

GROUPS

AXE VALE Gwyn Thomas, Tel: 01749 675294
2nd Mon, *The Star, Star (A38), Nr. Shipham, Somerset*

BLACK COUNTRY Nick Hammond, Tel: 01384 221520
1 & 3 Tues, 9pm, *The Mitre, Church Road, Bradmore, Wolverhampton*

BRISTOL Jon Black, Tel: 01179 044 748
4th Mon, *Keynsham Rugby Club, Bristol Road, Keynsham*

CAMBRIDGE John Brooker, Tel: 01767 692805
1st Thurs, *Golden Ball, Boxworth*

CHESHIRE John Stansfield, Tel: 07899 844872
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: 01709 367332
2 & 4 Tuesdays, *The Angel Hotel, Sprinkhill, Eckington, Nr. Chesterfield, Derbyshire*

DEVON Richard Arcscott, 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 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 Wed, *The Winget Social Club, Tuffley Avenue, Glos.*

HERTFORDSHIRE Colin Adlam, Tel: 01727 875618
1st Wed, *The Old Guinea, Ridge, Near Potters Bar*

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ISLE OF WIGHT Mark Gregory, Tel: 01983 867730
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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 Rob Latham, Tel: 01952 592324
2nd & last Wed, *White Horse, Shrewsbury*

SOMERSET Steve Hounsell, Tel: 01460 66452
Last Thurs, *The Bell Hotel, Currey 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
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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
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SWINDON Pete Owen, Tel: 01793 750557
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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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3rd Mon, *District Arms, Woodthorpe Rd, Ashford, Middlesex*

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WEST MIDLANDS Colin Bott, Tel: 01386 834105
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.*



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TRAIL

AUGUST, 1999

No. 252

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

EDITOR: Fred Ellison.



Dave King in Tunisia

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All Contributions to the Editor Please keep it short and sweet!
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HONDA ARE DETERMINED that you, the UK motorcyclist, will pay more than your European counterpart for your bike. A six line snippet under the heading "On yer bike" in the Daily Telegraph informs us that Honda UK has bought back hundreds of bikes from three independent dealers in an attempt to kill the cheap market in its machines. Do you recall the furore and the headlines when Volvo were found to be price fixing and now legislation is being put into place whereby they could be fined 10% of their annual turnover for anti-competitive trading. 10% of Honda turnover would probably go a long way towards settling the national debt.

It would appear that motorcyclists do not warrant the same protection as their four wheeled cousins. So if you are a politician, related to one, or know where to contact one, this is YOUR opportunity to strike a blow for the trail riding classes.

Trail is your bulletin and as such is the forum for discussion on all trail riding topics, so if you have something sensible to say then we would all like to read about it and if you disagree with something then don't say "this isn't for me" and go away - stay and try to change it because the TRF is a very democratic organisation, run for the members by the members.

Enjoy your trail riding.

Fred Ellison

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TRF EXECUTIVE MEETING

4TH SEPTEMBER 1999
10.30 a.m. Becketts Island,
Wythall, Birmingham

RE: MOTION FOR AGM 1999

CONSTITUTION ARTICLE 6.3

I see in the June edition of Trail that Mark Holland proposes amendment of 6.3 of our constitution, so that there is only one subscription levied on each member, and that there is then an apportionment from that to the local groups. This is seconded by Jeff Ward, and the relevant reference made in the last Executive Committee meeting is on the opposite page in that issue. Unfortunately, all AGM motions have to be in before there is any further opportunity for Executive Committee to look at any issues arising.

If I correctly understand the reasoning behind the proposal, the idea is to get all non members into the fold, especially the ones who come to group meetings, but who avoid paying the national sub. Those people are out there now, riding how they like, responsibly, irresponsibly, fast, slow, legally or illegally, but are we going to get them into membership this way? By increasing the sub by perhaps as much as 25%? The idea is OK in purpose, but the aim goes wide of the mark.

The proposal would also hit those groups like West Mids with members who concurrently belong to other groups. In our case from Shropshire, Gloucestershire, and the former Wyvern groups.

I have great respect for the work which Mark puts into Public Relations, and we are lucky to have him as a willing volunteer. Particularly, I think the continued existence of the TRF following the Tim Ley affair is a tribute to the outstanding work put in by Jeff Ward in tracking down missing finances. But....is this thing completely broken? If not, then don't fix it!!!

My greatest concern about this stems from something else which arose at that Exec meeting, but not reported in the abridged minutes, about the arenas in which we seek to recruit members. The view was expressed that we should choose our advertising sites more carefully and seek to be "elite", that we need a quality of person which does not include untidy appearance, body piercing, and so on.

Now here I lose my rag! I am not ever prepared to belong to any organisation which seeks to treat any of its members in any way differently, especially because of subjective issues such as their appearances, or habits, or preferences, etc. That is entirely the business of the individual, and nobody else.

