks, etc. I get the feeling that these guys are gonna be fast.

After Nick checks his two-way radio with Eddy the support driver, we burn off over the tarmac into the hills. Now, I don't want to go too deep into detail, but the riding itself was like nothing else I've experienced. The first part of the ride was through a pine forest. We go single file, with Mike or Jim at the back acting as the 'clean up' rider. The guys disappear from my view. All I can see is a cloud of dust. Nick had advised that we should pull back if there's so much dust we can't see the road. I do so. I realise that it wasn't the fact that I had pulled back that made me the slowest rider, it was the fact that I was simply the slowest rider! The others were gone in a blink! I was happy that there was a 'clean up' rider somewhere behind, but I was pretty miffed at realising that I felt like I was learning to ride all over again.

The XR I'm on is fast. The motocross schools I had attended had taught me to get up on the tank round corners and stuff, but a lot of this technique goes out of the window when it comes to riding on sand. Don't get me wrong - Baja is not one vast open desert like the Sahara. We're riding through lush, green pine forest, but the trail itself is mainly made up of dried up river beds and there's a lot of sand, see? The front wheel starts to do it's own thing, crawling around beneath me. I must be doing around 40mph right now and the last thing I want to do is crash and burn on a fully gassed 600! Nick had said that one has to get right back on the bike and *increase your speed* when you hit these kinds of conditions. It works.

After overshooting a couple of hairpins, I catch up with the rest and we finally take a stop at "The Saw Mill". The Saw Mill is basically a guy's shack in the woods. He sells us a few Pepsis, Nick chats with him in Spanish and we're on our way again. Our final destination for today is the famous Mike's Sky Ranch - about 100 miles from the Saw Mill. Mike's Sky Ranch is only accessible by off-road vehicle. It is a resting point for just about every famous American off-roader that has lived or is living. Larry Roesler, Ty Davis, Eric Geboers just to name a few. However, that's a few hours away. Nick stops us all high up on the trail and points to a distant mountain in the haze. That's where we're headed. I'm knackered already and we've still 100 miles of high desert riding to do.

Our trail brings us down the valley into a small village. Tumbleweed winds its way down the 'street' like so many Westerns have portrayed in the past. We hitch the bikes, ditch the gear and chow down. Chow consists of burritos, beer and

Gatorade. During this break, we notice that Alan's bike has three consecutive spokes missing! We notice that his rear wheel also has a flat! Alan is bummed. Eddy has met us here, so we unload the spare bike (the only XR in the group with a stock tank AND a rear drum brake) and Alan is slightly happier again. Wow, to have the luxury of changing bikes when you need to, eh? Lucky for some!

We start up our trusty steeds and get moving. We're on a dirt road, so the opportunity to get into top gear is with us. It instantly disappears when we find that the road is liberally sprinkled with cabbage sized boulders that instantly appear through the dust. It gets obvious too that we're gaining height.

After a couple of hours of riding, the trail gets tricky. We've been negotiating our way through miles of sand wash and my 'get your butt on the rear fender and give it plenty of gas' technique is helping big time. But what now looms in front of me is the nastiest, steepest rock climb I've ever seen. Alan and Jim get into second and ascend. Their technique looks like a trials riders. Up off the seat, knees squeezing the tank, with the bike bouncing around beneath them. I panic. I get into first, forget about the clutch and potter my way up through the rocks without even choosing a line (choosing a line turns out to be the most important rule of off roading). I round a corner in the hill (the track is about four feet wide) and bounce off a big rock. The bike lands on its side and I'm exhausted. I'm on a steep hill, with nothing but canyon around me and sharp, dry rocks beneath me. I just about manage to lift the XR, but I don't have the energy to get my leg over it. I want to die. The heat is oppressive and my breathing is strained. I hear Mike the Vietnam Vet behind me. Like Superman, he parks his XR, runs up to me, pushes me aside, jumps on my XR, kicks it over, rides it up a few feet to clear the hard stuff, gets off, holds the bike up whilst I clamber onto it. This guy is taller than me, is 20 years older (but looks 40 years older) and he's just rescued me from a gruelling, slow, hot death! He is and will always be my saviour! I get the bike up to the top of the hill. Mike's close behind me. Everyone has a good laugh at my expense. After taking a pint or two from my CamelBak, and after some severe 'encouragement' from my riding buddies, I remount and we're off again.

