

GROUPS

AXE VALE Gwyn Thomas, Tel: 01749 675294

2nd Mon, The Star, Star (A38), Nr. Shipham, Somerset

BLACK COUNTRY Chris Braznell, Tel: 0121 421 3086

1 & 3 Tues, 9pm, The Mitre, Church Road, Bradmore, Wolverhampton

BRISTOL Martin Harding, Tel: 01179 696674

4th Mon, Keynsham Rugby Club, Bristol Road, Keynsham

CAMBRIDGE John Brooker, Tel: 01767 692805

1st Thurs, Golden Ball, Boxworth

CHESHIRE Tony Bramah, Tel: 0161 366 6813

2 & 4 Mon, The Robin Hood, Buxton Road, High Lane, Hazel Grove, Stockport

CORNWALL Tony Stuart, Tel: 01208 862960

3rd Thurs, The Ship, Wadebridge

CUMBRIA Richard Smith, Tel: 015394 33470

2nd Tues, Derby Arms Hotel, Witherslack, Nr. Kendal

DERBYSHIRE & SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Kevin Marsh, Tel: 01246 237910

2 & 4 Tuesdays, The Angel Hotel, Sprinkhill, Eckington, Nr. Chesterfield, Derbyshire

DEVON Richard Arscott, Tel: 01803 400937

2nd Tues, The Welcome Stranger, Bickington, Nr. Newton Abbott

DORSET Paul Jackson, Tel: 01305 772208

1st Tues, 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 YORKSHIRE

Howard Wadsworth, Tel: 01405 860904

1st Tues, Boot & Shoe, Gowdall, Nr. Snaith

ESSEX

John Lay, Tel: 01206 263912, Mobile: 0831 886032

2nd Wed, The Swan Public House, Great Eastern, Nr. Dunmow

EXMOOR Ron Rickarby, Tel: 01271 326653

2nd Wed, The Hartnoll Hotel, Bolham, A396 1 mile north of Tiverton

GLOUCESTER Wayne Little, Tel: 01452 611735

1st Tues, Phone for details of venue

HERTFORDSHIRE Colin Adlam, Tel: 01727 875618

1st Wed, The Old Guinea, Ridge, Near Potters Bar

HIGH PEAK & POTTERIES

Simon Lowe, Tel: 01298 70680

1st Tues, Stafford Arms, Bagnall & 3rd Tue, Cheshire Cheese, Buxton

ISLE OF WIGHT Mark Gregory, Tel: 01983 867730

1st Thurs, The Royal British Legion, Pyle St., Newport, IOW

KENT Gary Westbrook, Tel: 01843 590184

2nd Wed, Pied Bull, Farningham, Off A20, Nr Brands Hatch

LANCASHIRE Keith Westley, Tel: 01704 893215

1st Tues, Hindshead Pub on A49, Charnock Richard

LINCOLNSHIRE Alan Wilkinson, Tel: 01529 460793

4th Thurs, The Queens Head, Kirkby-la-Thorpe, Sleaford

LODDON VALE Bernard Green, Tel: 01344 450289

2nd Thurs, Inn in the Park, Woodley Centre, E. Reading

NORTHUMBERLAND Steve Bertram

Tel 0850 863620 11am-6pm Tel & Fax 0191 261 9629

1st Tues, 7pm, Just Harleys, Sandyford, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

NORTH WALES John Mills, Tel: 01477 534425

1st Wed, Hope & Anchor, Ewloe Place, Buckley

OXFORDSHIRE Kevin Lindsey, Tel: 01993 841179

3rd Thurs, The Red Lion, 127 Cassington Road, Yarnton

PEAK DISTRICT Simon Mason, Tel: 01773 713188

1st Thurs, 8pm, Travellers Rest, Ashbourne Road, Derby

RIBBLE VALLEY Peter Higham, Tel: 01200 424947

2nd Tues, Pendle Hotel, Chatburn, Clitheroe (off A59)

SHROPSHIRE Lynton Powell, Tel: 01743 358423

2nd & last Wed, White Horse, Shrewsbury

SOMERSET Steve Hounsell, Tel: 01460 66452

Last Thurs, The Bell Hotel, Curry Rivel, Nr. Taunton

SOUTHERN Russ McDermid, Tel: 01703 812371

3rd Tues, The Phoenix, Twyford, Nr. Winchester

SOUTH LONDON & SURREY

Steve Sharp, 0181 773 4204

9pm every Wed, Ewell Sports & Social Club, Banstead Road, Ewell, Surrey

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 Thurs, Welsh Institute of Sport, Cardiff, 8pm

SOUTH WEST WALES

Mark Rowntree, Tel: 01792 844316

1st Wed, Lodge Gorseinon, 7.30pm

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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David Crone, Tel: 01325 258252

3rd Wed, 8.30p.m., Blacksmiths Arms, Swainby

THAMES VALLEY Don Hoaglin, Tel: 01474 704530

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 Richard Hawker, Tel: 01527 893874

1st & 3rd Thurs, Wilmcote Mens Club, Stratford on Avon

WEST YORKSHIRE Gordon Carr, Tel: 01729 830569

1st & 3rd Thurs, Bankfoot Cricket Club, Wickets Close, (off Cleckheaton Rd), Odsal, Bradford

WILTSHIRE Bill Riley, Tel/Fax: 01225 863811

1st Tues, The Toll Gate, Holt, Trowbridge

WORCESTERSHIRE David Gunster, Tel: 01905 616400

3rd Tuesday, The Fox at Bransford, Worcs.

