

RUST 2017 TRÈFLE LOZÉRIEN SPECIAL



TRÈFLE LOZÉRIEN

RUST RIDES THE CLASSIC TRÈFLE LOZÉRIEN ENDURO

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CONTENTS



Cover Image: Fabrice Glad

3 EDITORIAL

WE DID THE TREF! Well when I say *WE* I mean Warren, Pedro, James and Alex obviously...

4 GALLERY

Red Bull Romaniacs, too tough for some, but not Brett Swanpoel! Geoff Aaron and Gas Gas go EnduroCross...

8 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TREFLE LOZERIE

Since the very first Trefle Lozerien in 1986 the format has remained the same. Three days. Three loops forming the 'cloverleaf' in the event logo...

9 TO LE MENDE - DAY 1

The first day kicks off in the picturesque southern French town of Mende...

18 PEDRO'S TREF...

Co-proprietor of Horizon Adventures, Pedro Matos documents his first Tref...

23 VOLKSWAGEN CRAFTER TRENDLINE CR35 MWB TDI 140PS

The van that took the guys to the Tref and back in some style...

25 RUNNING FOR COVER - DAY 2

Day two at the Tref brought plenty of challenges for the RUST team. Rain was the first. Disintegrating mousses the second...

32 WARREN'S TREF...

The highlights of what Warren describes as his best motorcycle event ever!

37 ALEX'S TREF...

Van-Jockey for the 2017 Tref was Alex. Luckily he had a nice comfy van for the job...

39 ROLLING IN THE CLOVER - DAY 3

The final push. Can Warren and Pedro last one more day?

45 THE TREF: IT'LL COST YA!

Although aimed at a wide range of riders the Tref isn't exactly cheap. Warren calculates the bad news but, smiles-per-mile it's a bargain!

46 TREF TOP TIPS, PICTURE POST AND THANKS...

Top tips for the treffer, some conventional and unconventional sights and finally thanks to all people who helped us get there, race and get home. Thanks!

RUST TREFLE LOZERIE
SPECIAL ISSUE



TREF!

A FRENCH CLASSIC ENDURO has been on Warren's To Do list for a long time. He's been frustrated by work dates clashes on so many of them that when the Trèfle Lozérien came notionally clear on his 2017 calendar he made sure that this time, no matter what, he'd get there. And it took some doing, first in securing the RUST team entries and then spending the whole week prior in the RUST workshop (in Portugal) building his ultimate Tref-machine from our 2015 KTM 200EXC. And then, together with our Portuguese riding mate Pedro, driving 1500km in 18 hours non-stop to make the start. Sometimes nothing less than iron will and 100% commitment will get a job done.

Now while Warren and Pedro might be decent riders (Pedro's the proverbial missile over his home turf) neither are what you might call the most articulate (with the pen/keyboard) when it comes to professional story telling and, for that matter, I'm never sure either know which end to look through when handed a professional DSLR (that's a camera, by the way). We needed more members in the team if we were going to capture the whole story.

Which meant we needed a proper professional journalist. And, while it feels so wrong to say it – it's probably professional jealousy – James Barnicoat is one damn good pro-level writer/photographer. As a former editor of TBM (*Trail Bike & Enduro Magazine*) – RUST's predecessor – many long-standing readers will know him already, but for those that don't, you'll soon see he can describe – and shoot – trail to a championship level. And as a vegetarian he'd be an ideal partner for pescatarian Warren at the dinner table.

Just as the Lone Ranger needed Tonto, and Warren needed Pedro, so James needed Alex (*Waters*). Another ex-TBM man – and now RUST's industry liaison – Alex is a veteran of many an overseas raid and so was an ideal support officer for the crew.

So our four merry men spent four blinding days in Mende competing, capturing and most certainly enjoying what is one of the five 'classics' the French put on every year. Three unique loops, 600km of enduro heaven, set within a region of outstanding beauty, within a community that truly embraces our sport. Their experience wasn't without its challenges – disintegrating mousses and a lacerated arm among the woes – but the four were inspired all the same, and now Warren wants to go further, to ride all five classics in one season. Time and, well, time, will see if he can achieve that ambition. But in the meantime if you've ever wondered what these French classics are all about here is the RUST team's story. It would seem, given 54 – or is that 108 – pages, they've left no stone unturned. Enjoy!

JB

Although clearly a race the whole atmosphere was, relaxed...





TOO TOUGH?

IT'S THE RED BULL ROMANIACS, it's meant to be too tough. Although given it was won by a 42-year-old vet maybe there was too much bellyaching from the youth! (*Joking, okay?*). Yeah, well done Grimbo, you are The Man. Image wise, though, we are taken by this image of synchronized forest-misery. That's South Africa's Brett Swanepoel nearest the camera, who finished 7th. Swanepoel will be looking forward to his home event – the Roof of Africa – later this year, he's finished second and third in previous editions, so really it's only Graham Jarvis who stands in the way of ultimate success! A common situation in extreme...

Image: Red Bull Content Pool / Hila Tiberiu



GEOFF GEOFF

AS YOU KNOW here at RUST we'll always champion a vet rider and vets don't get much greater than Geoff Aaron. He's 45 this year, a ten-time AMA trials champ and a seriously good extreme enduro rider with two AMA EnduroCross victories to his name (*he beat Taddy!*). Aaron is now at the stage of his career where he's putting back, and as well as promoting trials he's Gas Gas's North America promotions manager. As part of that he's taking their brand new EC/XC300 into the EnduroCross season this year – great to see such hands-on attitude!

Image: Red Bull Content Pool / Chris Tedesco

BACK ISSUES

ISSUES 1-12

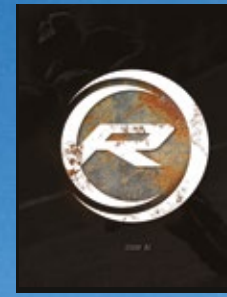
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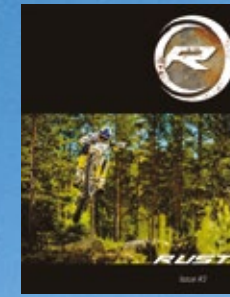
ISSUE #1

Introduction to RUST Magazine. 2015 KTM 250EXC vs 2015 Yamaha WR250F shootout. Trail test of the Chinese made WK400 Trail and columns from Chris Evans, David Knight and Gary Freeman...



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The 2016 Beta and KTM model ranges tested. Warren visits the 2016 Motocross of Nations. Pitgirl rounds up the 2015 EWC Season, plus columns from Si Melber and Rick Kemp...



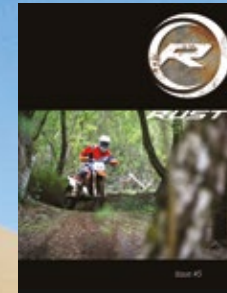
ISSUE #3

THE 2016 Husqvarna model launch. The KTM 250XC-F tested. The Suzuki V-Strom 650 and Pitgirl's analysis of the 2015 EWC Season. Columns from Chris Evans, Gary Freeman and Si Melber...



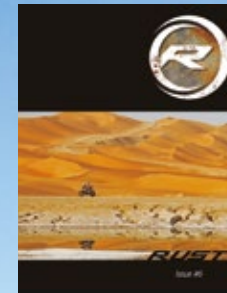
ISSUE #4

Race test of 2015 250EXC and 2015 Husqvarna TE350 on the Grappe de Cyrano. Testing the Honda CB500X Adventure. Pitgirl on beating the off-season blues and columns from JB and Gary Freeman...



ISSUE #5

JB's Instant Factory Set-Up – Suspension for the amateur rider. TRF main-men Mario Costa Sa and Greg Villalobos interviewed, plus columns from Rick Kemp and Si Melber...



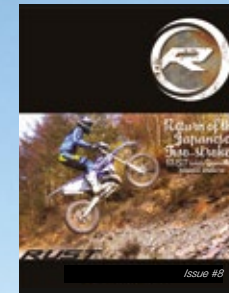
ISSUE #6

JB's first editorial. Interview with Jonny Walker. Dispatches – The TRF answers back. Profile of Patsy Quick, boss of Desert Rose Racing. RUST long-termers Pt1. Tested – Products for the Honda CRF250L. Gary Freeman column



ISSUE #7

Interview with David Knight OBE. What happened to the KTM 690 Adventure? Dispatches – In praise of the Honda CRF250L. The Michelin Anakee Wild adventure tyre. Chris Evans...



ISSUE #8

Yamaha's 'new' WR250 tested, the Royal Enfield Himalayan adventure bike, Iron Men – 3000 miles off-road on Harleys! The Adventure Motorcycling Handbook – 7th Edition.



ISSUE #9

Duel – Two riders, two KTMs, one title, Ivan Cervantes and Matt Phillips battle it out. The Yamaha IT490, 40 years on. Tested – Kit reviewed by Josh Snowden...



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700KM on a KTM450EXC. Looking for Mexico with Thomas Wielecki. Tested – Warren and JB on the latest kit, plus a column by Chris Evans...



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2017 KTM model range tested. EnduroGP the new face of World Enduro by Pitgirl. Gary Freeman with more MX insight...



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Heritage – The BMW R nineT tested. Dispatches – Too light, too fast, too good looking? Travelling across the Alentejo region of Portugal on a KTM 450EXC...