We got to Mike's Sky Ranch about an hour later. It was like stumbling into heaven after riding through 150 miles of hell! Mike's has a spring water swimming pool, 60 shady rooms, a full bar and posters of just about every off road driver and rider, all autographed. We strip off our gear, hit the bar, hit the pool and tell stories of the current day's riding. Bliss...

DAY THREE

After a hearty breakfast and plenty of picture taking, we hit the trail. We're off to find the Pacific coast (the Baja peninsula has the Pacific to the west and the Gulf of California to the east) which means heading west down the mountain we just climbed. The trail is nice and technical. Lots of second gear stuff, uphill rock climbs (not as bad as "Simpsons", the name of the climb that almost killed me) and

river crossing. We finally hit the fire road that will take us down the hill. It's open and sweeping. No crash barriers here to stop you from going over the edge either. We pass one or two 4WD, but that's about it. The view from here is like being on top of the world. After several hours of excellent, fast trailing we see the sea! Beneath us is the Pacific Ocean and there's not a human being in sight. Nick leads us down the cliff onto the beach itself. This is where the fun really starts. For the next couple of hours, we're kids again. We have standing-start races, Mike and Jim get their XRs in the water (Nick warned us sternly about not getting his bikes in the salt water), we do some speedway riding around clumps of seaweed and we have flat out blasts down the beach. Jim got up to 92mph. My top was around 80. We did this for 18 miles south.

Day three's destination was "The Old Mill". A group of chalets situated on the banks of a small cove on the Pacific coast. Prime fishing ground. What makes this place extra special for me is that the surrounding countryside is dotted with about a half dozen extinct volcanoes. It's an incredible site. We roll the bikes into the courtyard, get into clothes more suitable and hit the bar - big time. This is the evening I would end up regretting. I drank way too much, but to top it off, I ate clams. Clams straight from the sea. Anyone will tell you to avoid the water and any animals taken straight out of the ocean surrounding Baja. The next morning, I'm sitting on the loo for half-hour stints...!

DAY FOUR - FINAL DAY

I've been a bad boy and now I'm paying for it. Today is our final day and all I wanna do is stay in the bathroom. But I've got to ride, so I don my gear, take it off again to go to the loo, don it again and we're off. This time the riding is a little more relaxing. We're gonna be doing about 28 miles of beach riding. We need to beat the tide today, so speed is of the essence. When we can ride the beach no more, we cut inland a little but still follow the coast line. We pass die-hard surfers no doubt from California, parked up in their VW buses enjoying the totally empty beaches and surf breaks. We stop where Nick has spotted an enormous dead whale on the beach. It's so decomposed it looks like a 50 foot jelly fish. We continue up to San Jacinto, or "Shipwrecks" as the surfers call it. Before us lays a large boat, lying on its side, sitting on the beach. We exchange pleasantries with some surfers and we head on out. We've cut way inland now and we're heading up into the hills. No more tricky stuff now. Just wide open, fast trails. As we come over the hills, the temperature starts to rise as we get lower. I can feel the trip coming to an end now as the trail starts to turn more into fire road. After about 100 miles of this, we see tarmac. We see people. We see Eddy and the van. We pull up to the trailer, pass round the beers, wash our boiling heads in water and toast the end. The end of my first but not last Baja adventure.

Bernard Green, Berks, Loddon Vale Group

TRAIL RIDING THE HARD WAY

I just thought I would send you some photos of trail riding in the South of England. The Transalp was my brothers and here he is riding a very wet and sticky North Downs Way and the Elmley Ferry Lane. The Transalp was always a better bike than its looks might have suggested and we had a lot of fun with it. The other photo is me on a very early incarnation of my trusty and now well modified Honda C70. At this stage it still had road tyres and the original forks and was quite a handful on the wet chalk and clay lanes and the front wheel had the nasty habit of jamming in the forks in muddy lanes. Although it still looks a bit odd, these days it will run rings around bigger bikes in wet clay and is a darn sight lighter to lift out of a hole.