Rightly or wrongly, I see a link in these two things. The TRF is bigger than an individual like myself, and democracy must prevail. So, if this is carried in a vote at the AGM, I shall be stepping aside, and not renewing my membership for the millenium.

However, I shall continue to ride the trails, maybe even in the company of some of you reading this, but from outside the TRF.

In the meantime, best wishes to ALL members,

Richard Hawker, West Mids Group.

SITUATION VACANT DISPLAY EQUIPMENT CO-ORDINATOR

Since being pitchforked into taking responsibility for the TRF Stand at the BMF Rally in 1994 at very short notice and with the promise of display equipment from a distant Group which did not materialise ("It is not TRF display equipment, it is OUR display equipment and you can't have it, so there!"), I have been operating what might be termed a "library service" of display equipment. Groups throughout the country have been able to mount instant displays without having to originate material themselves.

Throughout the past six years I have prepared display material for the BMF Rally at the East of England Showground, the Dirt Bike Show at Donington and for another dozen events each year, from LARA Conferences to Police Bike Events, Young Farmers Shows and motorcycle dealers' Open Evenings.

The time has come for me to pass the baton to another Member. I said this at the 1998 AGM, but there were no takers and I agreed to continue through 1999. My policy of outlining a few ideas on the back of a large envelope with notes such as "Construct Green Lane leading to marquee... with gate and fence etc. - Trevor can dig post holes to work up thirst before MEMBA DAY - Byway sign would give authenticity..." really paid off in 1999. Whilst I was 200 miles away riding lanes in Dorset, Mick Hulbert and his team created a stand which was placed 4th overall by the Stand Judges at the most prestigious motorcycle show in the world. It is called delegation of responsibility....!

The Job Description for Display Equipment Co-ordinator was outlined in TRAIL No. 241 dated September 1998 and anyone who is interested in taking over this interesting post should contact me at the address shown on the inside cover. However, whether or not a volunteer comes forward I WILL be standing down at the forthcoming AGM.

If the "library service" is to continue it is necessary for another member to take over from me in the near future. Please do not wait for the moment when a horrible silence descends over the AGM - give me a call to discuss the job beforehand.

Jeff Ward - address and telephone number in front of TRAIL.

• POOR RELATIONS •

The minor highway philosophy of North Yorkshire County Council is clearly demonstrated in the Roads Supplement of NCE (I'm trying to ascertain the full name of this journal), June 1999. An article, Surface Tension, tells about the difficult situation facing chief highways engineer Alan Burns in maintaining the "9,511km of roads owned by England's largest county". The article states that NYCC is "currently being sued for negligence by a riding school claiming its horses slip on the road surface, and by several four-wheel drive clubs. The latter claim that the council is not properly maintaining 'for vehicular use' a stone track which the rough terrain enthusiasts want to use for rallying". Mr. Burns' head of department, Mike Masterman, says that "This year, as usual, our allowance was raided mainly by increasing the allocation to the education department. It is purely a local political decision and clearly there are more votes in education than in highways".

The article opines that "Such political bias is nothing new and Masterman's budget has halved in real terms over the last seven years. At the same time, the road deterioration curve has steepened". Mr. Masterman is quoted: "We have discussed internally the option of permanent road closures - an action I see as

quite possible if budgets are not increased..." "Such an unprecedented move would be fraught with political and legal headaches as the council must prove in court that the road is 'no longer necessary'." Explaining the NYCC 'fights tooth and nail to win every damages claim and our track record is excellent', Mr. Burns observes "But if this, or another highway authority, lost a really expensive high profile claim, perhaps councillors would finally get the message... Our roads generally are falling to pieces, but nobody listens".

Alan Kind, Byways & Bridleways Trust

^{Ed.} See Ed's letter in July TRAIL. This is not just Yorkshire we're talking about. Other local authorities are diverting their highways budgets: Shropshire 22%, Northumberland 35% and Somerset a whopping 42%.



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OPTIC 2000 RALLYE TUNISIE

Introduction: In the early 80s, for me the highlight of each year's International Motorcycle Show was the Paris-Dakar BMW, a huge, imposing machine with an unfeasibly large tank and a coating of Saharan dust. My ambition then was to travel the desert on such a machine. What I finally ended up doing, this April, was the Optic 2000 Rallye Tunisie on an XR400. Still one hell of a challenge for any trail rider, and about one tenth of the cost of doing the Dakar.

The prologue: One of the necessary evils which have to be endured when entering this rally is the scrutineering of documents and bike in Nice, which takes about half a day. This is followed by a photo session, wearing your 'Optic 2000' T-shirt and free sunglasses, and a multilingual briefing where the French riders natter loudly over the English translations so it's hard to tell what is going on.

The first actual riding was the 'prologue' which amounted to charging around a dusty, sinuous circuit a few kilometres inland from Nice. Since this was performed in front of several thousand Frenchies, I decided to take it easy and stay sunny side up. I actually put more effort into avoiding the other riders weaving through the traffic going there and back.