WYVERN Steve Pighills, Tel: 01902 672479

Every Thurs, 10pm, Potter's Rose & Crown, Colley Lane, Halesowen



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TRAIL

FEBRUARY, 1999

No. 246

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

EDITOR: Fred Ellison.



Paul Leafe & Philip Vince on Carbon Road in The Lake District 1998.

Photo by Stuart Alford

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

TRF OFFICERS

- CHAIRMAN** David Giles, 22 Ford Lane, Allestree, Derby, DE3 2EW.
Tel: 01332 552288.
- PUBLIC REL. OFFICER** Mark Holland, Corn Farm, Devauden, Chepstow, Monmouthshire,
(Gwent), NP6 6NS. Tel: 01291 650240 (Weekends only).
- MEMBERSHIP SEC.** John Pritchard, 8 Chantry Close, Bishop's Stortford, Herts., CM23 2SN.
Tel: 01279 505343, Fax: 01279 501599, Mobile: 0385 373758,
E-Mail: johnpritchard@dial.pipex.com
- SECRETARY** Jonathan St. John, 48 Kingrosia Park, Clydach, Swansea, SA6 5PL.
Tel: 01792 844719.
- TREASURER** Alan Wilkinson, 29 Christopher Close, Heckington, Sleaford,
Lincolnshire, NG34 9SA. Tel: 01529 460793. E-Mail: guzziwillk@tesco.net
- EDITOR** Fred Ellison, Sheepcote Farm, Moor Lane, Wiswell, Clitheroe, Lancs.,
BB7 9DG. Tel: 01254 823893, Fax: 01254 887999, E-Mail: ellison@ukip.co.uk
- DEPUTY EDITOR** Christine Higham, Bradmore, Whalley Road, Pendleton, Clitheroe,
Lancs. BB7 1PP. Tel: 01200 424947.
- RoW OFFICER** Richard Marshall, 1 Burlington Close, Breaston, Derby, DE7 3UB.
Tel: 01332 873416.
- BMF LIAISON OFFICER** Derrick Collins, 11 Grangewood Road, Wollaton, Nottingham, Notts.
NG8 2SJ. Tel: 0115 928 2806.
- KEEPER OF STATIONERY** Aelwood Finch, 8 Hallowell Down, South Woodham, Ferrers,
Chelmsford, Essex, CM3 5FS. Tel: 01245 329118, Mobile: 0374 471251.
- DISPLAY EQUIPMENT CO-ORDINATOR** Jeff Ward, Jeff Ward Ltd., Gretton Road, Weldon, Northamptonshire,
NN17 3HY. Tel: 01536 267036 or Fax: 01536 408787.
- TRF MERCHANDISER** Rob Sawyer, 15 High Meadows, Newport, Shropshire, TF10 7RY.

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EDITORS

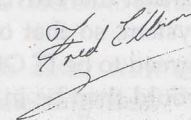
Doesn't 1999 look like being an interesting year - what a hectic executive meeting January's was. An exceptionally good meeting and if half of the decisions taken are to materialise there is an awful lot to be done over the next year.

We have a new King of the Road called a Hayabusa from Suzuki - 173bhp no less. That would be quite a challenge with trail tyres and at least it would be quiet and it is fitted with catalytic converters so it is eco friendly. I think I'm falling in love.

For trail riding all the talk is of Hierarchys and Management Solutions. If this means that we don't lose any green lanes, I for one am all in favour. What I wouldn't like to see is the TRF putting everything on the negotiating table then some bureaucrat or politician, home grown or Euro, changing the rules. We are being encouraged to rely more on responsibilities than rights but who decides what is responsible? The TRF is all in favour of responsible use because that is what we are all about - we have to use road legal bikes as green lanes are roads which someone decided weren't to be covered in tarmac. The legal requirements are basically the same.

Then consider the needs of the farmer/landowner, i.e. we do close gates - we are aware that most sheep are in lamb at this time of year so we don't panic them (or come to that any other time of year) and the same applies to other animals. I'm not so sure about ramblers because they seem to frighten much more easily and appear to be especially sensitive to noise of any kind - poor things.

Here's to responsible happy trail riding.