Trevor Butcher, Essex



LETTERS

SOUTH WALES IN THE SNOW

Back in March, Paul, Gary, Jonathan and John from North Yorkshire met up with Bob, Gavin and myself from Essex for a trail riding weekend with Yoshi Adams and the South Wales Group in the area to the north of Cardiff.

On the Friday Bob, Gavin and I found the pub that we were staying in more by luck than judgement, as our map was at least 10 years old and didn't show any of the new bypasses or motorways. We didn't ask directions as we didn't have a clue how to pronounce our pub for the weekend, the Ynysddu Arms. We had arranged to meet Yoshi for an evening drink at 9.00pm but as we arrived early, 3.00pm, we started drinking anyway. Yes, I enjoyed the Friday night, talking about rights of way and swapping tales.

The next morning most of us woke up bright eyed and bushy tail, very strange. Anyway we set off with Yoshi leading on his KMX200 and his friends Paul and Gary rounding up the stragglers. The third lane was particularly memorable, a moorland crossing in the snow, followed by a snow covered cliff face. I was definitely a bit apprehensive about that one as I watched Yoshi go over the edge. Fortunately the rider in front of me saw sense and took the safe route down

bypassing the steep bit so I quickly followed him.

It was good to ride the Gap road again, the view down the snow covered glacial valley to the north of the Gap was stunning. A little later we went through a narrow gate with mud on one side and an upright plank of wood across the middle. Paul impressed us all with his trials riding expertise as he almost bunny hopped his (borrowed) DR350, over the plank, out of control straight into Gary's new RMX250. We should have had that on film, particularly the look on Gary's face.

By the time we arrived at the lunch stop (half past three) I was tired and could have stayed in the pub for the rest of the day with very little persuasion. Unfortunately we got going again. I say unfortunately, because shortly afterwards we were faced by Grwynne Fawr. Uphill. For those that don't know,

it is a steep climb up a series of slippery rock steps and boulders and is one hell of a struggle in the snow.

Apparently the South Wales Group motto is "No turning back until it's dark". Well we did the last lane at half past seven and it was pitch black. Considering that it was night time, the view from the top of the Ebbw Vale lane was spectacular. We seemed to be at the top of a very high sheer cliff face. The street lights in the bottom of the valley were almost vertically below us to the left and snaked off into the distance. Apart from that all you could see whilst riding was a bit of grass in front of your wheel and the line of red tail lights ahead. An excellent day's riding.

On the Sunday quite a lot turned up for the ride so we split up into groups. Our leader was Arthur who rode a DR650. The Gap Road is subject to a seasonal TRO so we made the most of the right to ride it and did it again but this time doing a very different loop to the previous day. This time there was thick fog to the north for the Gap. A big change from the previous day. Again, a great day's ride with very little road work.

Many thanks to Yoshi, Arthur and the South Wales Group for an excellent weekend.

Neil Gamble, Essex

AN APPEALING LETTER

As I'm not able to attend this year's AGM, I thought it better to give a report via the magazine. And in light of recent tragic events it might offer another means of increasing local/national funds:

Little information has been forthcoming this year so most is of our local group:

For the Loddon Vale group this is our 15th year of involvement with the equestrian world "down south". Mostly this simply involves collecting over a cross-country course in very pleasant park land, both at small and international events.

We are well liked by those involved and organisers relax when they see "their" regular "bikers" arrive. During the average eight hour day we each cover between 60 and 100km, are given lunch and endless coffee/tea. Most large events require a team of three "bikers". In return we ask for a donation per head from which we pay riders expenses as required. We also get free TRF publicity over the PA system.

This year the Loddon Vale group, assisted on two occasions by more local groups, attended thirty events including two "benefits" for Red Cross and PDSA.

My problem is I'm wearing out my regular volunteers and still turning down requests for our assistance!! Despite previous appeals in "Trail" and "MCN" I would like more volunteers in the Southern Counties to spread both the load and the message.

For the groups already involved and with local "horsey" contacts, I'm sorry

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you're not mentioned, (I've heard nothing) but for those thinking of becoming involved, I'm more than happy to put both parties in contact. The requests seem to come in mainly around Easter so most of the wet/muddy trail riding is over, this might be the gentle summer exercise you are looking for as well as swelling those funds!!

