



ISSUE #35



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TRIUMPH TIGERS

Three days off-road testing
with the 2018 Tigers

CARIBBEAN CATHARSIS

Or crisis? PanAmScram
gets to its halfway point

GENTLEMEN OF THE TRAIL

A roll in the grassy lanes
with the TRF



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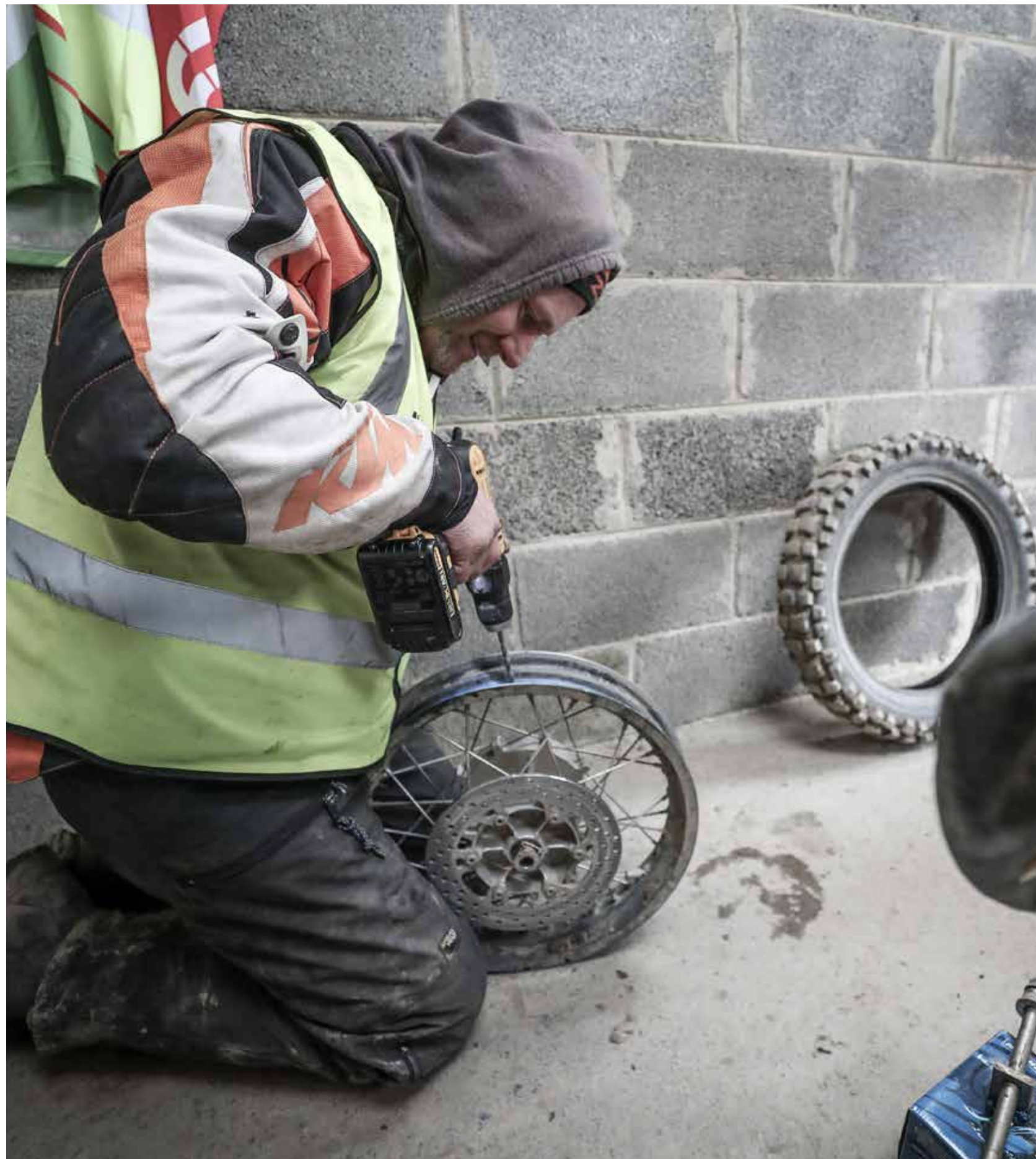


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Transporter

Featuring a Sprinter in the snow





REAL PEOPLE REAL LIFE

Confession: I don't like social media, I don't even like digital publishing. That makes me a dinosaur, of course – and what am I doing in this job? – but I can't hide my feelings. I do value Facebook,

Messenger etc as a wonderful means of staying in touch with friends who I can only see rarely, and it can work for day-to-day stuff like getting messages from event organisers to participants very quickly, very easily. But all this need to maintain a constant online communication, to post/tweet/blog/vlog – however banal the message – is just so damn artificial.