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EXEC. MEETING

The first Executive Meeting of the year took place on the outskirts of Birmingham on Saturday the 23rd January chaired by Dave Giles. It ran to the agenda published in the December issue of TRAIL. Using discussion groups created plenty of opportunity for representatives to put forward their ideas on important matters - yet we stayed on time. An abridged report will be published in the next issue of TRAIL. Meanwhile here is an approved account of the previous Executive Meeting in September. The next meeting will also be just off Junction 3 of the M42 at Beckett's Island Shop and Restaurant, Heath Farm, Alcester Road, Wythall, Birmingham on the 24th April 1999.

AN AGREED RECORD OF THE TRF EXTRAORDINARY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD AT: Beckett's Island, Wythall (S. Birmingham) on 5th September 1998.

FUND FINDING: Presentation by Jeff Ward (F.S.C.) - Financial Overview, followed by discussion.

Actions: It was agreed that the Finance Sub-committee would continue to operate, be chaired by Jeff Ward with Alan Wilkinson operating in a day-to-day role and continue to look at all aspects of TRF finance including;

- Life membership and it's effect on finance, e.g. is the fee too low and should it be age related.
- Group membership fees. Each Group should send an annual return of it's finances to the National Treasurer, plus the names of the signatories for the accounts.
- Direct Debit for membership.
- Should the TRF Accounts be published in TRAIL and more widely (to give members confidence and show others we were able to defend our actions).
- Give a breakdown of where the TRF National Membership fee goes, i.e. what do members get for their money.

The Finance Sub-committee to submit a report to the AGM, separate to the Treasurer's Report.

RIGHTS OF WAY: Presentation by Steve Neville (RoW Officer) followed by discussion.

Actions: It was agreed that the TRF Database of members needed upgrading to a Windows operating system, so that officers could get selected information much easier. Steve Neville agreed to be IT Officer when his term as RoW Officer ended in December 1998. He would then be in a position to sort out a more effective RoW data system.

There will be a meeting with Group TRF RoW Officers in early December,

travel expenses and meal provided. Steve to send invitations. Tim Stevens to help with venue. Kevin Marsh to chase up non-replies. This would be open to other organisations such as ACU, AWDC, BHS, BDS, CTC.

IMPROVE THE STRUCTURE OF MEETINGS: Executive responsibilities, etc. Presentation by Jonathan St. John.

Actions: It was agreed that there is a need to streamline the Executive Meetings by having a management Team of around 12 people. This could be done by having the key Officers plus Regional Representatives to make up the team. The meetings would still be open to any Group Reps. to attend, but the decision making group would be more manageable.

Jonathan St. John to put article in TRAIL to assess which Regions exist and are already effective, and to inform members of the change.

All those present at this meeting were given a copy of the BMF Policy Document to take away and read, then send their recommendations to the Secretary before the January Executive Meeting. This document sets out advice and procedure for running a club, and makes the duties and responsibilities of officers, etc. clear.

Secretary to put together the dates for the 1999 meetings - 4 Executive and the AGM.

IMPROVE P.R. SKILLS: Presentation by Mark Holland (PRO) followed by discussion.

Actions: There is a need for an information package on each Executive position, giving their specific tasks and duties. This should be resolved when the BMF document is reworked to fit TRF needs.

Information sheets and publicity material.

Perhaps a skills register of TRF members.

Co-opted Officers need to know who their 'line manager' is, so they know who they are responsible to and can report back on meetings attended, etc.

The Secretary ended the meeting with a summary of tasks which have been identified. They are:

IT Officer: Steve Neville has agreed to take on this task.

Finance Sub-committee: Jeff Ward has agreed to chair this committee and to meet before the AGM. They will submit a report to the AGM separate to the Treasurer's Report.

Group Annual Return Form: Wayne Little has offered to re-hash the form to include questions on the Group Finance.

RoW Reps Meeting: Tim Stevens agreed to assist with a venue for the RoW meeting, invites for other groups, and at the meeting itself.

The Secretary has agreed to prepare notes from this meeting to go to the AGM as 'A Way Forward'.

RoW NEWS

Axe Vale Group
c/o 10 Hardwick Road, Pill, North Somerset, BS20 0DG
Tel: 01275 373652
e-mail; david.clegg@gbsea.mail.abb.com

29 January 1999

Dear

Re: RUPP Reclassification in North Somerset

Please find attached a copy of an article from the Chew Valley Gazette, the contents of which have very serious implications for both Council Tax payers and trail riding in the North Somerset Council District Council with Unitary Authority Status (NSDC) area.

Since the abolition of Avon County Council, NSDC is now the Highway Authority for this area. In 1997 NSDC advertised two WCA 81 s54 Orders, both recommending RUPP reclassification to Bridleway. Order 1 going to a DoE Public Inquiry in September 1998. With almost indecent haste the DoE Inspector's letter confirming the order has just been issued. (Surprisingly fast - with GLEAM in attendance at the Inquiry, muddying the waters with the alarming alacrity, and now, no doubt, crowing over another "success for the environment"! But of course, if the Inspector had found the way to be a BOAT, GLEAM would have demanded another Inquiry - at yet more public expense.)