Sardinia: This year, the Sardinian stage consisted of a large, single loop, starting and finishing close to Oristano. The course was a mixture of dirt and rocky tracks which wound its way through a small range of mountains. Navigation was relatively easy as there were numerous roadside markers and roadside Sardinians indicating the route. One of the biggest surprise elements was the numerous river crossings which claimed many victims amongst those not brought up with British rainfall and sadistic TRF run leaders. The other surprise was a very long, steep dirt hill - the closest we came to a trials section. I'd like to say that I cleaned it, but I didn't. The front wheel came up and I nearly flattened some of the locals at the top of the hill before regaining control. Still, at least I didn't have to be dragged to the top....

Towards the end of this stage, I was following a German on a KTM when we came around a bend and were presented with Sardinia's only mud hole. Whoopee, I thought and cracked open the throttle in best TRF fashion. The German was obviously not a TRF member and hit the brakes with the inevitable result - he went into the bushes and I nose-dived into the mud hole. The only damage to the XR was that the throttle grip was rolled back on itself like a half-deployed condom. Later I found that the cup of my right kneeguard had been split open as well - no wonder my knee ached (and still does).

Tunisia: The other necessary evil of this rally was the Tunisian customs. Luckily, this year much of this was completed on the boat so was relatively painless.

The first few stages in Tunisia started off with twisty forest and mountain tracks and progressed to more open countryside with faster gravel tracks, sand spits, fields of sand dunes, oueds (dried up rivers), and chotts (dried up lakes). There was now much more reliance on the navigation equipment: the roadbook, the ICO tripmeter and the GPS. To my surprise, I found I was making pretty good progress and getting back to bivouac (i.e. camp) in good time, which I put down more to taking care over

my navigation than playing motocross heroes. Many times I'd see dust plumes moving rapidly towards the horizon in totally the wrong direction and wonder whether they'd reach the bivouac before sundown.

The only odd thing that happened to me during this time was that the XR's engine oil disappeared. I returned to the bivouac one afternoon, checked the oil and ended up putting 2.2 litres into the bike before the level was correct. There were no signs of leakage, the XR showed no signs of distress, and it never happened again. Weird, eh?

So I was beginning to feel rather pleased with myself until the fourth, and longest, stage in Tunisia, the run down to the oil refineries of El Borma. About halfway through this stage my front tyre suddenly went flat. Nick Palmer, who provided assistance for most of the Brit contingent, had advised me to use Michelin Deserts and solid foam mousses. Other people (hi, John!) had convinced me that they were more trouble and expense than they were worth and that Pirelli MT21s (my favourite trail riding tyre) with Trelleborg heavy duty tubes and liquid tyre sealant would provide the required puncture resistance and be easier to change.

After an hours struggle in the Saharan noonday sun, six patches, most of a large tube of rubber solution, two lengths of duct tape and skinned knuckles, I decided that Nick had a point. The extent of the damage causing the compression puncture and the incompatibility between rubber solution and tyre sealant meant that the tyre refused to inflate.

To punish both the tyre and tube, I decided to ride on them. Once going, progress was not quite as awkward as I had anticipated. It required a lot of concentration and a fair amount strain on shoulders and hands but I was moving in the correct direction. I found that the best approach was to keep my weight towards the back of the seat and try to ride over the virgin ground either side of the main piste whenever possible. Strangely enough, the bike was more stable over soft sand with a totally deflated front tyre than with the previous 15-20psi. I expected the tyre to jump off the rim at any moment but it held on for a total of over 220km and got me back to camp. Just to keep me on my toes, my electric road-book reader jammed up, my GPS batteries went flat, the ICO trip ceased to increment and my (backup) cycle computer lost its wheel magnet.

El Borma: When I finally arrived in camp, it was getting dark, I was very tired, my front tyre was scrap, my front wheel bearings were shot, a TV crew blinded me

with their lights and stuck a microphone up my nose, but I was still riding. Nick and Steve installed a part-worn Michelin Desert and solid mousse onto my front wheel and replaced the bearings and I believed that I'd had my bad luck for the rally.

The next day was the dreaded El Borma loop which dips deep into the south of Tunisia, brushing both Algeria to the west and Libya to the east. This is where the really big dunes are. The worst part of this stage was a large field of very soft dunes about a third of the way around. The best approach for dunes is to maintain momentum but these dunes just sucked the energy from both bikes and riders. I drank over a gallon of water during this stage without passing any.

Towards the end of the stage, the dunes got larger but firmer and my speed increased accordingly. For a while, myself and two other riders on Yamaha WR400s navigated by following one of the lead cars, rather than using our navigation equipment. The top cars are always worth following because they move fast, always try for the safest line, navigate well (having a dedicated navigator) and their dust can be seen for kilometres. This approach was all very well until I tried to take a shortcut, lost sight of the car (and the other riders) and suddenly found myself all alone, surrounded by some very large dunes. I cut the engine in the hope of picking up the noise of engines but the silence was total.