Conversely a day spent competing in the Brechfa Rally brought home how much I like people, doing real things in real places. Brechfa was an ordeal. The temperature was sub-zero, the near-gale made it feel positively Siberian, and the saturated course made riding a 200+ kilo adventure bike a real test. And yet everywhere I met happy people. Stood on corners marshalling, directing traffic, pulling stricken bikes out of bogs, pushing them up hills – all of them no doubt frozen to the bone. But smiling, working, contributing, being there.

The guy I've pictured is Nathan Best. He saw me get towed in with my rear tyre hanging off the rim and immediately set to help. Together we coordinated buying a rim lock, sourcing a drill and bit, grabbing a mousse-changing platform, borrowing a tube (from Mr KTM 950 Adventure S – thank you) and then Nathan set to. He drilled the rim. He cut up the punctured tube to create a liner within the tyre (which had suffered a half-inch rip) – a great old school trick – and together we put the whole lot back on the bike.

It was freezing, snow would frequently blast into the barn where we worked, and of course we worked with the minimum of tools. And as we worked I found out a little about Nathan. How he'd suffered a work-related accident that had left him paralyzed for months, but he'd managed to fight back to full health and was now keener than ever to help the Dyfed Dirt Bike Club with its events, and to get back onto a bike again soon, for himself. He was engaging in life. At the end, we simply shook hands and Nathan was away to help the next guy.

What's my point? Jeez, I should know. It's probably about values. That we should appreciate people who do real things, who make a real difference. That we need to get over this selfie mentality that social media has instilled. That we should kill off #TBT and #wheeliewednesday and step out of the house and do real things for each other. Maybe that's my point. I don't know. Thoughts and ideas have a habit of only part-forming in my brain. Maybe ask me again later.

But to Dylan, Nathan and all the guys and girls at the Dyfed Dirt Bike Club – thanks. It was real. 🇬🇧

JB



NIGHT RIDERS

Road racers – why not? RUST is going to tip its hat to the MotoGP crowd. Yeah, they spend millions but – unlike the Formula1 crowd who spend billions – they create some of the best motorsport you’ll ever see. That freight train action at Qatar, lap-after-lap – just brilliant. A more stark contrast with the sleep-inducing Melbourne GP we can’t imagine. And nice happy people – c’mon Lewis, you need to lighten-up!