NSDC Order Number 2, 1997 allegedly produced only a single letter of objection despite the PROW in question being one of the most maliciously obstructed and argued over RUPPs (LA 19/82 on the Definitive Map) in the now NSDC - the infamous "Mad Axemans" Lane. The DoE have written to the sole objector asking if he wishes to withdraw his objection. Already, a vast amount of man-hours have been consumed in the last 5 years attempting to get this RUPP open for the public to enjoy. Considering the wealth of historic evidence held on this RUPP, actually shown on older maps as part of Great Stone Lane, it seems most odd that NSDC were not inundated with objections?

The Chew Valley Gazette article mentions both the departure of Ex-Avon PROW staff and the new PROW management team, by name. There is talk of partnership and co-operation between all and sundry: PROW team, parishes, landowners, occupiers, ramblers and riding* associations (TR*F?). But so far, despite the TRF

being invited to the NSDC CRAF (Countryside Recreation and Access Forum) and letters directed to the NSDC Councillors, Chief Executive, the needs of general public (and Trail Riders) are being ignored.

If the NSDC expects to reclassify over 50 RUPPs in 5 years, and process the steady stream of DMMOs etc etc, the new PROW team needs to be totally conversant with the historical research of highways and be aware of the potential cost of a virtually continuous Public Inquiry calendar. Whatever the projected PROW status of the forthcoming WCA 81, s54 reclassification orders when they are advertised there will be objections and the expense of Public Inquiries. Ten years on from the original WCA 81 s54 Orders in Wansdyke D.C. (now Bath and North East Somerset D C), PROW matters are still not resolved. We have: a number of bridleways (with some possibly carrying higher rights) a devious High Court ruling and a whole flock of much richer PROW Officers and lawyers - WCA 81, s54 being the proverbial PROW Officer's gravy-train and running sore in the side of the Council Tax payer and Trail Rider.

D.C.Clegg

EXTRACT FROM CHEW VALLEY GAZETTE

Taken from North Somerset District Council Highways, Planning Committee Meeting Minutes, December 1998

North Somerset Council has adopted ambitious new targets on sorting out the legacy of anomalies in the rights of way network for walkers, horseriders and vehicular users of green lanes.

The new targets include:

- All rights of way to be signposted from metalled roads by next year (1,284 locations, only 384 of which were signed as at 1.4.98)
- All rights of way to be easy to follow and use by the year 2000.
- Ongoing maintenance of about 4,800 stiles, gates and bridges.
- Parish Path Surveys to be completed for all the authority's 38 parishes by next year.

- Vegetation clearance on about 28 kilometres of routes done twice annually.
 - Reports of obstructions to RoWs to be checked within 5 days of receipt.
- The team will also address the backlog of re-classifications of RUPPs (Roads Used as Public Paths) inherited from Avon.

These include many lanes which walkers, riders and drivers have had bitter disputes about in the past with regard to classifications of status.

57 of these RUPP reclassifications are still outstanding and at 10 reclassifications per year, it is hoped that all unopposed reclassifications will be sorted by 2005.

Several local parishes have RUPPS on the list to be sorted:
Burrington has two (without names) totalling 0.55km.
Butcombe has 3 totalling 0.95km, one of which is called Sutton Lane.
Churchill has 3 totalling 1.45km, one of which is Redslord Lane.
Barrow Gurney has 4, totalling 2.2km, one of which is Rocks Lane.
Dundry has 8, totalling 5.85km, including Strawberry Lane, Middleway Lane and Primrose Lane.
Winford has 9, including Longton Lane, Rocks Lane, Ironstone Pit Lane, Oxhouse Lane and the network of Greatstone/Pinchway and Elwell Lanes.

Modification Orders also need to be

sorted in a number of other high profile cases, such as claimed bridleways on Dolebury Warren.

Others include two routes between Goblin Combe and Wrington, Leg Lane at Winscombe, Spine Copse, Wrington, a bridleway at Wrington Woods, Copthorne Lane Burrington, a route in Mendip Woods, Dark Lane, Blagdon and Winterhead at Winscombe.

The Environment Group of the Council is developing a partnership approach to Public Rights of Way management by involving the local community and has already had help from groups such as the Ramblers Association, local footpath groups and riding associations.

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Unit 9, Cowper Road, Gilwilly Industrial Estate, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 9BN.

British Motorcyclists Federation News

CHANGING TIMES

Sharon Nash, the BMF's Deputy Chairman, has taken on the role of BMF Chairman vacated by Henry Marks following his appointment as the Motorcycle Action Group's new Chief Executive.