The roadbook and tripmeter were not much help as I didn't know where I was in relation to the book. It was down to the GPS to get me home. The problem was that the batteries were low again (they are supposed to give 10 hours use but don't). I'd leave the unit to recover for a while, turn it on, and the arrow pointing to the next waypoint would flicker for a few seconds before the unit went dead again. However,

this was just enough to allow me to pick successive landmarks on the horizon and ride towards them, making the odd detour to avoid the very largest dunes. If you get in amongst these there's a good chance you'll never get out. After about 30 km of this, I arrived at the checkpoint at virtually the same time as the two WR riders.

As I rode into camp, the wind was beginning to pick up and within a matter of minutes a full-scale sandstorm was in progress. In scenes reminiscent of the film 'Twister', tents, clothes, food and anything else not weighted down was blown away into the desert. Even the massive central tent of the bivouac, capable of seating several hundred people and with its cables anchored by the giant support trucks, was blown down. Luckily, there were few serious injuries.

Ras El Oued: Two more days to go and

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I'm feeling really good. This soon evaporates on the next stage ('lots of stones', we were warned) when I whack the rear wheel on a washout, dent the rim, break some spokes and suffer another compression puncture. I take my time with the repairs on this occasion because I only have one patch left. The tyre holds up for about 10km then goes flat again. Right, off we go on a flat rear tyre. Riding on a flat rear was, surprisingly perhaps, more awkward and problematical than riding on a flat front, although again progress was easier on virgin ground than well-travelled tracks. From time to time a metallic graunching noise told me that the rim was contacting the ground directly. Pulling in the clutch and wiggling the rear slightly would usually cause the tyre to hop back onto the rim. Occasionally the tyre would hop off completely and jam itself between rim and swingarm, causing the bike to skid to a halt and requiring a bit of violence to rectify. Then, to liven things up, the metal wires started to escape from the tyre bead, wrap themselves around the wheel and jam in the rear brake calliper and sprocket. Several sessions with the pliers and the tyre was totally devoid of any bead wire or rigidity.

During this time I came across Australian rally veteran Andy Coaker, whose Husaberg had suffered engine failure. He lent me some giant cable ties which held the wretched rubbery doughnut approximately in place for about 5 km before it returned to flapping around, only in contact with the rim at its lowest point. I rode a over 100 km like this and got back to the bivouac at Ras El Oued after dark. Nick and Steve fitted a Michelin Desert, a mousse and some blagged spokes, and I am indebted to the NPO officials who allowed me to continue riding. I wanted to keep the remains of the tyre as a souvenir but an Arab ran off with it in the night.

Djerba: Because of the time this had cost me, on the final day I was the last rider away. As I sat all alone at the start, one of the NPO officials said to me, 'This will be the best day of your life'. And it was. Unlike on previous days, I didn't bother to pace myself; I just went for it. At least I wasn't going to get any more punctures. I made one minor navigation error whilst following Ilke Evers (think of a tall, German version of Zena, Warrior Princess) but was saved when getting stuck in a herd of sheep gave me time to double check my position.

Ilke was also (indirectly) the cause of my only crash that day. She left the fuel stop some 30 seconds ahead of me and while trying to catch her I crossed up hitting a sand spit. The next moment I was engulfed in a fountain of dark orange sand through which I caught glimpses of cartwheeling XR. My one thought was to keep going. I picked the bike up, replaced the roadbook's perspex cover, cleared the cylinder using the decompressor, and after the second kick I was off. I'd crashed at over 100km/h but was riding again after only 30-40 seconds.

The rally ended in true 'Dakar' fashion with a dash across the beach, just south of the Isle of Djerba. I later discovered that I had fractured both my fuel tank and my water tank in the crash and had been leaking both fluids. However, the important thing was that I had made it to the end. Mention must also be made of Trudi Silvey and Patsy Quick who became the first British women ever to complete a desert rally.

I didn't think that I had fallen off many times but I ended up covered in bruises. One thing, however, is certain. The combination of the scenery, the riding and the camaraderie is unique and infectious and I'll be entering another desert rally next year.

Dave King, Bagshot, Surrey

IS THE XR400 FOR YOU?

Having returned to dirt bikes in my late 20's following years aboard the latest plastic rockets, I had convinced myself that a Katoom 600 was for me. In January, 1995 I bought a converted crosser and hated every minute of ownership. It refused to start, vibrated like 'Zebadee' on acid and shook itself to bits. After that a KDX250SR import - great bike, fast reliable and capable, even if I wasn't. Then a brief flirt with a Kawasaki KX250 - too much, too soon. Then the light at the end of the dirt bike tunnel. A new XR400.

I had read every piece of literature about the XR, it has a reasonable turn of speed, all the original suspension and carburation problems had been sorted out and, best of all, its easy to start and well screwed together.