Image: Red Bull / Gold & Goose



TRAVELLER

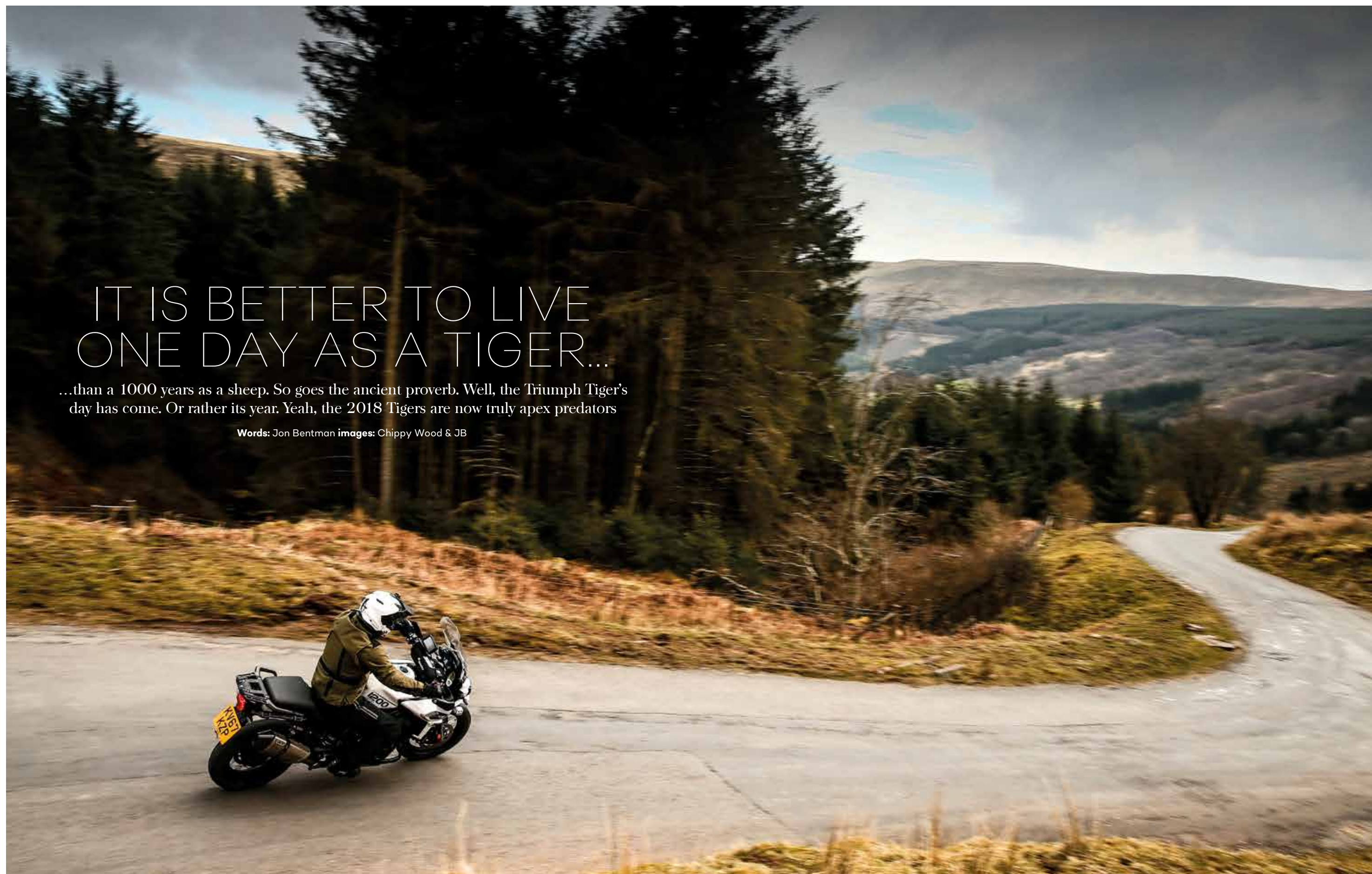
What should an adventure bike look like? What does it do? Does a promotional video where the latest model GS/AT/SA clears the biggest tabletop at Glen Helen really hold any relevance to the end user? Or is that just a virtual hand job between obviously brainless marketing execs? July Behl's BMW R nineT Scrambler speaks of a more human connection, speaks of life on the road, and of a genuine love for travel. One of these days he'll wash it.

Image: JB

IT IS BETTER TO LIVE ONE DAY AS A TIGER...

...than a 1000 years as a sheep. So goes the ancient proverb. Well, the Triumph Tiger's day has come. Or rather its year. Yeah, the 2018 Tigers are now truly apex predators

Words: Jon Bentman images: Chippy Wood & JB



spin the Tiger 800XCx around in the mud, a classic lay-over skid about-turn centred around my planted left boot. I keep the gas on, the rear wheel spinning, and pile on the revs ever more as I ride up the slope (a zig). I reach a bank so chop the throttle, turn quickly and get back on the gas again (a zag). More wheel spin, but it's controlled, I'm feet-up, in good balance. I crest the climb and with the rear wheel still spinning I scribe an arc as I head off to look for more challenges.

I've just ridden the XCx as I would an EXC. It's a 200-kilo 95hp adventure bike, not an enduro. But it can do these things. And believe me, I'm no riding god.

2018 is a new year for Triumph, and especially for their adventure fleet. The Tiger 800s and Tiger 1200s (the bigger models are no longer called Explorers) have received hundreds of upgrades between them and given the launch of the Triumph Adventure Experience in Wales – the first of several such centres planned for around the world – you can tell Triumph are putting ever-more impetus behind their adventure bikes. Oh, can we call an 800

and a 1200 a 'fleet'? Yes we can, because Triumph is producing a myriad of versions of each, with four road-biased types (XR, XRr, XRx and XRt) and two off-road-biased types (XCx and XCx) in each capacity, so that's 12 options in all. Of course this being RUST it's the XC models we're interested in.

TIGER 800

The new Tiger 800 doesn't look so new. That's on first impressions. After all, the engine – that distinctive 800cc triple – hasn't externally (or internally) changed much since the launch of the model in 2010. Neither has the chassis, it's still a steel trellis type. And the bodywork looks much the same. All of which is good news for owners of the older Tiger 800s – their bikes haven't dated so much, don't look obsolete, and probably as a consequence are holding their values well. But it also means you don't quite get the visual excitement a new model usually creates.