Sharon, 41, a director of the BMF since 1990, and Deputy Chairman since 1996, takes over as the BMF itself goes through the process of appointing a full-time Chief Executive and so will also retain her post as the BMF's Administration Director.

Speaking of Henry's departure Sharon said: "We wish Henry well in his new job. His Chairman's role within the BMF was in a voluntary capacity but at the end of the day that doesn't pay the bills. The important thing is that the skills employed by Henry will remain within the sphere of motorcycling's riders-rights where I'm sure our close working relationship with MAG will be reinforced."

LARA NEWS

LOST ROADS IN POWYS

Mid Wales is a favourite area for green lane enthusiasts, and has been for many years. Some time ago evidence came to light that there were more roads than anyone in charge was admitting. Local research showed that the mileage figures didn't add up, although Powys CC asserted at the highest level that nothing in their road records was ever lost, stolen or strayed. Recently, though, the high-level official left, and they were persuaded to have another look - just in case.

As a result of their own recent researches, Powys has re-discovered around 50 miles of road which once was on the List of Streets but which went missing in the 1950s. Quite what is to be done with this newly revealed recreational resource, is under debate. Councillors want the lost roads to go back into limbo, and be 'reclassified just like RuPPs', but local users and LARA members are horrified. 'They have had 40 years to do their existing RuPPs and they say they will need another 20 or more to finish the job,' said a mature local rider. 'That means we will all be dead before the lost roads are properly available again for anyone'.

The Countryside Council for Wales, who helped fund the research, agrees with LARA, that these roads were lost from the List of Streets, and should go straight back there. 'Now that the Ordnance Maps are showing unclassified roads

clearly, this is a simple answer to a complex problem', says LARA, 'and this will be an ideal opportunity to explore the principles of our Lake District Hierarchy system in another area of real trail riding country'. Meanwhile, Powys CC has postponed the meeting at which these ideas were to be discussed. Why? Another member of staff has left.

COUNTRYSIDE COMMISSION REVISIT RoW

Even while their own world is being reorganised, officers of the Countryside Commission have been busy with proposals for upheaval elsewhere. 'Rights of Way in the 21st Century' is a consultation paper setting the scene for new ideas, and remodelling some slightly second-hand ones. CoCo 21, as the new document has been nick-named, includes ten laudable objectives. The Action Plan which follows sets off in the same even handed tenor, but then, base notions creep in. Things will be better for all, it promises, except perhaps those naughty motorists. Extra resources are suggested for horse riders and cyclists, and for walkers - already promised more access to Open Country. LARA welcomes this, as it should reduce the need for others to use roads, but not at the expense of our own limited access away from tarmac.

The LARA response to these proposals has been agreed by our steering committee - anyone wishing to see our response, or contribute further to this process should contact their club representative. In order to help mould policy, we would also like to see any individual responses made by LARA members, and those from clubs within LARA.

CCP 543 is available from PO Box 124, Walgrave, Northampton NN6 9TL. Or, visit www.Countryside.gov.uk

GREEN LANE DAY - NEW PLANS

Green Lane Day 1999 will be March 28. All LARA volunteers are asked to arrange works on lanes in their own areas, to include cutting back over- and under-growth, clearing grips ditches and drains, removing obstructions, erecting official signs and waymarks, collecting litter, and in general putting something back into the countryside we enjoy. Liaison with highway authorities will be needed, and sometimes with landowners too.

To help in this nation-wide effort, a leaflet has been prepared with advice on the practicalities, organising the day, managing a bonfire, etc., in co-operation with Mike Dyer, recently appointed as Green Lane Day Co-ordinator. This is an entirely voluntary role, like many others in the LARA network, and in motorsport generally. While he is not able to set your local scheme in motion, Mike can help where necessary, and bring volunteers and authorities into contact wherever there is an opportunity.

Contact Mike by E-mail - doghouse@cix.compulink.co.uk - or by telephone on 01276 473907.

HAVING FUN ON A 250 GAS GAS

I have always wanted a Gas Gas enduro bike. To me they look like the dog's proverbials. They have all the top class components fitted i.e. Marzocchi forks, Ohlins rear shock, alloy bars, Excell rims, etc., etc., and not forgetting the highly praised hydraulic clutch.

After the trials and tribulations with my KLM300, regular readers will know what I'm on about. I decided it was time that I returned to the joys of owning a 2-stroke. We had our second visit to Scotland planned just after I got the bike. I didn't even have time to go on a trail run to see if everything was OK.

Just after setting off from our hotel, I had a bad omen from the bike. I fell off on the first lane of the day. I felt the steering was very remote and I couldn't feel what the front wheel was doing. Not a good start to my friendship with a Gas Gas. After everybody had stopped laughing we carried on to our next lane. The suspension lived up to it's full expectations, as did the brakes. The bike is very light and is easy to manoeuvre on the trail.