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ISSUES 13-26

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SWM returns! 10 reasons why you should buy a SuperTénéré. RUST do the Welsh – Part 1. Scott Prospect goggles, Chris Evans column and the first part of the Honda TLR project...



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Yamaha WR450F finally tamed. SWM RS650R ridden and rated. RUST do the Welsh – Part 2. Knighter column - finally. July Behl adventure column. Alpinestars SX-1 knee guards...



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2016 EnduroGP Round-Up. RUST did the Welsh! Finally... 2000km on the Road of Bones, Honda TLR 250 Project – Part 2, Gallery and Dispatches...



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BMW R nineT Scrambler, Touratech's Adventure Country Tracks, Tom Sagar Profile, plus new models from Honda, KTM and Suzuki plus Galleries...



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2016 ISDE from Spain, two new superlight trail-enduros from Fantic. Chris Evans In praise of the new CCM GP450 adventure bike plus products from Pirelli and Polisport...



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2016 EICMA show from Milan, all the new models previewed, the Athens/Gibraltar Rally. A brief history of Acerbis and first report from Andy Dukes as he prepares for his RTW trip in 2017...



ISSUE #19
2017 Dakar race preview, the Wieleckis continue their search for America, Andy Dukes searches for the 'Perfect RTW Bike' and JB finds more nasty surprises on the Project TLR...



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Part 2 of the 2017 Dakar preview, Part two of the Wieleckis US Odyssey, Andy Dukes is going solo RTW, Poole MCs Andy Sutton offers sage advice and Chris Evans is Dakar bound...



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Exclusive first ride of Touratech's BMW R1200GS Rambler!!! 3 Plucky Brits tackle the Red Bull Sea to Sky, Warren M. takes on his first road book rally, and we test 100% goggles and the 6D ATR-1 helmet...



ISSUE #22
Is the new Sherco 300 SEF-R clubman friendly? RUST gets and exclusive ride on the Royal Enfield Himalayan, Andy Dukes gets some last-minute RTW tips, and we pick our fave clothing to keep us warm in winter...



ISSUE #23
Hawkstone Park, the first MX of the year, JB and Warren M. do round 1 of the R3 Rally Raid Series, the long term Husky TE300 and the WR 250F updated, products tested and part one of Best Western as six trail-mad Kiwis follow the Trans Am trail...



ISSUE #24
Forza Italia, is the Italian Enduro series the best in the world? We ride the new Fantic 250E Casa 4T. Best Western Part the six Kiwis continue their trip out West... RUST Products, a selection of trick parts, tried tested and rated...



ISSUE #25
We ride the new Gas Gas EC/EX 300 from the newly resurrected company. Portuguese trail heaven with Horizons Unlimited and updates on Chris Evans' WR250F and JB's now up-and-running Honda TLR250 trialler...



ISSUE #26
Our new boy Tom Sagar testing the new Husqvarna fuel-injected two-strokes in British Columbia, plus Sand Raiders classic Dakar event and Andy Dukes departs for the Far East on the first leg of his RTW trip...

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A black and white photograph of a motorcycle rider in full gear, including a helmet and protective suit, leaning forward as they descend a steep, rocky hillside. The rider is on a dual-sport style motorcycle with knobby tires. The background shows a vast, hilly landscape with sparse vegetation under a clear sky. In the top left corner, there is a yellow arrow pointing downwards. The title 'TREFLE LOZERIE' is overlaid in large, bold, yellow letters with a distressed, stencil-like texture. A small green four-leaf clover icon is positioned to the left of the word 'TREFLE'.

TREFLE LOZERIE

A BRIEF HISTORY

THE FIRST TREFLE Lozerien, or 'Lozere Clover', took place in 1986, with the same basic format we see today. Run over three days, the three separate loops out of Mende formed a cloverleaf shape, which gave the event its name.

The Moto Club Lozere intended the event to be both ridden, and rideable, by professionals and amateurs alike. As with the other 'classic' French enduros it inspired (*the Val de Lorraine, Cyrano Grappe etc*), the timing on the going is reasonably slack. Sure, you'll want to keep up a reasonably brisk pace in order to give yourself a margin for error and enough time to eat some cheese and catch some rays at each check, but there are no 'tight checks'. The idea is that you enjoy the riding and your surroundings.

150 riders entered that first year, doubling the second year, and growing to 500 for the third. The event is massively over-subscribed, though numbers are capped at a manageable 550.

Entries open in late January (*look out for updates on www.trefle-lozerien-amv.com and www.facebook.com/TrefleLozerienAMV/*) and the event takes place in the last week in May or the first week in June.

Many giants of the sport have entered, though to this day only Frenchmen have won. Gilles Lalay was the first, with Stephane Peterhansel winning the next five in a row (*and nine in total!*). At the turn of the century David Fretigne took six on the bounce, and Marc Germain has claimed victory in five. This year, Outsiders Yamaha's Jamie McCanney was the closest non-Frenchman to winning – after 57 minutes of special test action he was a paltry six seconds behind Jeremy Tarrow.

There are some things the French do very well. They've got shrugging down to an artform; their cheese production is the stuff of legend; and how they lay-on an enduro is simply sublime. The Trefle Lozerien is arguably the best of the bunch...

Words & pics: James Barnicoat
Pics: James Barnicoat & Fabrice Glad



TREFLE MENDIE

Day 1

TO LE MENDE – DAY 1

THREE DAYS. 600KM of almost entirely off-road riding. 15 special tests. Moto Club Lozerien's AMV Trefle Lozerien enduro is something rather special. And with the event taking place on some of Europe's finest enduro terrain, centred around the picturesque southern French town of Mende, it's not hard to comprehend how the 300 online entries available (*out of a total of 550*) sold out in just four minutes!

Now in its 31st year, the Tref is an enduro icon and RUST wanted in. Warren and Pedro bagged themselves entries (€350 a pop), I enrolled as press, and Alex was enlisted as race support. Bikes were prepped and plans were hatched. The logistics were worked out, revised, and then changed again. Twice. Eventually it was decided that Warren and Pedro would drive from Portugal with their own bikes (*200EXC and 350EXC-F KTMs, respectively*), whilst Al and I would leave from the UK in a Volkswagen Crafter test van, loaded with the box-fresh 2017 Yamaha WR450F I'd be piloting. Road trips all round!

'If being trapped among hundreds of suburban Parisiennes queueing for fuel in the midst of a tanker drivers' strike during rush hour traffic in the French capital isn't Dante's fifth circle of hell it sure felt like it...!'

We converged on Mende on Thursday, 1 June, each van experiencing its own marathon journey. Warren and Pedro had banged out their mega-mileage in one go, whilst Al and I (*having left the UK four hours later than planned*) got snarled-up in Paris when a height restriction forced us onto a convoluted detour. And if being trapped among hundreds of suburban Parisiennes queueing for fuel in the midst of a tanker drivers' strike during rush hour traffic in the French capital isn't Dante's fifth circle of hell it sure felt like it!

Make no mistake, it's a full day of driving to get from the UK to the Lozere and, unless you're making a holiday of it, bombing down the autoroutes is the way to get it done. Gradually, the flatlands of the north gave way to more rolling hills of increasing severity – the satnav's altimeter steadily clicking over 2000, 3000, almost 4000ft. And when we realised our ETA at the hotel was a clearly anti-social 02:30, only the budget motel chain hotelF1, and their credit card entry system, saved us from a night sleeping in the van.



TO LE MENDE – DAY 1



RUST ENDURO

Mende

Nestled in the mountains of the Lozere, Mende is a small town with a huge 14th century cathedral at its heart. Away from the cathedral square, the town was taken over by The Tref, with administration, the main paddock and startline sitting slap-bang in the centre, and the parc ferme perched on the hillside above.

Signing-on opened at 10:00 and, although by 11:30 it looked as much fun as a Paris fuel queue, the system worked pretty efficiently. Join slow moving line of indeterminable length (*because everyone seems to know everyone else and runs up to say 'bonjour' and shoot the breeze*). Have friendly Moto Club Lozere (MCL) staff check your paperwork. Join the second queue. Have someone else check through more of your papers and some of the same ones again. Join a third queue and almost immediately receive your race numbers, check times, program and goody bag. The end of a fourth queue is where you get your transponder, and you're done. I saw a couple of problems with entries, which the officials were working to resolve, but the biggest hubbub turned out to be someone had kicked over the wine chiller bucket under the desk!

Outside, Paddock A was where the big teams put their big trucks, with shining factory machines sitting under enclosed awnings. Paddock B, where we'd set-up our pit, was a supermarket car park ten minutes away. Elsewhere, vans gradually filled every available parking space, with work mats sprawled-out across the pavements and fevered spannering all around. A sense of nervous anticipation hung over the town, like the foreboding storms clouds that were gathering above.

Once we'd sorted the bikes, we rode up through the narrow back streets to parc ferme for scrutineering, and the time-honoured process of having your bike's key components daubed with paint. Replace any of those parts and you're immediately out. Helmets were checked, as was body armour, then it was straight back down into town, exploring every nook of the historic centre – all honey-coloured stone buildings, wooden shutters, and closed cafes – in search of a mid-afternoon meal.

Once fed and watered, and while a thunderstorm bellowed down the valley, we hot-footed it to the local shopping centre, where we watched footage from last year's Tref alongside a display of Laurent Charbonnel's race bikes (*both Dakar and enduro machines*), before filling a trolley with an eclectic mix of race day food, drink, and high-energy snacks. A random Sherco sat amidst offers for loo roll, instant coffee and washing powder, further emphasising the local interest in all things enduro.