My first outing was December 1998 with the East Yorks Group, around the North York Moors. I was running the bike in and had changed the poor original handlebars for Renthals. Just as well, as, having bought the bike, finances were running thin and the standard trail tyres remained. Bad mistake. I'm glad that Renthals are virtually unbreakable as they were tested on that occasion. Since then the bike has received decent tyres and guards to protect the levers, frame and sump. It has been used mostly for trail riding and a couple of hare and hound events that are put on by the Army at Driffield (Great fun and easily rideable). I have also ridden the bike at a motocross track and successfully beaten friends on motocrossers with distinct weight advantages, that includes me and the bike. Whilst they were losing grip wheel spinning and sliding, the XR never failed to put its power down and get traction.

For the average rider the XR is ideal. It has a strong powerful motor and a simple well bolted together frame and suspension that is adjustable for compression and rebound both front and rear and, apart from the poor quality standard stickers, cleans up like new after a days outing. The versatility of the bike allows for any style of riding. It simply does it all.

Lastly, as I stated at the beginning, having recently returned to dirt bikes and joined the TRF last year I have thoroughly enjoyed the runs I have been on. Other riders are friendly, informative and willing to share knowledge on lane access and rights of way issues, but most importantly I have relished the countryside I have seen whilst riding my four banger.

My wife has also joined after passing her test and has a KDX200.

Ian Tweddell, East Yorkshire

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GREEN LANE OUTFIT - SUMMARY

Very glad to see that you are still keeping 'TRAIL' up to its usual high standard. I am also glad that the TRF is surviving despite horror stories and the usual occasional shooting of ones-self in the foot-rest. Same old problems, are we trying the same old solutions?

Whilst I was in Germany I was pleased to be kept in touch with life back home through the Trail magazine. Although I never managed to get a bike on the road in Germany due to the severe restrictions on modification of motor vehicles from standard I did manage to work on the bikes for eventual use in UK, France or Belgium.

I am now back in England, hopefully for good, so am starting riding the lanes again after around 3 years. I managed to squeeze in three green lanes on the way back from the local MOT station. I still regret selling my XL185 and XR200 before going to Germany, but I hope they are still chugging along the lanes somewhere.

I have now got a Kawasaki KLR650 on the road with a lightweight specially built sidecar. "Here we go again, destroy a good bike with a bit on the side!" Though thinking about it they never said that about my Ural outfit, they did say other things about it though!

Anyway, after a good start to the modifications to the KLR frame by Tim Stevens to take the loads the chair would impose, I then took three years or so to design and build the chair, I never liked rushing! The chair should be comfortable for the crew (not passenger!) There is nothing worse than a crew member who turns into a passenger half way through the day since their legs have given way, they have to work for their living with me.

In an effort to help other trail sidecar riders and builders I have tried to create a sort of database of trail outfit dimensions. I was grateful for the two responses with three outfits I got from my request in 'Trail', but I am sure that there are more outfits out there among TRF members and friends. I have thus generated a chart showing the range and typical dimensions of our green lane outfits. The typical dimensions are not really averages since some dimensions are difficult to change and the rider may be putting up with a compromise.

Green-Lane Outfit - Summary Dimensions. (PJB 10/5/99) - see chart opposite.

WHY THESE DIMENSIONS AND FEATURES?

Motorcycle Used: The bike frame and transmission needs to be tough due to the extra loads imposed on it in strange places, and obviously carrying more weight ie the passenger all the time plus tools. Engine: a twin cylinder engine is certainly

Green-Lane Outfit - Summary Dimensions. (PJB 10/5/99)

Motorcycle Used.	Triumph TR5T	BMW R75	Triumph TR6	Ural M66	Dnieper MT12	Kawasaki KLR650	Typical.
Owner	John	Mike	Mike	PIB	PIB	PIB	Maxbe-vout?
% final drive lowered from	0	~2.5%	?	0	0	33%	25%
Outfit derived from?	Trials	MX	Trials	Sid	'WWII'	Special	Trials
Weight: (bike+ss/c)	175kg	?	?	270kg	350kg	159+73kg	~200kg
Wheel Base:	1630mm	1575mm	1473mm	1450mm	1440mm	1580mm	1600mm
Track of outfit:	890mm	1042mm	965mm	962mm	1140mm	1000mm	950mm
Overall width including	1400mm	1448mm	1372mm	1442mm	1620mm	1500mm	1400mm
Lead of sidecar wheel over	180mm	305mm	305mm	279mm	230mm	320mm	300mm
Ground Clearance	180mm	165/178mm	229/254mm	~200mm	~125mm	200/220mm	200/220mm
Lowered rear suspension	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lowered front suspension	0	-60mm	-60mm	+75mm	0	-50mm	0
Wheel sizes?	21/18/18	21/18/16	21/18/16	19/18/18/19	19/19/19	21/17/18	21/18/18
Front fork type?	l-link	l-link	l-link	l-link	Telc	l-link	l-link
Leading link sunnier?	Wasn	Wasn	Wasn	Special	-	EMI	MX type
Trail of fork assembly?	0mm	0mm	0mm	2.5mm	64mm	10mm	0mm+
Brake fitted to s/c wheel	No	No	No	Drum	Drum	Disc	No
S/c suspension linked to	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Seat in s/c?	'berch'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
S/c ground clearance?	250/340mm	292/305mm	305/355mm	280/300mm	260/280mm	210/260mm	250/300mm
Bike lean out when laden?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
S/c toe-in over wheel base?	15mm	45mm	38mm	25mm	0	25mm	25mm
S/c wheel suspension travel?	90mm	45mm	38mm	100mm	100mm	200mm	100mm
Other: Eng power?	35bhp	1000cc	~40bhp	40+bhp	26bhp	48bhp	35 to 60 bhp
Other: Ignition?	electronic				S/c drive!		
Other: Front Brake?	disc						