Colin Patient, Tel: 01734 696783,
Equestrian Events Coordinator (or something like that)!

THE MEMORY MAN

A member of our club was riding in the Tiverton area a few weeks ago and on turning into a lane at Berrash Cross, came into contact with a wire which was stretched across the entrance. No tape was hanging from it for visual reasons and it was head high. He lost control of his machine, ending up in a bramble hedge.

The next day he had to visit the hospital and was given a neck support. It was too painful to work so he lost two days. I suggested after reporting it to the local RoW Officer at the Council Office that he should give the landowner a ring.

He did this and explained in the first few moments what had happened, how he felt about it and the damage that it had caused, in a calm and sensible way. In fact, it was his partner that did the phoning and when she had said her bit a voice on the other end grunted an apology and rang off!

He was very lucky, if the wire had been four inches lower it would have cut into his neck, instead of catching under his helmet and forcing his head back.

Lesson - ride with caution!

M. Troake, Devon

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A GREAT DAY WAS HAD BY ALL - I THINK!

I arrived at Pateley Bridge early (I usually do). It was 8.20am, it was peaceful and quiet, apart from the pleasant noise emanating from the scout camp on the other side of the River Nidd. I wanted to start about 9.00am so I expected my fellow travellers soon. I had brought some fuel as a precaution as Keith Westley was riding his bike from home! A journey about 70 - 80 miles on his XR250.

Keith is a stalwart of the Lancs. Club. He is Chairperson, Secretary, glass collector, "chief-cook-and-bottle-washer". He is also an experienced trail rider and

he would use this experience to the maximum today. Since retiring from teaching Keith has started a gardening business. He has worked hard recently and has had little time for trail riding. To highlight this phenomena I will give you an example. We both have XR250s, mine is two months old, Keith's is about a year old and we have done the same mileage!!

Martin Davenport arrived next. He came with wife and bike gear, but without bike. They had spent the day in the Dales on Saturday and had stayed overnight in Pateley Bridge. Phil Lord and Alan Ogden arrived later with Martin's trailer and all the bikes. Martin seems to have it 'sussed'.

Some of the 'troop' were missing. Mark Vipond had hurt his back. Andy Chislett's XR was in bits. Ian Wright was working (poor sod).

We set off for Summerbridge and headed North to Kirby Malzeard. After the 1932 cart road at Dallow Hall we headed East and turned North on Drift Lane. We then took the clockwise loop over Fountains Earth Moor passing two large rocks on our left known as Jenny Twigg and her daughter Tib. Then moving eastward over Grewelthorpe Moor back towards Grewelthorpe. Road 25 is tarmac over Swetton Moor. Keith tried to avoid a sheep on the road in front of him. Although he fell off the bike and suffered some injuries he was otherwise OK. Later we travelled East down Lane 60, at about 205756 there is a tight right and then a tight left bend. Keith didn't reach the left-hander, he decided to go straight on at the first bend. He said 'I was going down the lane and the bend was *there*'. He slapped on

the anchors but his wheel washed out. Luckily there was a nettlebed to help him! Is this the first time a nettlebed has helped him? I wonder? Phil Lord following said "I saw this small red part of someone's clothing in the undergrowth, it turned out to be Keith. He was OK though". Everybody enjoyed Redway and Melmerby Moor after lunch. Horsehouse was easier than usual (summertime = dry), but still a challenge. If I hadn't gone sideways, or hit the tree, or fell over, or lost grip and a thousand other excuses... I would have cleaned that bit of road!

We arrived at base at about 6.00pm. A great day was had by all (I think?).

Alan Hodson, Manchester

STELLA ALPINA 1996 - UNLUCKY OR WHAT!

Two days before I was to leave for Italy

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the bike decided not to run. After two major overhauls, one for the Coast-to-Coast and one for this event I cannot believe it. We put it down to the CDI unit. After a few last minute phone calls to Phil Fawcett, a borrowed CDI would be waiting for us when we arrived in Italy. So along with Phil, Andy Tyas and me Dave Wood, we packed the van and set off Thursday afternoon for the long drive down to Bardonecchia arriving Friday morning. After a short kip I started working on the bike, changed CDI units, put tank back on and gave it a kick - nothing, dead, no spark. This continued until Saturday night when I gave up after trying everything I and everyone else could think of.