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TO LE MENDE – DAY 1

DAY ONE

O'Meo

THE FOLLOWING MORNING the first bikes left at 08:00, four per minute. Big names such as Jamie McCanney, Fabien Planet, Jessica Gardiner and Emmanuel Albepart were among the first away. Each rolled silently down from parc ferme to be introduced over the PA system in Paddock A, before waiting on the wooden start ramps, firing-up on their minute and heading out through the streets.

Excitement built within Team RUST as Antoine Meo – who'd brought with him a sizeable team of riders – was due to line-up alongside Warren and Pedro on their minute. Well, it's not often your name is announced alongside that of a multi world champion! Sadly, as their 08:49 start-time rolled around it was clear that the Frenchman was a no-show, it transpired that he'd crocked himself earlier in the week.

As my press entry allowed me to start at any time, I'd snuck out 20 minutes ahead of my team-mates in the hope of snapping some shots of them on the going. Following coloured arrows and ribbons of blue tape dangling from roadside furniture, I made it all of a mile through the town before blindly tagging onto the bikes in front, missing a turning, and wasting five minutes back-tracking down the road. Idiot.

It hardly felt like we were out of the town before the first trail began – a narrow loose rock track hemmed-in by stone walls. The Yamaha skittered across the surface, its box-fresh suspension as stiff as my still-cold limbs. A gentle trail would've been nice to get the blood flowing but it wasn't forthcoming. Instead there was more rock, wet and slippery in places, followed by a nadgery climb up into the forestry.

I caught the numbers of those coming past, eager to find a photo spot before Warren and Pedro caught up. Unfortunately, I'd underestimated their pace and was dismayed to see the name 'Warren' billowing across the back of a vented race shirt as he snuck past. Curiously, he then overtook me again, having missed a turn on a short section of sandy trail. All hope of keeping him in sight disappeared when I too failed to see the blue tape amongst the pine branches on a fast blast through some trees, and flew straight past the turn.

This respite from technical trails soon ended as we again entered dank, deciduous forestry. Sunlight barely penetrated the tree canopy, its drying powers only reaching the ground in dappled patches and having little effect on the slick mix of rock and mud which meandered across the





RUST ENDURO

hillside. Slipping and slithering, I soon reached the back of a queue and peered around the riders ahead to see a bike on its side across a short stretch of rock steps.

With a clear path and a modicum of momentum it looked straightforward and as each rider scrabbled and footed their way along I planned my route. The left side looked safer – you could dig the bike into the hillside if it went wrong – but it featured the larger steps. I plumped for the right... until I was within a few metres when I realised that the side of the trail had disappeared down the hill. If you messed up you'd do likewise!

Switching to the left side robbed me of precious momentum and I was forced to hop off and perform the Shove of Shame in order to get the Yam over the ledge. It wouldn't be the last time that morning I'd have to dismount to counteract a wildly spinning rear wheel...

In the shade of the tall pines

Out in the open, the sun was beating down hard and the trails were bone dry. It would've been hellish dusty if it wasn't for all the rocks! Loose rocks; slabs of rock; rock set deep into hard-packed tracks: rocks everywhere. Yet the terrain wasn't scorched beige – that parched look that's trendy amongst the hills of southern Europe. Instead the rolling uplands of the Lozere were joyously verdant, carpeted with lush grass, adorned with the deep dark green of pine forest, all speckled with the bright yellow flowers of gorse and broom.

As the course headed west it constantly rose and fell, with just enough opportunity to take in the views between technical descents or climbs that'd keep your focus dead ahead.

What started with a couple of switchbacks over cambered rock slabs soon turned into a steep-ish singletrack slog over large loose rocks, ledges and tussocks of grass. Hemmed in on both sides by dense broom bushes, no doubt hiding a similar minefield, there was nothing to do but follow the bikes in front.

The climb seemed never-ending, a relentless pounding through the upper body from the rocks beneath my wheels. 'FFS!' I shouted into my helmet in its unabbreviated form, frustrated with my lack of bike fitness and the constant lumping over each mound of stones at walking pace. I was trying to maintain some distance, but the pair in front were making a real meal of it.

Rather embarrassingly, yet equally fortuitously, the riders took my outburst as aimed at them and pulled to one side, allowing me just



TO LE MENDE – DAY 1

enough room to squeeze past. *'Merci beaucoup, monsieurs...'*

Although the morning had proved rather physical, something I learned over the three days is that the Moto Club weren't in the habit of battering you into submission. Demanding riding was often balanced with a couple of kilometres of twin-track or a stretch of country lane afterwards on which to take a breather. And it was on such a stretch that I first noticed the Yamaha's fuel light glowing bright yellow. Uh oh.

For a good ten minutes the light shone intermittently. It'd gone out again by the time I reached the first special test so I didn't really give it the thought it deserved. The test's digital display showed times around five minutes, so I chanced a run through the *'banderolée'* (what the French call a *taped-*, or *MX-test*). My press entry meant I could record times but not appear in the results so, carrying a bag of speed-hampering-expensive camera gear, I'd opted not to run a transponder and simply ride for the fun of it.

Looping through an open section of forestry, the test was now nicely worn-in. Corners were bermed in the soft soil and the optimum line was flattened through the grass. If I'd taken more notice of the names on the timing board I'd have realised that it was the front runner whose time I'd noted, and that even a mid-pack rider was taking more than six minutes. I bet I wobbled round in nearer seven. And that put the fuel light back on again...

Each section of field-side singletrack seemed to be taking me deeper into nowhere. Every tiny village looked unlikely to house the first service check. If the smiles and waves of friendly locals could power the Yam then I'd make it to refueling with ease, but I had visions of walking back to a farmstead and relying on GCSE French and mime to elicit a can of fuel. It felt like I'd been riding all day, not the couple of hours and 64km it'd actually been.

Finally, check one appeared like an oasis mirage, lines of vans shimmering by the roadside. Warren and Pedro had already left some fifteen minutes before, so whilst Al refueled the Yam I refilled my hydration pack, shoveled down some food, snapped a couple of photos, and got moving again.

The going remained wonderfully varied. One minute you'd be buzzing along a wide farm track, looking down across a humpbacked landscape stretching far into the haze. Then you'd plunge down, through the tiniest hamlets and between the fields, into yet another woodland. And who could predict whether the trail within would be beautifully smooth and sweeping, or a pig of a slippery slither.



RUST ENDURO



RUST ENDURO

Whilst the going proved diverse, special test two was another banderolée-based blat through gorse and broom, and between tall pines. Shorter than the first special yet no less enjoyable, it stood out for me by having the body shell of an old 1940s Citroen Traction Avant abandoned deep in the woods. How very French....

Etiquette?

As was the queue at test three. The course abruptly funneled dozens of waiting riders into a single line and it took all of 30 seconds for me to forego British queueing etiquette and launch headlong into what was akin to the first corner in a snail's pace MX race. Every opportunity to make up a place was grabbed with elbows up, and a sneaky front wheel turned across the bike alongside. Time spent in line was time wasted and no quarter was given.

The first few hundred yards of the special were slow and sinuous, dropping down banks and into a bombhole before the tapes opened out and the test revealed itself to be a looping sprint around a hillside. The quick guys had it beat in four minutes.

The third check was another long haul, 64km, two-hour jaunt, perhaps more open than the first though no less diverse. And I was just as glad to see the van as I had been earlier in the day. The time check was located on the shores of a beautifully-kept leisure lake, more akin to being crowded with sun-kissed families than sweaty dirtbikers. How I resisted a swim I have no idea.

Just up the road was test four – you've guessed it, another banderolée. This time the trees were the predominant feature, and the layout varied from tight second gear, off-camber banks to fast open sweepers. The lack of white roots, ruts or braking bumps – which often characterise such tests in the UK – was most welcome.

The final run back into Mende mixed open hilltop trails, fast dusty field tracks and a wonderful, muddy, rock-strewn descent through dense woodland so dark I could barely see the ground through tinted lenses. This wasn't the end of the day, however, as there was still the last special test to ride – the hillside finale to each of the three days.

Looking down on the town, the test was by far the most motocross-like of all the specials. Riders disappeared off the edge of the hill, only to jump back into view seconds later, before embarking on the fast corners, wide off-cambers and chicanes that made up the three-minute course. A small tabletop was the only manmade jump, unless you carried enough



speed over the wooden bridge which facilitated a figure-of-eight layout (*just don't forget to duck as you looped back under it!*).

It was a brief, yet enjoyable, blast, though it did get me thinking about how it'd fair if the weather turned. Last night's storm barely dropped enough water to wet the ground, but a good deluge would turn the test into one giant slip 'n' slide. And the weather reports promised more rain...

High fives

Back in the paddock it was high-fives all round, acknowledgement that it'd been a long day. After the last check riders were allowed 90-minutes to get their bikes to parc ferme – plenty of fettling time if you didn't dawdle.

While Warren and Pedro set about their KTMs I gave the Yam a once-over. The slightly tweaked clutch lever would have to remain bent, though a missing seat bolt would need replacing. I found something suitable amongst Warren's comprehensive spares kit. And with a tank of gas, a fresh air filter, and a cable tie standing-in for an AWOL sidepanel bolt it was ready to go again.