Only the looks flatter to deceive, in fact much has changed, and it's all in the detail, of course.

It's worth stepping back in time before going forwards, though. When the Tiger 800 was updated in 2015 a lot was improved. The WP suspension was a big upgrade and for the XCx/a variants that made a big difference in off-road capability. That model also got a fly-by-wire throttle and traction control, making overall rideability that bit nicer, while fuel efficiency improved by a claimed 17%. All very handy, and all helped make the Tiger 800 super-serious competition for BMW's F800GS. In many ways it was better, feeling to be marginally lower in the saddle and more alive off-road. The BMW has indestructible tank-like solidity to it, but the Triumph wins for dynamics.

SPECIFICATION

TRIUMPH Tiger 800XCx

ENGINE: Liquid cooled DOHC 12-valve in-line three cylinder four-stroke

DISPLACEMENT: 800cc

BORE & STROKE: 74.05 x 61.9mm

MAX POWER: 70kW (95bhp) @ 9500rpm

MAX TORQUE: 79Nm (58lb.ft) @ 8050rpm

FUELING: EFI

STARTER: Electric

TRANSMISSION: Six-speed gearbox, wet multiplate clutch

FRAME: Tubular steel trellis

FRONT SUSPENSION: WP 43mm USD forks adj for compression and rebound, 220mm travel

REAR SUSPENSION: WP monoshock, hydraulically adjustable preload, 215mm travel

TYRES: 90/90-21, 150/70-17 (Pirelli Scorpion Rally fitted for the test)

WHEELS: wire-laced spoked wheels

BRAKES: Front disc 305mm Brembo twin-piston caliper, Rear disc 255mm, single piston Nissin caliper, switchable ABS

SEAT HEIGHT: 840-860mm

WHEELBASE: 1545mm

WEIGHT: 208kg (dry)