Sunday dawned, the day of the Stella. I managed to secure a ride as pillion on the back of an Africa Twin piloted by Ian, otherwise known as EMO. This was hairy at times to say the least, "you all know riders don't make good pillions", but I was glad I made the trip despite having no rear brake coming down the mountain. Ian did a great job controlling that big Twin.

Monday. I've borrowed an XR250 off Denny Chappell from Newcastle so with our leader Phil "The Red Head" Fawcett off we goes to climb some mountains. After a good morning mountain climbing and being attacked by millions of flies whilst having lunch, we met up with the rest of the Geordie Possie. We set off looking for another mountain to conquer.

Now you know when you get that feeling and all of a sudden everything goes pear shaped, well, just after a reasonable climb up though some loose stuff, we comes out into a small meadow with a small brook running at the side. Nice, I thought so too. There was this drain pipe about a foot in diameter across the trail. When I hit it I thought now I've done that wrong! Bounced once then straight into the brook. Then over the top the long way round, but on the way hit this very large piece of mountain side next to this tree. This is going to hurt, I thought!

So there I was gathering my thoughts upside down in a river halfway up some mountain in Italy, with water trickling past my crash helmet. I decided it was time to move before I drowned, but there was a hell of a pain coming from where my left shoulder used to be and my left leg was trapped under the bike. I still don't know how I got out, but Alistair found me sitting on the side of the bank some minutes later, contemplating life's mysteries like how

you get up the hard bits and fall over the easy bits.

Anyway Alistair sorted us out, hid the XR in the bushes then came the painful descent down on the back of his bike. To this day I don't know how he managed it.

To cut a long story short that ended my trail riding in the mountains. We made a sling from one of my race shirts and I spent the rest of the holiday hanging around the hotel sunbathing with all those lovely girls. But like a true Brit I kept a stiff upper lip!!

Thanks to you all, I'll be back in six weeks if I can get the thing to start!!

Dave Wood, East Yorks.

CLASSIFIED

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blue, size 10, £40 ono. Steve Todd 01457 868648 Derbyshire.

YAMAHA WR200 "N" reg, 1995, 2200 miles only. Good condition. £2650 ono. Phone Michael on 0191 456 4696 (Tyneside).

XR200R lights, "V5" disc front stainless rebuilt wheels/exhaust, recent Metzeler, cam chain, safety seat, "O" ring and sprockets only 500 miles ago. Unused so £895 also XL185 engines/XR200R forks/f. wheel T61 tyres/disc hub. Tel: 01538 754170 Staffs.

SUZUKI TS125R "J" reg, tax and MOT Feb '97, full fresco, enduro trim, £995 ono. Tel: 01827 64596.

ENFIELD 500 "N" reg, 1996, £1695. Full tax, built to army spec with panniers and crashbars, etc. Ex. condition, only 1500 miles from new. Poss p.ex. cheap road or trail bike. Tel: 01772 614218 (Lancs).

KAWASAKI KL250, 1979 taxed and tested Jan '97. Geuine 12000 miles. Mainly commuting, very tidy, new green lane tyres, lowish seat height so suitable for short person or beginner. £600 Please phone 01984 640195 eves/weekends (Somerset).

TOW BARS FOR SALE for Sierras. One, as new, (used once) £25. One, good condition, £20. Richard 01734 781850 Wokingham.


HELP! My XT350 needs a new head due to severe cracks after 11 years' abuse. Yamaha want £700 plus VAT... I'll consider a complete motor or crashed late model bike; any ideas on what else might fit? Tel: Patrick 01273 507346 eves/wkends.

"N" REG DR350 Enduro. Less than 900 miles. Fully road legal. Acerbis plastics frame and forks. Inclusive of original tool bag. As new £3100. Tel: 01793 723184 (Swindon).

1989 KMX200 "F" reg in black. 7000 miles. 18" rear wheel, good MX tyres back and front plus 17" rear wheel with trail tyre. Good all round condition. £750. Tel: 01457 872380.



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