We debriefed over a well-earned beer in one of the town centre bars surrounding the main paddock. I was concerned that stopping for photos and relying on AI for refueling was going to put him behind schedule and jeopardise Pedro and Warren's race. There seemed little point me riding the special tests – the time would be better spent covering the course – and an even earlier start wouldn't hurt. Everyone concurred. Then we ran through the day's results, already posted online (*how times have changed*), special test by special test. Seriously impressive organisation, MCL!



PEDRO'S TREF...

After guiding two back-to-back Portuguese dirt bike tours, finishing just hours before leaving for Mende, Pedro didn't have time to think clearly about what he was taking on. As the saying goes, 'just do it'...

WHEN I FIRST knew of the opportunity to be part of the RUST team at the Tref I did not realise what a unique chance this was knocking at my door. Events like the Trefle Lozerien are the kind of events that all the big lovers of dirt bikes dream to ride.

A confession then: I am more a Baja rider, and let's just say enduros are not my specialty. But the Tref is the kind of challenge you don't want to pass on. So you say yes first and then quietly run away to practice the skills you need to improve whether for the liaisons or to be faster in the special tests.

What prep?!

The preparation of my bike for this event started (*ahem...*) on the day we left from Évora for Mende – incidentally that's a journey of 1500km in itself.

That's not as crazy as it sounds when you have a 'Ready to Race' 2017 KTM 350EXC-F. Well, only a little less crazy. So having got back from my latest guiding tour only the night before, the day started at 07:00 (*Warren's an early bird*) changing tyres and mousses – not my favourite warm-up, but so much easier these days now we have the Rabaconda mousse changer.

Tyres done, the next job was fitting new plastics to the bike, having first applied the new RUST team graphics (*the sponsors including Horizon Adventures, I might add*), plus new hand guards (*Acerbis*) and levers (*ARC*).

Then came an oil and filter change, a fresh air filter plus prep on two more for changing after each day of the Tref. The chain and sprockets were the standard ones because this bike has done less than 2000km on open dirt tracks and the kit is still – remarkably – in good fettle.

And that was it. Not so much, but of course it took a while to finish...



Words: Pedro Matos

RUST ENDURO



www.rustsports.com 



Okay, so only eight hours late...

By the end of these tasks we were eight hours late... well it is always like this when you are preparing bikes and gear to go to a race, isn't it? So it was only when all this was finished that the nerves started to get to me. We still had 1500km to drive (*it would only take 18 hours, non-stop!*) but it was as if we were there already.

Just before arriving in Mende we were looking all around to find some coloured tapes of the track marking, trying to have a first mental picture of how would it be on the tracks and special stages. You could almost smell and feel the race although we hadn't yet seen so much as a single bike.

Finally at the main square we found KTM, Yamaha and Sherco team trucks bringing the racing colours to Paddock A. A thrill ran through my body reminding me of when I was racing 10 years ago. Although my main objective was to finish this race with no injuries, and saving my lovely KTM 350, you cannot avoid the nerves coming up on you.

A big sea of emotions

The first day for technical and administrative verifications was itself a big sea of emotions. Did I really have all the necessary documents? Would they ask me for something more, me being too far from home to get it? And given the rush of the prep', had I forgot to tighten something on the bike?

Given Warren's OCD ways, the RUST team was first in line to make the administrative verifications, with almost 600 riders stood behind us! Incredibly the administrative verifications and technical verifications went without a hitch and so we moved on to placing our awning in Paddock B and then, at last, took a look at the special test on the edge of Mende. It was a beautiful test (*previously seen in EnduroGP*) with a beautiful view over Mende. One I will never forget.

Day 1. Blue tape.

The race is on...

At breakfast I had to make an effort to have a good feed. Nervous? Yeah! Arriving at Mende I realised I'd left part of my gear back at the hotel, now more than 30km away. My luck being that Warren always carries 1000 spare gear kits...!

My heart rhythm increased and way before our time (*Warren!*) we were at the parc ferme where we got to realise the true dimensions of this race – it's huge! So we headed into the mountains and as we didn't know how long the first section would be we put on a briskish consistent pace – after all

PEDRO'S TREF

we'd be putting in 210km for the day. After a few kilometres a group of Welsh guys passed us going at a really strong, fast pace which prompted me to thinking that I might be riding too slow, so I chased the guys. It was like a gang racing in between the liaisons.

As I rode I was appreciating we were riding in the best conditions, the temperature and the sun... But the tracks too were absolutely amazing. Enduro tracks, not Erzberg-tough, but you have to be skilled...

At some point, after the first nerves subsided, I also began to realise that I was riding the TREFLE LOZERIEN and that put a big smile across my face. I made a point to enjoy every moment. That was until a special moment in that morning when a rocky single-track up a hill that never ended brought on a sweat, and the smile on my face became a little shy.

Uphill, downhill, streams, single tracks under a dark forest... this was awesome. And, I thought, I am here! Arriving to the first check point we realised the trail times were actually quite generous and you don't have to rush, but speed is in our blood and once you are on track again you can't help but put a really good pace to it.

At the check points there'd be hundreds of vans and so we'd have the fun each time of looking for our support vehicle (*Alex and the VW*) but you still had time to admire the dimension of the race with all those people and support teams.

There were a million good feelings as we rode through the beautiful landscapes. And arriving each day in Mende is a sensation of achievement because it is really easy to fall and damage yourself or the bike and finish your race right there. So we put the bikes in the parc ferme and I shared a big high five with Warren – day one done.

The end of the day will be remembered for my yellow socks (*the smell!!*) and a few celebratory beers with the Welsh and Scottish in Paddock A.

Day 2 . White tape.

Another 213 kms for the day. Some muscles were sore in the morning but the happiness of racing is much greater than any muscle complaint.

On the trails again we encountered the most impressive single tracks – probably not advisable for people with vertigo... Then there were the single-track descents that seemed to never end, disappearing under dense bushes where a good headlight is necessary even on a sunny day.

Then disaster. After 50km my rear mousse was completely destroyed. I could not imagine that my race was over – this was the worst feeling I had during these days. But it's at these moments that we discovered that this race is much more than a race, this is a community, a brotherhood, helping each other. Without a spare mousse nor an inner tube we were begging for





help. And there they were, the Welsh, the Scottish, the British, all trying to help me. One gave me levers, another a Rabaconda, Dave was asking the French guys for an inner tube – and he found a 21" tube which I squeezed into my 18" rim. Then there were the wives asking me if I wanted water, tissues to clean my hands – everybody was amazing. THANK YOU ALL...

The rest of the day was a rolling nightmare of course, as I was always looking down at the back tyre waiting for a puncture that (*fortunately*) never came. It was my lucky day.

Lucky day? The second lasting memory of the day will be the rain that appeared from nowhere. And it rained a lot. I got soaked and so I froze, my googles were shit, the tyres started complaining as the tracks were getting that much harder. The last special test was a nightmare, in the grip-less mud I felt like I didn't know how to ride...

And so we staggered into Mende, leaving the bike in the parc ferme meant that I was starting the third day. Not so much high fives, but conciliatory hugs... Team RUST had finished one more hard day. It was not impossible but for sure it was not the easiest.

Day 3. Red Tape.

The day started with some work – me riding direct to our support vehicle and changing the inner tube for a mousse. Then came a challenge that was very personal – as I'm colourblind between green and red it was at some points during the day difficult to see the red tape over the green vegetation, which meant I missed quite a few turns. I knew I had time enough but once I got back to the track I'd put on a very fast pace because I didn't want to be penalized, and I wasn't. And with a new mousse I could be more confident and push on through the rocky sections without fear of a puncture.

This third day was of course the last day and I really wanted to achieve my target – to finish the race! And this day, as every day, there were outstanding tracks with beautiful views although maybe not for those afraid of heights. These beautiful mountains and tracks were shared by all lovers of the countryside, be they walkers, families, horses, with everybody respecting each other and their hobbies – the way it should and must be.

Arriving at Mende after almost 600km of enduro tracks was a huge victory for Warren and me. What an adventure and what magnificent riding days! As I've been saying, it was not difficult but to finish is never a given – many things can happen...

Well done RUST!!

Thank you Warren, Alex and James.



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VW CRAFTER TRENDLINE CR35 MWB 2.0 TDI 140PS

Drive review

Words and Images: Alex Waters

GETTING OUR BIKES, accessories, riding gear and associated clutter down to the South of France required the right vehicle. Having asked them for the use of a Transporter, the good people at Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles UK asked if we would like to try out the all new 2017 Crafter instead – to which we immediately said *(of course)* yes please!

For the first time in 20 years the Crafter is being built by Volkswagen themselves instead of alongside the Sprinter by Mercedes and the good thing about this is that all the top end VW tech which has made its way across from the T6 Transporter range, making for a very different Crafter.

First impressions inside the cabin are good. Tough looking plastics sit alongside smart black cloth seats, multiple storage options and our van has the optional large touchscreen sat-nav and audio system – it sure feels refined for a large panel van.

In the back the first thing that hits you is the cavernous space – when empty it feels like you could comfortably Airbnb your house out for a couple of weeks and move in here, and this is only the MWB version! Although the press vehicle we are using hasn't been ply lined I doubt that feeling of space would be affected.