smoother, but the single cylinder engines are lighter and can be narrower. Percentage final drive ratio lowered from standard: The bike is now pulling more weight consistently and all out top speed is not needed, so 25% reduction will typically give nearly walking pace in 1st gear and still 60 to 70mph on the open road (if you are so brave!). This is easy with chains, I have a 14:60 final ratio, dropping below 14 teeth on the small sprocket will increase chain wear due to a tighter bend and increased working load. With BMW shaft drives there is a vast range of ratios to choose from, from the different models. Fitting a lower profile rear tyre can also help. The Urals and Dniepers are pretty low enough to start with, and alternatives are expensive to make.

Outfit derived from: Trials chairs are light and of the right width and should be tough enough. MX and Enduro chairs are wider and very tough, but will usually have to be narrowed, depending on intended use.

Weight: This is more important than for solos, since when they do get stuck they really get stuck. Even the odd lift out of a rut can be hard work on a heavy outfit.

Wheel Base: Very much determined by the bike. The very short trail on the front forks of an outfit will extend the wheel base of the bike by the length of the solo trail that is often around 75mm (3inches).

Track of outfit: A wide outfit track gives good stability on wide lanes and makes the outfit respond well to power on and power off/braking inputs for cornering at speed. A really narrow track makes the chair go very light but gives better access through narrow gates and between boulders on rocky tracks. A wide track will often match 4x4 ruts or bridge them, but with a narrow track often either the bike or the chair wheel has to fall into a rut. With skill the narrow tracked outfit will fit between pairs of 4x4 ruts, a bit of a knife edge game though!

Overall width, including bars: Needs to be controlled for gates etc, offset bars in clamps towards the chair to reduce width.

Lead of sidecar wheel over rear: Too short and the back wheel lifts too easily. Too great and the s/c tyre scrubs on 'chair inside' corners but keeps the rear wheel down on chair out corners. I prefer a greater lead off road. Too great a lead also causes the bike to lean left if the front wheel is lifted under power.

Ground Clearance: Very much determined by the bike. Too low and you keep hitting rock steps, too high and the outfit becomes a bit 'tippy'. Your compromise will depend on preferences and terrain.

Lowered suspension: The benefit is to lower the bike to reduce height of the centre of gravity, but compromising ground clearance, perhaps setting depends on terrain.

Wheel sizes: Easy to change but can be costly. There is a much bigger choice of tyres now than ever before. Good 'FIM Enduro' and 'Long Distance Overland' tyres are now available in 17", 18", 19" and 21". Rear tyres of up to 150mm (like mine on a 17" rim) fit most rear forks, just. A 19" or even 18" wheel in the front will enable a front tyre bigger than a 3" or 90mm section to be fitted, but most off-road leading link type front forks are narrow and may not take the wider tyre. A 4" by 19" front tyre works well on an outfit. A 16" s/c wheel helps to keep s/c seat low and still give good wheel travel.

Front fork type: Standard 'Tele' front forks are OK in a straight line, they tend to twist and lockup on corners causing loss of some control and rapid wear rate. They also have too much trail causing heavy steering.

Leading link supplier: Both Wasp and EML make good MX leading link forks. Wasp forks can be supplied for most bikes, my EML set were modified to fit my KLR that has a very long head stock! Hedingham also make good sets. Many engineers build their own to suit.

Trail of fork assembly: Most big trail solos run at around 75mm (3"), this is to give good stability over loose ground and other handling characteristics. This will make for very heavy steering on an outfit and tired arms at the end of the day. A static trail of zero does work well, as the outfit rolls forward the contact patch does move rearwards (pneumatic trail) to give better straight line stability. The trail distance does go up and down as the suspension rises and falls on a leading link fork, so this does to confuse things. It is often a matter of copying somebody else's dimensions or trying different trail dimensions until you are happy. Many leading link forks have alternative pivot points to help adjustment.

Steering Damper: With minimum trail there is very little front wheel flutter to need damping out. I prefer to have one fitted, it eases the shock loads in the bars when crabbing fast across rocky terrain or crossing ruts. I use a linear hydraulic unit.

Brake fitted to sidecar wheel: I love these! I have a hydraulic disc brake operable by rider or crew with a foot pedal. Tight left hand turns are now tighter and the use of this brake is so good at slowing the outfit approaching a left-hander too fast!