Sometime later on that morning I knew I had made a mistake by buying the cheapest spark plugs I could get. I went through 4 spark plugs in the space of 42 miles. That certainly doesn't inspire confidence in the reliability of the bike. I think the problem was that the weather was so cold and the ground was very slippery so I couldn't get to clear the engine on the gasser so the plugs seem to foul up and stop working. The bike would run badly for a while then just suddenly stop. As soon as I put a new plug in the bike would run fine.

The following day was so cold that my bike and a KDX200 suffered with the carb icing that badly that I could hold my throttle half open and the bike didn't even rev. The owner of the KDX had a novel way of trying to stop carb icing but if I told you how, Fred the Ed would edit it out (it did involve a bodily function though).

I didn't enjoy my trip to Scotland mainly because of the bike and the weather so when I got home I washed the bike off and took it round to a local bike shop who said he would sell it for me. What a relief - I just wanted it off my hands. I think the Gas Gas would suit a better rider than me. After all it is designed as a race bike, not a trail bike. Well, at least I've realised another one of my biking dreams and it's been well and truly shattered like most of my bikes.

I've now got a DR350 and at the moment I like it a lot. More of that in the next thrilling instalment of Sumo and His Bikes.

Sumo, (Phil Holland, Ribble Valley Group)

TRAIL RIDING DOWN UNDER

No not Australia, New Zealand, that other bit of 'Down Under' that is half Pacific island and half 'Old England' and one is tempted to say "The best bits of both".

My two sons, Michael and Richard, who both live in Australia, met me in Whangarei, which is about half way up North Island on the right, for our annual trail ride. My nephew who lives there had hired for us two Yamaha XT 600s and one Tenere 600. We took along our riding gear, a couple of small tents and a sleeping bag each and with only that tied on the back of the bikes set out to explore.

Although New Zealand is well served with a good network of sealed roads, there is very little dual carriageway and no motorways and in the top end of North Island there are very few trails as we know them. However, there is a maze of graded, gravel roads which was what we contrived to use as much as possible when we weren't riding trails or beaches.

On first setting out we had serious trouble finding any grip on the loose gravel surfaces, but then we discovered that all the tyres were pumped up to about 40psi so we adjusted them and got along a lot better.

We crossed over to the West coast to a small town called Dargaville and, after lunch in a pub full of boozy but friendly Maoris, travelled out to Glink's Gully, a little valley which led down to the beach. With the blue Tasman sea on our left and gleaming white sand dunes on our right we travelled at a leisurely pace up the beach to our first camp site. Camping couldn't have been easier. We merely selected a likely looking spot in the dunes, parked the bikes and put up the tents. As there was a total fire ban on we were not able to cook, so we just jumped on the bikes, found a way through the dunes to a country hotel (Kiwi speak for pub) and after a few jars of the local brew stoked up on hamburgers and chips. Back at our camp we lay under the stars, smoking and yarning until it was time for sleep.

The next day, after breakfast, we carried on up the beach. The sand was hard, the beach was wide and there was no one else around, so we were soon riding three abreast. In the silence the beating together of the three exhausts was something we had not experienced before.

We had to leave the beach at Aranga and at first it seemed as though the poor grip afforded by the road tyres wouldn't get us up the steep little climb onto the track, but with plenty of throttle in low gear and a lot of paddling we managed it and were soon tucking into bacon and eggs helped down with lashings of tea at a roadside cafe.

The rest of that day was spent heading North on tarred roads to the ferry at Rawene. The dirt started again on the other side. We were heading for 'Ninety Mile Beach', another wonderful sandy beach which would take us nearly up to the top of the island. We had supper at Waipapakauri and got down onto the beach just

North of the town. Although called 'Ninety Mile' it is actually nearer to fifty, but to the early explorers it must have seemed endless and so the name has stuck.

Knowing that we had a long ride ahead of us with no way of getting any supplies we took the precaution of taking along a few cans of beer and when we camped in the dunes that night we sat at ease watching the sun set in a suitably relaxed frame of mind.

When we came to set off in the morning the Tenere would not start. The starter motor would churn the engine over but it would not fire up. As the bike was not fitted with a kick start we had to borrow the battery from one of the XT's and get the Tenere going. After that it started and ran OK on it's own battery.

The ride up the beach was again fantastic, hard sand, blue skies and no-one else about. In less than an hour we were at the top and turning off through a Maori fishing camp to look for breakfast and petrol. We found the petrol. There is no leaded petrol in New Zealand and only two grades of non-leaded, but if you're worried about your valves they will sell you little capsules of gunge to put in the petrol, which is supposed to do the job.

By late afternoon we arrived at the northern extremity of North Island. It's a bit like our Land's End. You go there, look at it then turn round and leave, but it means more to the Maoris as it's the place where, according to tradition, all the spirits of their dead leave the land to travel back across the sea to the islands of their ancestors. After a look around the rather touristy top end we headed South again and rode down a river called Te Paki back to Ninety Mile where we camped.