Out on the road the high level of refinement continues, at motorway speeds on the way down through France the cabin noise is exceptionally quiet for such a large vehicle using the TDI engine, gearbox and running gear from the T6 Transporter. The adaptive cruise control is particularly useful for big motorway stints and the climatic air-con keeps us cool in the early June heat. The height and lumbar adjustable seats with armrest offer ample support on a long trip.

It's at the event itself (*the Tref*) however where The Crafter really comes into its own. For three days it becomes our fuel station, food and water carrier, mobile garage, and shelter from the rain (*the size of the van at this point making it the right choice over a Transporter*). Some of the checkpoints are in small villages with the inevitable narrow streets and tight, twisting turns but the Crafter's light and sweetly balanced steering makes it feel like a much smaller van. Steep hills throughout the three days didn't seem to faze the punchy 140PS TDI unit and it never felt underpowered even when fully laden with kit.

All in all The Crafter was an excellent companion throughout the seven days and a pleasure to drive. It's a big van with small van ease of use. The fit and finish is above that of a typical builder's van, but that is reflected in the price. Yep, it's the ultimate mid-size team truck.

Distance covered: 2900 miles
Price as tested: £40,135 (OTR incl. VAT)

We like: Car-like handling from such a big vehicle, huge load capacity, cabin refinement.
We didn't like: £1650 seems a little steep for air-con.



Day two at The Tref brought plenty of challenges for the RUST team. Rain was one matter, but disintegrating mounds, now that's serious...



RUNNING FOR COVER

Day 2

Words: James Barnicoat
Images: James Barnicoat & Fabrice Glad

RUNNING FOR COVER – DAY 2

DAY TWO

HAVING JUST SET down a large plate of breakfast croissants, which I almost entirely demolished, our hotelier explained that the day's route would take us right past his door. Jeez, I could've had a lie-in and started from there!

But that would've meant missing out on the picturesque 40 minute drive down the valley into Mende in blazing sunshine, not to mention what transpired to be some of the most enjoyable riding I've ever experienced...! So instead it was back to parc ferme for 08:00 to head out with some of the event's top riders.

Turning out of the paddock we immediately double-backed and climbed the tarmac hairpins high into the forested hills. A wide bumpy fire road soon narrowed into an undulating twin-track, skirting along the tree line with the most glorious sweeping turns. Puddles sunk down into the dirt, with bermed edges to rail around or handy crests to loft the front-end. It was fast, flowing, and oh-so enjoyable on the 450 Yam.

A stream of tape – white this day – marked a gap into the bushes and an end to the high-speed blast. What followed was what I can only describe as a foot-wide goat track cut into a cliff. It wasn't vertical – there was just enough of an angle for trees to maintain a good grip – but if you went over you wouldn't stop unless you grabbed a trunk or reached the bottom. I was glad I couldn't see how far down that was...

I inched along, slipping the clutch whilst carefully placing the front wheel on the muddy trail, ever mindful of catching my rucksack on a hanging branch. A few spectators sat above, presumably waiting to help (or video!) the unfortunate, as this was by no means high-action. They doubtless heard my sigh of relief as the track began to widen.

Once out of the trees the course leveled out and the pace increased. Wide trails ran between fences, walls and small plantations, which blurred in the periphery as I wound-up the 450.

The smooth surface began to get progressively more rutted, and a well-used green lane slowed the pace considerably. It was really the only proper set of ruts we'd see in 600km, and with a choice of eight regularly converging lines there was plenty of opportunity to avoid the deep puddles and stodgy holes which punctuated the track. Yet, cruelly, every single rut eventually culminated in a track-wide muddy waterhole that was all but unavoidable. Cling to the slippery trailside and you'd be fine. Any other line provided me with a real photo opportunity...



RUST ENDURO



RUNNING FOR COVER - DAY 2

RUST ENDURO





A doozy

Given the terrain it was a real surprise that, over the three days, there wasn't a real killer climb. With 550-odd riders you wouldn't want a 'stopper' of a hill, though I was fully expecting the occasional *'third-gear-pinned, hold-on-and-hope'* ascent. MCL did, though, throw in a real doozy of a descent...

It came mid-way through the first check. A car-width trail was winding its way innocently up through a woodland when suddenly the tapes marked a turn straight off the edge of the track. It was steep, not quite *'heart in mouth'* steep but enough to get you hanging right over the rear fender and feeling your way down. S..l..o..w..l..y...

I gave way to the rider next to me, only for him to insist I went first, gesturing to where his rear brake lever should've been. *'Bon chance, fella'* I thought as I pulled ahead of him, picturing his runaway bike taking-out everyone in some kind of dirtbike avalanche.

Both wheels gripped then slid then gripped again on the loose surface and a couple of vertical drops meant freewheeling or flipping. Somehow, there even managed to be a small bog partway down!

The MCL's 31 years of Tref' course design were really showing – breaking up the fast stuff with just the right amount of technical riding to make it feel challenging, yet enjoyable.

Les Mousseketeers

Warren and Pedro were suffering their own particular challenges, and those definitely weren't much fun. Both arrived at the first check with melted rear mousses. The Rabaconda mousse rig was back at the paddock, there weren't any mousses in the van, and there was precious little time to swap-out two rears.

Pedro was adamant his mousses wouldn't last the day, and headed off around the service area to hunt-out a solution. Warren resigned himself to a slower pace and nursing the bike round. There was still 150km, and four special tests, to go...

The previous day we'd seen plenty of spectators out on the going, but now it was the weekend and the locals were really out in force. Standing by their properties and waving; pointing the way at junctions; picnicking by the special tests; cheering us on from the middle of nowhere (*sometimes in fancy dress*); kids waiting, arms outstretched, for a high-five.

RUNNING FOR COVER – DAY 2

One young lad was waiting, camera poised, by a gravel corner for riders to come through. I was about to unleash the kind of glorious powerslide that 450s are oh-so good at when I spotted his dad's car parked right in the firing line on the outside of the turn. Make the kid's day or ruin the dad's? With a few hundred riders still to come through I'll wager the Renault didn't escape a strafing...

Bypassing the first of the day's five specials, I swept between giant beech and oak on wide hard pack trails, before the trees turned to pine and then the associated clearfell. Farmland followed, paddocks deep in grass or smothered with colourful wildflowers, the tracks constantly swapping from single- to twin-, the riding always changing. Somehow I hadn't noticed that the sky had gone from bright blue to overcast grey...

It was mid-afternoon, just leaving the third special, that I noticed a few riders had donned waterproof jackets. The sky hadn't changed in hours, so I wasn't too fussed that my jacket was back in the van, and instead concentrated on following the course through wheel-deep undergrowth and back into more woodland trails.

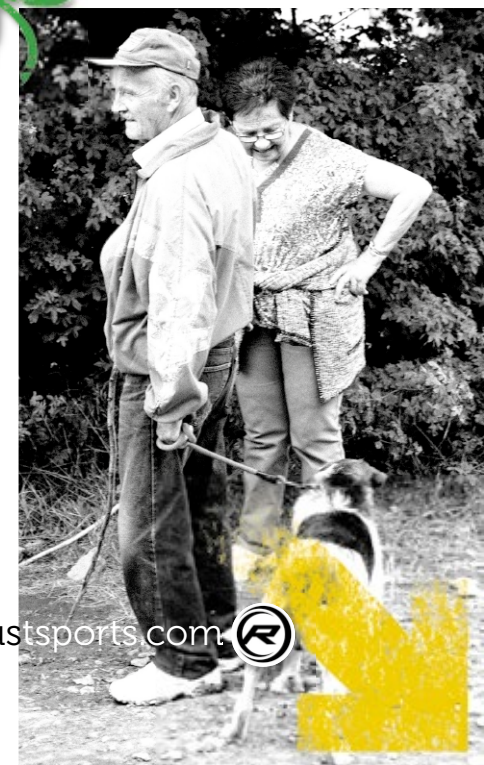
It wasn't long before I happened upon another queue, stretching just out of sight down a sunken lane. With the sound of engine being mercilessly revved just out of sight, I figured more rocksteps were the cause of the hold-up. But as the line shortened it became clear it was actually a steeply cambered bank covered in large tree roots. For some it proved little trouble, others were there for minutes – giving enough time to plot a route. Stay to the right, build momentum and drive into a dug out berm, then cut left roll off the throttle as you climb the bank. If you've timed it right you should carry enough speed over the roots at the top and then you're clear.

Happily, this went largely to plan, albeit with a good bit of footing to haul the Yam over the last few bumps when the front wheel took a nasty deflection. That's when I saw the first raindrop on the lens of my goggles. Timed that just right, then...

Il pleut!

On more open going the change in the weather was obvious. The rain held off for now, but away in the distance, well, *'the distance'* was obscured in a blanket of low cloud.

It was after the fourth special that the rain really came down, slowly building into a comprehensive drenching. I could've done without it, not least because the terrain had changed to a stunning moorland







dotted with large rounded stones that would've looked beautiful against a blue sky background. Only just able to see through sheets of water, I wasn't going to let the rain spoil a fantastic descent into the third check, a wonderful downhill trail of rock ledges and holes, where line choice was essential to maintain momentum and not crash down on the bigger stones or drop the front-end into a deep hole.

Check three was in the middle of the small town of Rieutort-de-Randon and here I found Al, Warren and Pedro sheltering in the back of the van. Rivers ran through the streets and waterfalls tumbled from the tops of awnings. All around people covered under any bit of cover they could find. From the high ground I'd been reassured by a glimpse of distant sunlight, but it wasn't forthcoming. The rain poured down.