Sidecar suspension linked to bike: If the sidecar suspension is stiff and the rear suspension has little travel it is not needed. My KLR has 11" travel at the front, 9" at the rear and to match 8" on the sidecar! The sidecar and rear wheel travel is linked on my outfit with a very stiff anti-roll bar from a car. This takes out nearly all roll! Thus I have long travel soft suspension to soak up bumps on the trail with good stability on faster tarmac and across cambers.

Seat in sidecar: I think this is essential to give the crew an easy life and be ready to stabilise 'the ship' in times of need. Good quality foam on seats the right height to stand up from and located in the right places to apply weight. Along with this goes hand-holds, these must be at the right height to enable the crew to stand up without stooping. The crew must be able to easily see the course ahead, and not have to peer under the visor to see.

Sidecar ground clearance: Again a compromise between stability and missing rocks. At least with a low sidecar chassis the rider can compensate and hoist the chair over obstacles.

Bike lean out when laden: Bikes on road outfits are lent outwards to reduce the pull of the chair. This is less important on green lanes. There is less pull due to the minimal weight and narrow track. A vertical bike also keeps the tyres at the right angle to the ground.

Sidecar toe-in over wheel base: Again this helps to correct the pull of the chair, parallel or 1" over the length is sufficient.

Sidecar wheel suspension travel: This is often minimal to restrict roll, and with a light chair the wheel lifts easily anyway. Also low sidecar wheel movement helps keep the seat height over the sidecar wheel mudguard low.

Other. Engine power: I think 30bhp plus is essential, but a good spread of torque is more important to pull the outfit out of sticky situations and keep driving up long climbs when the speed is being knocked off.

Other Modifications (on older bikes). Electronic ignition will help reliability and smoother running. Big disc brakes out perform drums and when they get wet at least they do dry out the same day!

Sidecar Wheel Drive. My Dnieper MT12 has a split torque differential on the rear swinging arm that then sends a shaft across the sidecar to drive the



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sidecar wheel. This gives great grip on loose and boggy going. Without a diff. lock it is difficult on tracks with good grip one side and poor the other, one wheel or the other can spin. The system came originally from the WWII BMW R75 and does work well, but it is VERY HEAVY! The outfit weighs 350kg before fuel, tools, driver and crew; giving an all up weight of around of 530kg (1166lb) or half a ton! The machine gun and ammunition is of course extra; who said there was conflict on the lanes, you ain't seen nothing yet!

Riding the Beast!

I do not intend to cover sidecar outfit riding in detail here, tarmac road experience is soon transferred to mud and rocks, the only difference is that you run off the road at slower speeds.

Picking a line. One of the most essential skills is to be able to pick two parallel lines the right distance apart through the ruts or rocks to suit both the bike and sidecar wheels. Manage this and half the battle is won.

Balance. The rider must be able to confidently do figure of eights with the crew with the chair wheel up, off tarmac. The rider and crew must work together to get weight over the rear wheel and off the s/c wheel on straight ahead and right turns and then over the chair on left turns. (NB for RHD outfits). So many times I have seen the rider and the crew on an outfit leaning in opposite directions, they needn't have bothered leaning at all. Both must lean together to keep the balance, I suggest that the crew should really follow the lean of the rider.

Grip. This is even more needed than with a solo since an outfit is carrying more weight. Steady throttle control, good speed going into areas of poor grip, light chair load and planning the best path though are all essential to keep going. On loose rocky going, keeping the power on often works well. Bogs can be lethal, keep rolling, do not spin the rear wheel, jump off if it starts to dig but keep rolling and push.

Success. The whole hearted joy of riding your outfit up a loose rocky climb picking your way through a group of exhausted solo riders who have been trying to ride 'bucking broncos' and have eventually shut the throttle and stalled out. Do it in style and change up a gear as you go past, it makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up, and really annoys the solo riders!

Remember, tricycles are twicycles as nicycles as bicycles.

Peter J. Ballard.

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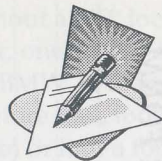
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letters



A SALUTARY WARNING

The contribution to Group News by Dave Clegg (July Issue - 251) concerning AONBs is indeed a salutary warning as to the dangers emanating from such bodies. The nation's Joint Advisory Committees will be made up of representatives of the Country Land Owners Association, National Farmers Union, Association of Parish Councils, &c. As such there will be a bias against motor-sport and recreation. The answer is clear. The users must be represented on the JACs. From there our point can be promoted in a reasoned and responsible fashion. (Sad that it has to be so but the facts of life dictate it)

There is a TRF representative sitting on the East Hants AONB and we are also fortunate in that the local LARA rights of way respondent Chairs the Access and Recreation Panel. This Panel is formed from representatives of the user groups, the County, Countryside Agency, disabled, CLA, &c. Amongst a lot of other positive work it has secured the reinstatement of three unclassified roads within the area, with more work of a similar nature scheduled for the coming year.