The Tenere played up again the next morning, but as the batteries on the XT's were sealed we just took one off and held it upside down, terminal to terminal with the Tenere's and it did the trick.

The next day we went to a race meeting at Taipa. The track was a quarter mile oval of hard packed clay. There were 30 races for all classes from old bangers driven by some very agricultural types to big V8 hot rods running on methanol. There were also separate races for women drivers. The racing was fast and furious with a lot of bumping and shoving. It was a great afternoon's entertainment.

After camping overnight in a wood we continued to journey South and West by gravel roads arriving about midday at the Omahutu Forest, where we saw some giant Kauri trees which once covered most of North Island. These trees were chopped down in vast numbers in the early days of the European occupation of New Zealand and now only a few remain. One stump was about 50 feet in circumference and the top branches were lying almost 65 feet from the stump, so that one tree had contained approximately 12000 cubic feet of timber. We lobbed down in the one and only official camp site that we used in the whole holiday and it cost us £2 each. Just below the site was a beach with rocks covered with oysters. Finding a stone each, we soon had a pile cracked open and slithering down our throats - the cheapest and tastiest oysters I've ever had.

We hoped the next day to ride a trail to the top of a very high hill shown on our map, but when we got to the foot of the hill we found a locked barrier across

the track. As the barrier was on a bridge over a steep gully we were unable to bypass it, so we stripped off our clothes and went swimming in the river. An old chap turned up on a very battered old motorbike. He lived locally and was checking on us. We guessed that these woods were a hiding place for little gardens growing a certain illegal plant and the old chap confirmed our guess. He also told us that occasionally the police helicopters would fly over looking for the plots. One year they came over at harvest time and finding a goodly crop took the lot. As the plants were very ripe, the seeds rained down from the helicopter and now the plant grows wild over the whole area!

By now we had done a complete loop of some 700 miles and were back at Dargaville where we bought food and beer for our final two days. We got down onto the beach just South of the town and headed South on another stunning beach ride of nearly 50 miles. We set up our camp and ate our supper. We heard of an interesting natural phenomena just back up the beach called a 'surging waterfall' and decided to investigate in the morning.

Back-tracking a few miles we found the 'surger'. At the foot of a huge sand dune was a rocky outcrop and over the lip of the outcrop fell a small waterfall into a sandy gully. Every few minutes the waterfall would increase its flow until it was rushing down and washing sand out of the gully and onto the beach. Then it would just stop as though there had never been any water there at all. After a few more minutes it would all start up again.

Leaving the 'surger' we carried on South and after a while found that the beach sand was getting very soft. Richard and I kept close to the dunes where it was soft and dry and we could keep going. Michael decided to keep close to the sea where the sand was harder but soggy and wet. He was making good progress and got his speed up to about 40mph when suddenly the sand turned liquid, he got into a massive wobble and catapulted off, landing about 20 feet in front of his bike on his neck and shoulders. The bike nearly buried itself. Although winded and bruised he was not badly hurt and the bike, when we finally got it dug out, started without too much trouble.

Our last camp was again in a wooded area and here we did find those little gardens of that proscribed plant, obviously the police had not helped these gardeners out with their broadcasting service.

Our last day did not start well. To begin with we could only find really foul meat pies and even worse coffee for our breakfast, which none of us could finish. Then, on rounding a sharp corner on a track of deep loose gravel I came face to face with a truck. There was a deep storm drain on my side and the track was too narrow for any passing, so I locked up both wheels and fell in a heap just under his bumper as he slid to a halt. Apart from a nasty attack of gravel rash I was OK and so was the bike. The truck driver nodded to us, crunched into gear and drove on. A phlegmatic lot these Kiwis. Soon after this it was time to head back to my nephew's to see about getting cleaned up for the long haul home.

So what does ten days trail riding and camping in this super place cost? The

air fare to New Zealand is about £1060 (less if you shop around). Bike hire £50 per day. Petrol 40p a litre. Meals for 3 around £8 (yes £8 for 3) Camping almost nothing. If you want to go for longer you can get an XR400 with full off road spec on a buy back basis that will cost you about £600 for the whole holiday. When to go. Well, New Zealand is not a very hot country so we went over the New Year which, of course, is their mid Summer and we had 10 days of glorious warm sunshine and no rain at all.

So go now, don't waste any more time, you're not going to live for ever.

Bob Combley



Riding down the stream at Te Pahi

A bush trail in New Zealand

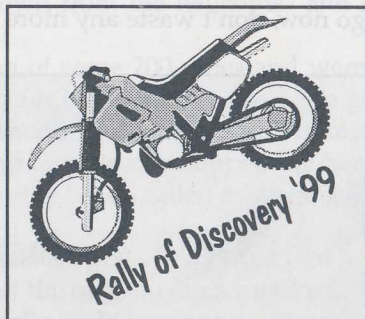


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Paul Blezard, TrailBike Magazine

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letters

A GREAT BIG THANK YOU

Following my note in last month's TRAIL, I would first like to thank all those members who took the time to phone or write to me with information, ideas and advice for my planned trip to Andorra. I was surprised how many members have visited the area. The phone never stopped ringing.