Mende was ten miles down the road, or 30km by the course. If I took the tarmac I could at least try to shoot the guys on the final special. So as Pedro and Warren took off on their minute, I opted to follow Al back down to the town.

Throwing the bike in the van, and rearranging all our kit to do so, was deemed too much hassle so I simply followed behind the big VW. It was a move I regretted just minutes later, as an absolute deluge soaked me to the skin and chilled me to the core!

Mende proved noticeably warmer, and as the rain had subsided Al parked the van and jumped on the back of the Yamaha for the short ride to the test. Once through the backstreets of the town, clogged with traffic, support crews and spectators all looking to park as close to the test as possible, we left the 450 and carried on up the hill on foot. We'd gone barely 50 yards before the rain returned in earnest, and soaked spectators swarmed down towards us. Two small oak trees provided just enough cover to sit it out.

Meeting Warren and Pedro again, now down at our pits, work began in earnest. Alex headed to the Michelin truck in Paddock A to buy a couple of mousses while we started spannering in the sodden conditions. Warren's mousse was completely fubar'd, while Pedro had found someone with a front tube that he could use and stuffed it into his rear tyre. They only just made it up to parc ferme in time...



WARREN'S TREE...

Here are Warren's highlights from what he calls his best motorcycle event ever!



RUST ENDURO

Day 1

A real treat; riding in the sunshine in what is best described as a chocolate box wonderland. The beauty of the place is unquestionable and is quintessentially French.

Early into the day my whole Tref nearly came to an end when I used a rock wall as a berm on a wet slippery turn and sliced a deep three-inch gash along my left arm behind the wrist – patched at the next service but required a trip to the local Mende hospital for four stitches later that night. The doctor on call was an absolute crack, loved bikes and we had a good laugh while he was stitching me up before wishing me well for the rest of the event and sending me on my way.



Highlight of the day: The never-ending switchback rock climb that was little more than a narrow rock-strewn goat track that wound its way towards a summit we couldn't see, 'are we there yet?!'

Day 2

Began in bright sunlight, warmth and happiness and ended with me feeling near hypothermic in the wet and the cold. When the rain came we were wearing just vented jerseys and pants so the wind chill really got to me in the afternoon, I was left shivering and couldn't feel my hands for the last 40km.

My knee was in a bad way from the beginning as I was carrying a torn ACL and detached meniscus from an accident prior to the event, but it was much worse after a fall in the fourth special.

To add to my blues the bike's handling went off a cliff after I'd destroyed my rear mousse. I finished the day with a sloppy final test above Mende with three things on my mind – painkillers for the knee, changing the rear mousse before parc ferme closed and GET DRY!

Highlight of the day: Having Laurent 'Pom Pom' Pidoux save my bacon when I arrived in Mende in the pouring rain with a disintegrated rear mousse, cold and dishevelled, unable to find the route to SP5. Running out of time, I stopped at the jet wash to ask directions from someone who had already finished. That person – Laurent – simply smiled and said 'follow me' and led me through town until he was certain I couldn't mess up. The rain was torrential but no bother, he stopped, we shook hands, he looked me in the eye and said 'good test' – a moment of real sincerity and brotherhood. For those who don't know, Laurent Pidoux is a former French supermoto champion and has been a mentor and trainer to 2015 MXGP world champion Romain Febvre.



Day 3

Pedro fitted a new Michelin mousse after the start (*we'd managed to change mine the night before*) so we had to push on during the first liaison to make up the 20 minutes the mousse change cost.

The first special came up quickly and landed up being my best test of the event as I caught and passed the two riders ahead of me while fending off a screaming Yam from behind me the entire test. The pressure pushed me on a bit – I was not going to let him come by me – for love nor money. I had to defend at least some self-esteem.



RUST ENDURO

The Gorge du Tarn, along with some excellent trails, provided the most spectacular decents I've ever made on a motorcycle, simply breath-taking, the town below looked like a scene from a Disney movie – distant, quaint and unreal.

The Sunday's 180km seemed too short and the final decent down onto the fields above Mende was bittersweet. When it was all over, we distributed the van's wares into the right vehicles, loaded the bikes begrudgingly, had a few beers in town and headed off to the Hotel de la Poste for an excellent dinner and a few last laughs reminiscing about the events of the past few days. We parted company at around 10pm given an early morning start for both crews, James and Al heading back to the UK and Pedro and I back to Portugal.



Highlight of the day: When my front mousse started breaking up halfway through the day and I had to fight to keep the bike on point throughout the afternoon. I was tired and looking forward to a tall cold one but I was not wanting the banter, the riding, or the experience to come to an end. To me this is where I'm happiest; it reminds me that people are good, that the world is a beautiful place and that the soul feeds on challenging yourself.

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ALEX'S TREF...

GETTING THREE BIKES and riders around the Tref for three days requires more organisation than you might imagine. Luckily we had the right vehicle (*VW Crafter*) and a spare man (*me*) for the job. It also allowed me to photograph and film the event from a slightly different perspective.

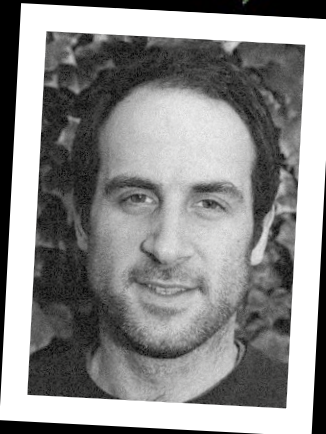
Bikes and riders both need fuelling on a regular basis and without it you won't be finishing the day at this type of event. Each day has three or four checkpoints and a similar amount of special stages. The evening before we went through Warren and Pedro's start times and when they should be arriving at each check. James, as a press rider, was riding at his own pace, stopping to take photos, so would be arriving later at each check but also needed fuel and food.

My job was to make sure I was at each check (*preferably ahead of the first rider*) with fuel mats out, two-stroke mixed, sandwiches made and drinks at the ready – a theory which (*mostly*) went to plan...

Bearing in mind we are in a rural part of southern France the organisers hadn't gone into a huge amount of detail with maps and directions for support teams and drivers and there were some reasonable distances between some of the checks. What you essentially get is an obscure village name and a large coloured blob on a map (*mostly obscuring where you actually need to be*). Fortunately the VW Crafter sat-nav helped me out on more than a couple of occasions... Amazing tool sat-nav – it would have been the job for two men and a vast paper map not ten years ago.

On reflection it was a lot of fun and what I missed out on in riding terms was made up for with three days of driving through some stunning landscapes and the satisfaction of helping the lads get through three tough days at the Tref.

Words: Alex Waters



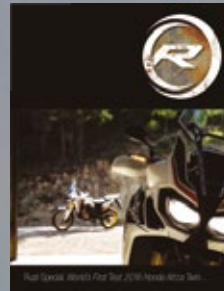
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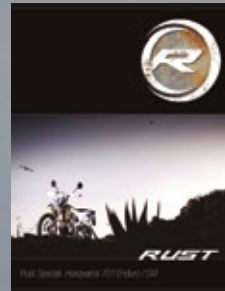
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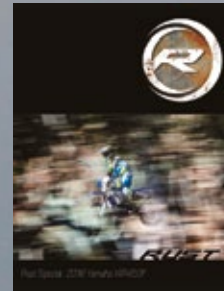
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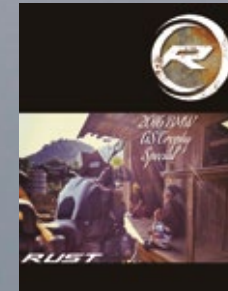
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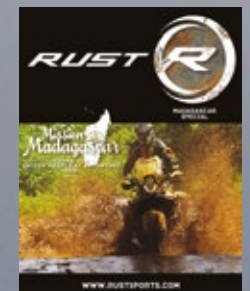
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**2017 BETA RANGE
SPECIAL EDITION**
JB braved the heat and went to
Beta's home town just outside
Florence to test ride all the
latest 2017 models...



**MADAGASCAR
SPECIAL EDITION**
JB joins the Touratech United
People of Adventure expedition
to the island of Madagascar...



**2017 HUSQVARNA
SPECIAL EDITION**
Full test of the 2017 Husqvarna
model range, with New for 2017,
some history and the final
conclusions on JB's favourites...



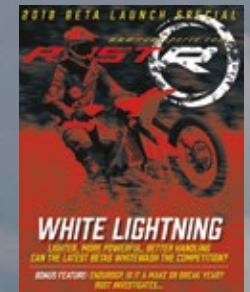
**TOURATECH BMW
R1200GS RAMBLER**
First full test of Touratech's
200kg, 125hp Enduro R1200 GS
Rambler in the Azores!



**RUST TOURATECH
AUSTRALIA SPECIAL**
JB embarks on an adventure into
The Outback and returns humbled
by the experience...



**RUST 2018 KTM
LAUNCH SPECIAL**
RUST rides the revolutionary
new fuel-injected two-strokes
from KTM... at the Erzberg!



**RUST 2018 BETA
LAUNCH SPECIAL**
JB rides and rates the latest hot
models from the 2018 Beta
model range...



Day three – the final push. It's never over until it's over. Can Warren and Pedro last one more day?