Despite these small successes there are draft proposals that could preclude motor-sport events from the AONB. The Panel will, I'm sure, seek a re-drafting of the offending section.

Each AONB will have an administrator, or AONB Officer, who will, in all probability, be housed in local authority offices. Value may be seen in seeking a seat on your local AONB's JAC for an articulate and knowledgeable member of your group! Should you have difficulty tracking down the relevant AONB Officer your Area Countryside Agency office should be able to assist.

Anon

LAST OF THE SUMMER WINE

The Pennines, South Yorkshire. Love the countryside, hate the Bill Naughton imagery. Don't get me wrong, The Last of the Summer Wine was a great play, but the television series is, in my humble opinion, a tad past its sell by date. Having said that it is very hard to get the characters out of your mind

when visiting the area around Holmfirth.

Gracie Fields is another one. Sally, Sally, don't ever wander away from the alley and me in a voice like a fishwife and then off to Capri at the first opportunity.

Phil Lord's run into the heart of Compo-land coincided with a beautiful day weather wise. How does he do it? We met at "Owd Betts", a pub near Rochdale. There's another of my pet hates, Lanky dialect tha knows. Not to mention Gracie Fields. Anyway Alan Hodson turned up on a new XR 250 and his son, John on a DT 50. John did a great job of keeping up, but the lack of power from the Yam required a fatherly helping hand in the small of the back on steep hills. When he graduates to a bigger bike (John not Alan) we will all have to watch out.

We started East, crossing Rooley Moor Road, built during the Cotton Famine of the 1800's and entering Yorkshire via lanes around Delph, legendary home of "Malt Loaf, the Bat Out of Delph". This is an area where "Heavy Metal" refers to cast iron baths, which are articles to be fitted with pram wheels, and pushed down a steep hill complete with old git wearing ragged jacket and knitted hat. Incidentally, there is always what I hope is good-natured rivalry between Lancashire and Yorkshire folk, dating back, I presume to the War of the Roses. Playing safe we make a point of not telling anybody we are from over the border!

Phil led us seamlessly along a series of great lanes up and down the Pennines, including a very small bit of the Pennine Way and part of the infamous Saddleworth Moor. Emerging from a lane we saw the Holy Grail, Compo's Cafe and lunch! This gave us chance to eat fish and chips while Ron demonstrated his technique of mending a puncture. In the words of the great sage, Dame Thora Hird, 'Eh up lad, least done soonest mended'. I must confess that I had trouble all day with my socks bunching up in my wellies. Rumour has it this was due to my coming under the influence of a certain Norah Batty. Phil confessed to feeling the urge to wear brown overalls and a flat cap and repair old bangers while being verbally abused by women in curlers. Ron said he felt like dressing in his scruffiest clothes and doing stupid things with his bike and Alan felt like walking around and being a pedantic old git, so no change there!

Even early in the year Holmfirth is busy, but in Summer it is hoorendous due to tourism and the pull of you know what. The last straw for me was Compo's face, or a facsimile thereof, leering out of the back of a bus. Promise you'll shoot me if I should ever lapse into bucholic old gittishness. Here endeth the SAGA, ohmigod it's already happening. Many thanks for a great day out Phil.

Rodger Davies, Lancs.

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KAWASAKI KDX200 1991. 12 months MOT, road legal tyres, FMF Pipe. £1400. **Kawasaki KDX200** 1989. 12 months MOT. Road legal tyres. FMF Pipe. £1100. Tel: 01772 752906.

HONDA DOMINATOR NX650 1989 F Reg. VGC. 10 months MOT, 5 months tax. £1550. Tel: 01706 828197 home, 0161 797 4151 work.

GAS GAS PAMPERA 250 1998 1700 miles, new 'O' ring chain, sprockets and rear tyre. In excellent condition. £1950 or consider P.X. either way. W.H.Y. Tel: 01484 643841 (W. Yorks.).

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HONDA XR200 'A' 1980 Twinshock. Original type, one careful owner (several careless ones). As featured in the Sunday Times. £400 ono. Tel: Basingstoke 01256 841350 answerphone.

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SUZUKI DR350S 1992, 9000 miles, new C/S, new rear tyre, MOT October. Has been used but still a good solid bike. £1300 ono. Tel: 0191 567 2438.

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HONDA XR400 1996 UK Bike, bash plate, Technosel seat and graphics, Acerbis H. Light, good tyres, new MOT, standard exhaust. £2595. Tel: Alan 01722 501306 (Wilts.).

SUZUKI DR250 electric start, 1992, first used in UK 1998. Ride height suspension and friendly grey and black colour scheme. Trials tyres, bark busters, taxed and tested £1900. Tel: Paul on 01873 832407 (South Wales).

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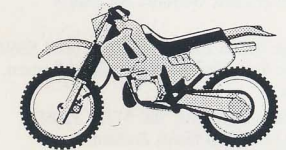
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