The trip is now well and truly planned and our Group is full to bursting. However, if you are planning a trip to the Pyrenees, Andorra or the Picos Mountains you may be interested in joining us for the ferry trip. We will be sailing from Portsmouth on Tuesday 7th September 1999 at approximately 7pm and returning to Portsmouth at approximately 5pm on Friday 17th September. The reason for inviting you is not only to meet other like minded folk but Group bookings of twelve or more make a saving of £60 each. If you are interested in booking with us for your trip please contact me on 01332 874947 or Phil Perry on 01491 574458 ASAP for full details.

Mark Phillips, East Mids. Group

BEWARE!!

I must draw your attention to "Riding With Roger" December '98 issue.

Everyone should note that although both washing up liquid and Swarfega will do the job as described, BEWARE!! They are both CORROSIVE and therefore may result in damage to the rim, particularly alloy rims.

It is far better to pay your local tyre fitting depot a visit and obtain some of the SPECIAL TYRE FITTING SOAP that will not do any damage. Happy tyre fitting.

G. Lewis, Vale of Glam

TONE POMES

If you are over fifty two
A DR350's not for you!

I had some fun on my DOT,
But, not a lot.

Riding ruts
Will drive you nuts -
Watch the scenery,
And join the greenery!

Tony McCusker, Elstree

IMPRESSIONS OF A TT250R

What's Hot

- Electric start! Great!
- Good suspension
- All the power is usable
- Good delivery

What's Not

- If you change the gearing the speedometer becomes inaccurate, the digital speedo is driven off the front sprocket
- A little under powered

Conclusion

Great bike, easy to ride, quiet and economical.

Iain MacKinnon

BRAKES AND CLUTCHES

It is disconcerting, to say the least, when, at 70, one is balked by a younger rider stalling on a steep, loose slope and the Triumph's weight urges it rapidly downhill. Applying the front brake helps little as the wheel merely locks and slides backwards. One cannot apply the foot brake as the left foot is usually engaged in acting as a prop stand to prevent the machine falling into a deep rut/ravine. Likewise the right foot is either trying to find neutral, act as human foot brake and/or trying to restart the damn thing! Consequently I have coupled the rear brake to an additional lever and clamp on the handle bar, with a longer fulcrum pin, with a cable to an extension on the rear brake lever and cable stop on the pillion footrest hanger. Ample cable adjustment is provided at both ends of the cable, (LE Velo rear brake cable adjuster at the handlebar end!), and the holes drilled in the rear brake extension arm provide for changes of leverage, for experimental purposes.

The front brake may be used as normal or in conjunction with the rear and the rear be operated either from the handlebar or from the foot pedal - or by both! An additional bonus is that on steep, slimy descents, when one has to "paddle" to maintain equilibrium, with both feet needed to do this and break the "brimbles", rear wheel braking may be obtained from the handlebars - front wheel braking would only provoke a sideways slither and subsequent "laying down to rest"!

Another solution might be to obtain one of those Swedish Ohlins hydraulic drive systems that sends 10% of engine power to the front wheel, thus giving more traction and less likelihood of stopping on slippery slopes and easier restarting if you do!

On a different topic - clutch sticking. I have found this to occur if a bike is not used for some considerable time. On the Greeves the cure is simple - remove

the single bolt that secures the primary chain case and prise the plates apart. On shaft drive twin Velocettes matters are not nearly so simple and in fact can necessitate removing the engine/gearbox/clutch unit from the frame. When, recently the clutch on the Voletta stuck, I found that I could JUST, by shining a torch into the very small hole by the speedo drive, see a small part of the bell housing. I wired the clutch lever to the handlebar and squirted brake/clutch cleaning fluid into the clutch slots, working the slots round, one by one, by turning the rear wheel. After three days the clutch cleared and is now judderless in addition! Had it not cleared, I would have used one of those sideways cutting drills to elongate the hole in the casings. The light aluminium swarf should not damage the clutch or the right angle kickstart drive mechanism - hopefully!

The brake/clutch cleaning fluid could also help with other clutches.

John Chilcott, North Devonshire

P.S. On a different topic - why is Honda making such a fuss about "cheap parallel/grey imports? Surely the only source of Honda bikes is Honda as no one else makes Honda machines! If grey importers can supply machines at two grand or so less than "official" agents and still make a cosy living, then said "official" suppliers must be making the same profit, plus two grand!

Ed.

Yes, John, I do know Blackie Holden. He isn't a TRF member but I'm working on it!

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