ROLLING IN THE CLOVER

Day 3

Words: James Barnicoat
Pics: James Barnicoat and Fabrice Glad



ROLLING IN THE CLOVER – DAY 3

DAY THREE

I DON'T MIND admitting that, after the amount of rain we'd seen the day before, I was quietly dreading day three. I had visions of hideously cut-up trails, unscaleable climbs and hours spent picking the Yam out of the undergrowth.

With the start order reversed, another early start put me out way ahead of Warren and Pedro, and it was another climb up the hillside behind parc ferme. Unlike day two, the course led straight onto muddy singletrack, slick yet nowhere near as bad as I'd expected. Things looked good right until the cold-blooded Yamaha cough-stalled on a bank and pitched me straight into a pile of brush, upside down. Number 555, Vincent Jouanen, found me floundering beneath the trail and rather than laugh at my pratfall he helped me back to my feet and we hauled the WR upright. Merci, Vincent!

The track emerged from the trees onto a wider dirt trail. It was almost bone dry. Across to the left was a breathtaking view into a valley, with low cloud hanging over the trees beneath us. The course would take us west, across to the 600m deep Gorges du Tarn, before looping back to Mende.

The first special test came early in the day and proved to be the only point-to-point (*or 'en ligne'*) test of the event. There was no way to bypass it, so I might as well enjoy it. And, oh boy, did I!? One line for much of its length, the test constantly jinked, wound and climbed its way through a small section of forestry with absolutely no let-up. Straights were short and gaps between the trees were often little wider than the handlebars. It wasn't natural 450 terrain but I loved it!

The two-and-a-half hours of riding to the first service check were as varied as I'd come to expect. Narrow dirt tracks led across open grassland, diving into forestry for fast blasts on stony trails. Glance left and there was a towering cliff-face. Two minutes later you'd be looking out across meadows stretching far into the distance. There were more goat trails on wooded hills. More stony paths through dense, dark, beech woods, and all with the barest minimum of road work.

Gorgeous Gorges

The check was in the pretty town centre of La Canourge – another stunning refueling point – and the road out was a sinewy stretch of tarmac almost as enjoyable as the dirt.



RUST ENDURO



ROLLING IN THE CLOVER – DAY 3

RUST ENDURO



Much of the late morning riding was on fast dirt trails through patches of pine and across open rolling plains with incredible vistas stretching out for miles. The surroundings were familiar, yet slightly different from what had come before. Then we reached the Gorges Du Tarn.

Initially there was little to suggest that the course was headed for this half-a-kilometre deep cut through the Earth – it appeared to be just another wooded valley, perhaps. Then like some kind of enormous landscaping ‘ha ha’, you saw that the ground suddenly dropped away. A long way. And we’d be heading straight down the side of it. Well, okay, not quite straight down, as the trail zigged and zagged all the way to the bottom. At first the hairpin turns were incredibly tight, just wide enough to get around on full-lock if you chose the optimum line, with a few metres straight before they cut back the other way. Then they started to get a little wider, the view off the side a little less stomach churning, and I was able to brake slide the bike around each one and actually use the throttle inbetween each turn. By the bottom it’d become just another hill...

The second check, seemingly in the back of beyond, led onto yet more open terrain across vast grasslands. With a quick turnaround at the service I’d leap-frogged ahead of Warren and Pedro, and knowing that they had a fourth test to ride before Mende I’d be able to capture them on the final test.

Having already come across mountain bikers on the trails, and been stopped to let a running race pass by, I wasn’t entirely surprised to give way to a Nordic walking competition. Not half as surprised as one elderly walker was to see me a few miles further on, as she (*somewhat unnecessarily*) dived for cover at the side of the track.

Soon the faster going was replaced with wooden, technical trails. Steep descents and short steep climbs squeezed the entry together and pulled them apart like an accordion, as people cleared each obstacle and the faster riders worked past the slower bikes.

Following half-a-dozen riders, we came across a pile of rocks strewn across a hillside trail. Some got stuck and had to haul themselves clear, others bopped across it feet-up like it wasn’t there. So shortly after, when I came to the back of another queue, I figured it was more of the same. Right until, that is, I glanced down through the trees and saw the final special test.

The crowd was vast, sprawled across the hillside above and congregated amongst the corners. There were people of all ages – from young



ROLLING IN THE CLOVER - DAY 1



RUST ENDURO



ROLLING IN THE CLOVER – DAY 3

to old – and if I hadn't experienced the overwhelming local support out on the going I would never have believed it. Most were content with shouts and cheers, though a small band in fancy dress had equipped themselves with an array of airhorns and a chainsaw engine to make themselves heard.

Once Pedro and Warren had been through all that remained was to head up to parc ferme, where the final check was located. And that was it, the end of the 2017 Trefle Lozerien.

Bikes were washed, kit transferred between vans, everything loaded away for the long journeys home. At 17:00, the top 30 in the overall standings lined up for a motocross around the hillside special test, competing for the Thierry Castan Trophy. But for us, it was beer o'clock and our time in Mende was rounded off outside a town centre bar, watching the event wind down.

No doubt about it, the Trefle Lozerien is a stunning event. The scenery is spectacular; the riding phenomenal; and what the club (*and their partners*) put together is simply incredible. Just marking out 600km of riding and the organisational nightmares associated with such a large race don't bear thinking about. And then there's the evenings' entertainment (*freestyle BMXers and motorcycle stuntriding*), the free concerts and parties. It's a massive event for the whole region.

Everyone you pass waves, smiles, gives you a thumbs up, or some other gesture of appreciation, despite 600 bikes streaming past their tranquil farm. Hundreds stand out simply to watch the field come through. Children gesture for a wheelie, or hold out a hand to slap, or often both. Service checks take up entire villages. And the entire entry was incredibly friendly to boot, asking 'okay?' with a questioning thumbs-up when they passed a stopped bike, waving to the camera, or obliging with a stand-up wheelie at just the right moment.

Here in the UK there's nothing like it. Comparisons with the Welsh Two-Day are obvious, but we simply can't match it for diversity of terrain, time spent off-road, the number of special tests, nor public support. We don't have the land and the wider population doesn't have the right mindset.

So if the Tref' isn't on your 'to do' list then there's really only one reason why not. You must have already done it...

Thanks: Huge thanks to all at the Moto Club Lozere, Volkswagen UK, Yamaha Offroad Experience, and to all those who helped us out (in so many ways) over the three days.





FOLLOWING IN THE CLOVER - DAY 3



RUST ENDURO



THE TREF...

It'll cost ya!



THIS EVENT IS not for the light in pocket or for a single man and his van; it requires resources of all kinds. Money firstly: €350 for the entry, €100-€110 for the FFM license (*plus your doctor's fee for the associated medical*), plus €200 for the transponder deposit – you get it back after the event. Then there's the fuel to and from the event, then hotels, food etc. All of this is before you begin the race prep, race fuel, spares, kit, tyres, mousses (*and yes you do need mousses or risk a puncture, then DNF and little or no reward for your outlay*).

The Tref The Cost

Entry	€350
Euro tunnel crossing, one van	€200
Fuel – to and from the event for one van	€350
Race fuel for one bike	€100
Accommodation for four nights, per room	€250
FFM single event license	€110
Transponder deposit (<i>beer money afterwards</i>)	€200
TOTAL	€1550

So expect to budget around €1500 per rider as a basic cost without food and other ancillary costs, but you could bring this down by buddying up and putting a number of bikes in one van, besides you're going to need some mates for the service.

Also consider negotiating a full support package from a local French enduro club so you can turn up and ride – this of course means making contact months before, becoming familiar with the club and perhaps participating with them in another event first – oh, and knowing a little Francais here would go a long way.

Words: Warren Malschinger



RUST'S TOP TREF TIPS

Being lucky enough to get an entry is the first 'special test' of the Tref. Once you're in you'll want to plan ahead. Here's some of what we learned...

Google Translate is your friend: Unless you speak excellent French then you'll want some help deciphering the rules and regs before you go.
Keep checking the website: www.trefle-lozerien-amv.com will update with route maps and timings invaluable to your support crew.

Book accommodation early: Local hotels fill up fast. We booked late and the closest we could get were a half-hour drive away.

Get your papers in order: Signing-on is no time to realise you're missing that crucial document. You need to show original versions of your driving licence, bike registration, road insurance, plus FFM race licence. *(One-event versions are available online and on-the-day. Either way, your doctor must complete the FFM medical form beforehand.)*

Take plenty of Euros: Beer- and fuel-money aside, you need €200 cash for the deposit on your race transponder.

Don't forget a lock: Locking your bike in parc ferme is not only sensible it's mandatory.

Ensure you've got CE-approved body armour: It's checked at scrutineering. Consult the race regs for the spec required.

Fit (good!) mousses: Fast; rocky; or fast and rocky: much of the terrain on the course is Puncture City.





RUST

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To view any of these videos just click on the link below the thumbnail to go direct to the Rust Sports youtube channel...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=sj-5xW_-x-l

RUST TESTER TOM SAGAR RIDES THE 2018 HUSQVARNA TEis

Multiple European and British enduro champion Tom Sagar tests the Husqvarna TE250i and TE300i for RUST Magazine in British Columbia, Canada...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXtl8s3xA98

JB RIDES THE LATEST 2018 MODELS FROM BETA

JB finds the latest Betas to be lighter, more powerful and easier to use. Which must makes them better. Shouldn't it? Read the feature to find out...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6KdM5w8GWO

2018 KTM 250/300 EXC TPI FUEL-INJECTED TWO STROKES

Jochi Sauer KTM of-road product development manager explains the story behind the development of these revolutionary two-strokes...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=4v6loSJl4jM

2018 KTM 250/300 EXC TPI FUEL-INJECTED TWO STROKES

Ride along with JB on the latest KTM TPI machines and hear his verdict on these Euro Stage 4 compliant motorcycles...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=8516kr_og58

NEW FOR 2018 GAS GAS EC300 RIDDEN AND RATED IN GIRONA

JB rides the latest offering from the recently resurrected Gas Gas company with new frame and suspension and many more upgrades...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEjSqECe6sA

FIRST RIDE OF THE BRAND NEW FANTIC 250 CASA

JB takes a spin aboard the new 250 Casa from Fantic and speaks to Dean Clements the UK Fantic importer about future plans and other new models...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=ul7_ebar560

WE GET TO RIDE THE 2017 SHERCO 300 SEF-R

Join JB for a ride on board the Sherco 300 SEF-R to find out if the EnduroGP winning model is actually clubman friendly or a bit of a handful...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=xH0E2Ra1TL4

2016 WELSH TWO-DAY ENDURO THE MOVIE - RUST rode the Welsh and lived to tell the tale... just. The trials and the tribulations all here, in glorious colour. Enjoy...

JB finds the latest Betas to be lighter, more powerful and easier to use. Which must makes them better. Shouldn't it? Read the feature to find out...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_EGuentg3s

2017 HUSQVARNA LAUNCH

The 2017 Husqvarna enduro bikes, ridden and rated by RUST's Jon Bentman... Check out the full review in the 2017 Husqvarna Special Edition at rustsports.com.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwK49cZ4yvs

2017 BETA LAUNCH

The 2017 Beta enduro bikes, ridden and rated by RUST's Jon Bentman... Check out the full review in the 2017 Beta Special Edition at rustsports.com.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0K02x9reL0

2017 KTM LAUNCH

Warren Malschinger and Josh Snowden go to Portugal to ride the extensively redesigned 2017 KTM enduro range...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVYqp3biTnc

2016 BMW GS TROPHY THAILAND

Montage of scenes from the South-East Asia GS Trophy featuring comments from Kurt Yaeger, Tom Wolf and our man Jon Bentman...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQBn2qbfp0Y

THE TRAIL RIDERS FELLOWSHIP

Read the story behind the ethos of the Trail Riders Fellowship in RUST Magazine Issue 5 available FREE on the website www.rustsports.com



www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8ePyI2E4M

2016 V-STROM 650XT

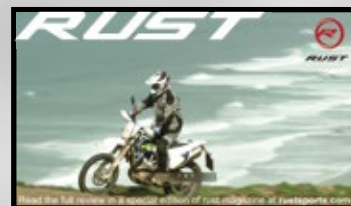
Seve Hackett explains the revisions to the Suzuki 650 V-Strom in order to make it more suitable for all-out adventure riding...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=yriJw_FU910

2016 YAMAHA WR450F

JB tests the new Yamaha WR450F in the hills of Andalusia and finds that it's packing some heat and demands a good deal of respect...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=8l54XQOYoPo

2016 HUSQVARNA 701

Testing the new Husky 701 Enduro and the 701 Supertmoto on the road and on the track...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oHMTpB0RNW

2016 HONDA AFRICA TWIN

Exclusive first test of the new Honda CRF1000L Africa Twin... Read the story in the RUST Magazine Special Edition at www.rustsports.com



www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntK07l63tuA

HONDA CB500X ADVENTURE

Jon gets an exclusive ride on the Rally Raid Products latest adaptation of the CB500X for the adventure riders out there...

RUST'S TREE

In Pictures

Below: When you've got 200km of riding venturing into the back of beyond, first aid becomes a logistical nightmare. So the medics take to two wheels and ride the course, too. Yellow-shirted ladies are the friendly staff who'll see you through each check.



Above: With temperatures nearing 30 degrees, and humidity levels reaching 'very sweaty', the five mates of the 2Past Horizons team opted to dress in velour animal costumes. A good wallow in the mud cooled 'em down...



Above: When he heard the weather report, the owner of the Grand Bleu jetwash must've rubbed his hands with glee. Located just across the road from our paddock, it saw plenty of use over the three days – and that's just from Team RUST. Warren (*Mr OCD*) and Pedro (*Tonto*) started each day with spotless bikes.

Right: Nope, we've no idea either. Maybe there's something in the water in Mende.



Above: What better way to spend a Saturday afternoon than getting your mates together and driving out to the countryside to watch some motorsport and have a picnic... in full fancy dress?

PICTURE POST



On the whole, and especially given the distances involved, it was hard to fault the course marking. But if you did miss a turn, there was often a friendly local (or three) to offer you directions.

Right: You'll find spectators in the most unlikely places at the Tref, and we came across this guy twice over the three days – one day in the east, one in the west, and both time miles away from civilisation. You don't need a daft costume to stand out when you're driving an old Jeep adorned with broom flowers.

Far right: The Three Musketeers they are not. Is it any wonder we couldn't get served any food at three in the afternoon looking like that!? Coming into town straight from scrutineering, wearing your armour is easier than carrying it...



PICTURE POST



Left: Not quite a Playboy Bunny...

Below: A vast crowd steadily assembled at the final special test on day three, entertained by a nun cheering on his (her?) buddy by revving a chainsaw engine at him! These guys constantly ran around the test, hollering at their mates from every corner they could get to.

Right: Either Pedro's offering praise to the tyre changing god, Rabaconda, or he's completely misunderstood the term 'foot-pump'... When his rear mousse disintegrated early on day two, he found someone at the first check with a spare (front) tube to fit in its place. At this point he's got about four minutes until he's due at the check.





Left: Modern classic, one careful owner... This well-used early 520EXC was festooned with examples of old skool enduro prep, such as running spare cables along the existing ones, and 'money-saving mods' such as holding things together with rivets and bodge tape. But we knew it'd be there at the finish, and sure enough it was – Manuel Karl placed 46th in class and 470th overall.

Right: Moan about how you've had a tough day aboard the very latest tackle and someone like Pierre Truel comes along and puts things in perspective. Riding a Suzuki PE250 he placed mid-pack, 262nd overall



When support driver Alex was delayed en route to a service check, Warren had little option but to go on the scrounge. And not only did he get a tank of gas, but a ham 'n' cheese roll and a slice of tart to boot!



Left: When the rain came, those without awnings had a miserable work period. A small area of paddock B, below a row of shops, offered somewhere to spanner (or kick back with a beer) in the dry.



THANK YOU!

IT'S HERE THAT the list of thank you's comes into play – given that our rookie Tref prep was woefully short of the mark we came to rely on the kind-heartedness and sympathy of our more properly prepared fellow riders and their crews. The format of the event makes it easy to take the time to help out a fellow rider and I witnessed this countless times over the three days. This list is not exhaustive but without the following people we would simply have not made the finish line – or would have at the very least struggled to do so.

To all of the French fans and spectators that lined the course and packed the sides of the special tests; to the villagers who waved and shouted encouragement; to the countless kids' 'high-fives'; and last but not least, the staff at the local pubs and restaurants.

To Dave Coles who after an early injury on Day One went above and beyond over the course of the event to help us out (*on more than one occasion*) including helping Pedro secure a tube from the Enduro Club Verrieres which got him to the finish after a collapsed mousse at the first check on Day Two.

To Lorraine Pickering and Karen Hurrell for all their support over the three days – helping us and giving us a temporary home when our team van did not show up at the checkpoints (*not until the very last minute at least!!*).

To Michael Alty, Russ Millward, Rudy Austin and the rest of the Purple Helmet crew / Sheep's Skull Enduro Club for the food and water along the way and a number of smiles we were witnessing them attack the track – 'wolf pack' comes to mind. Thanks lads.

To Al Ranger from Endurotyres.com and their whole Husky Sport Team – big thanks for your support – Al is the biggest Michelin dealer in the UK for off-road tyres and mousses, and also supplied our irreplaceable Rabaconda.

To Emilien Osmont, the President of the Moto Club Lozere and his team – a big thumbs up for the magnificent management of the event. I would also like to thank **Christophe Paris** from Sky Up Communication for arranging our press and rider entries and putting up with our endless questions.

Warren Malschinger



CONTACT

RUSTS SPORTS LTD

www.rustsports.com
Warwick House
The Grange
St Peter Port
Guernsey
GY1 2PX

Editor: Jonathan Bentman
editor@rustsports.com

Designer: Andy Riley

Industry & Advertising Liaison:
Alex Waters
alex.waters@rustsports.com

Commercial Manager: James Linane
james.linane@rustsports.com

Managing Director: Warren Malschinger

Contributors: Warren Malschinger
(Guernsey), James Barnicoat (UK),
Pedro Matos (Portugal), Alex Waters (UK),
Fabrice Glad (France)

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Huge thanks to all at the Moto Club Lozere, Volkswagen UK, the guys at Yamaha Offroad Experience for the use of the Yamaha WR450F, and to all those who helped us out (in so many ways) over the three days.

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Just riding, let alone racing amongst this kind of scenery is just mind blowing...