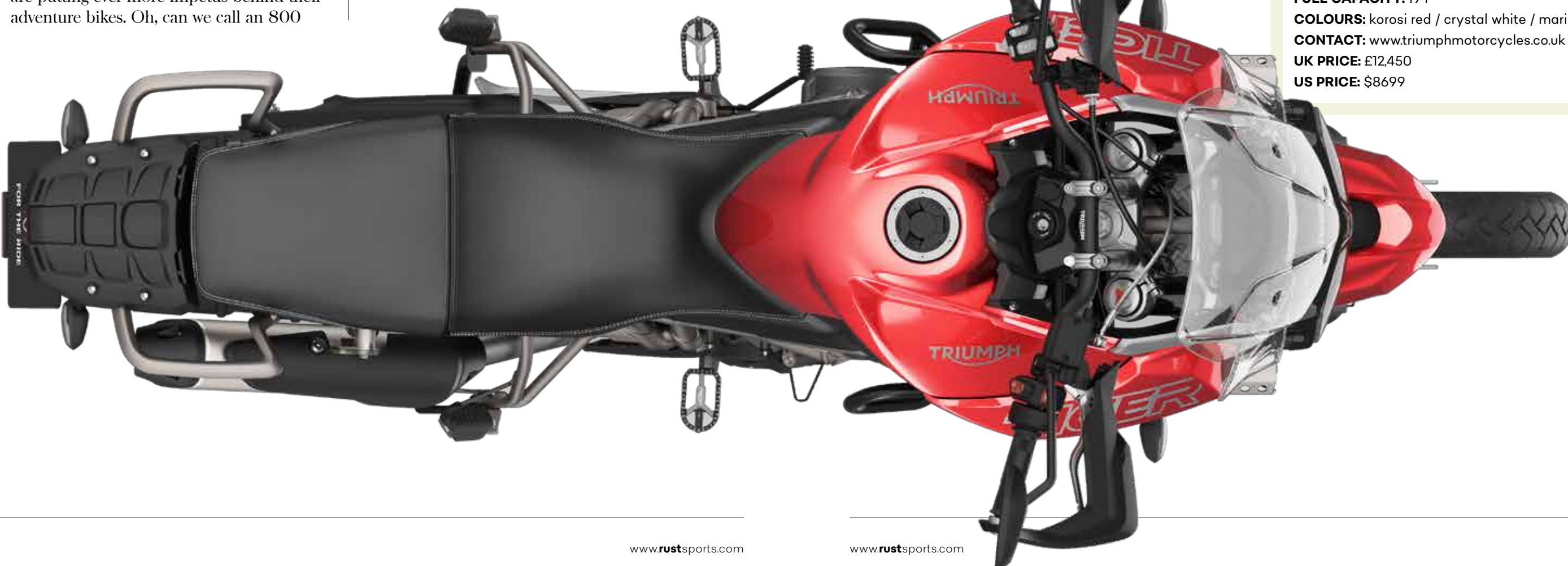
FUEL CAPACITY: 19 l

COLOURS: korosi red / crystal white / marine

CONTACT: www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

UK PRICE: £12,450

US PRICE: \$8699



The 2018 model brings a reputed 200 improvements, but Triumph aren't listing them all, instead just hitting their top-10, as it were. So while this is in effect the third generation of Tiger 800s, just as in 2015 we're talking evolution, not revolution.

Rider aids seems to be where we are at. Triumph leadoff with their new 5" (adjustable for angle) TFT instrument panel. TFT, FYI, stands for Thin Film Transistor; its common in modern televisions too. It's a full colour unit that allows six options on displays, complete with scrolling menus (for rider modes etc) and auto-adjustment on brightness according to light conditions. It's very easy to take this unit for granted – smartphone

technology has raised our expectations on anything electronic – but it's a long way from the analogue tacho-speedo-tripmeter instruments of our not-so-distant past. And of course it makes the selection of the various rider aids that much easier to make. In fact it was entirely necessary so as to be able to make the personalisations you can now choose from in the Rider Programmable mode.

Allied to this unit are the new backlit (for night riding) switch blocks on the handlebars, and particularly the five-way joystick that's the main navigator for the rider aid functions. We should quickly rattle off the next bits: all LED-lighting (brighter, improved visibility benefits), five-way adjustable screen (single hand operation – not electronic), updated Brembo brakes and updated cruise control.

Arguably the biggest update is in the rider modes, which for the XCs offer Road, Rain, Sport, Off-Road and Off-Road Pro. And for the top-of-the-line XCa there's a sixth: Rider



Programmable. This one's the trick option as it allows you to personalize the effects of the ABS, traction control, throttle mapping etc. Off-Road Pro seems to translate to 'Everything Off' – hence 'Pro' – so here at RUST we like the programmable mode best as our experience suggests degrees of ABS and traction control never go amiss, especially where full electronic intervention can lead to frustration, while zero intervention can lead to crashes.

Together with some styling tweaks, quite a few changes to the frame (so we're told) and few other details (like a shorter first gear) we end up with over 200 upgrades. But bore/stroke, brake horsepower – yeah, as before.

What's it like?

On-Road

On road it's surprising how little you





notice the gangly 21" front wheel. That's a skinny 90/90-21 hoop up front, but it feels secure and having the ABS there to step-in if you overdo the braking is a great advantage. The handling on road is then very predictable and secure, in the wider scheme of things the Tiger 800 is a tall bike but it doesn't teeter and while its no road racer, on the roads you're not feeling as compromised as you might think.

The performance from the motor is nothing short of impressive. In Road mode it's a very comfortable easy-going companion that lets you cruise along with minimum of attention to operations. In Rain mode by heck its strangled – probably to A2 licence limits or more – ideal for nervous types but a bit too much for some of us gung-ho types even in the wet. Sport mode has more than a dash of Moto2 to it; it's represented by a Stig-like helmet icon on the dash, and it unleashes the full potential of the motor – the Tiger rockets away, to a wailing-howling

soundtrack that's pure grand prix. It's like no adventure bike we've ever met. And yes, we like this aspect, a lot. Adventure bikes are about taking it easy, seeing the world, but even adventure riders like to let off steam sometime.

Comfort is very good. It's a comfortable saddle, the pillion isn't sold short, and there's enough room to stretch limbs and for taller folk there's a higher-seat position that works. The heated grips are great and are hot when on full power (especially if wearing thin motocross type gloves). There's a heated seat, too – such luxuries! Long days (and with a tank range easily over 250 miles you can have very long days) will not be an issue.

What's it like? Off-Road

You want to say it doesn't deserve to be as good as it is. Because no one ever thought an 800cc triple should make a dirt bike. But it does deserve to be this good,

because Triumph's engineers clearly have worked bloody hard to make it so.

The power characteristics in Off-Road and Off-Road Pro modes certainly suit dirt riding. There's snap enough to lighten the front in an instant, but not so much that you get unintended wheelspin. That low first gear works great and the whole gearbox shifts just fine. In all you can forget structuring your input and simply ride on instinct – as you should. Only in the slipperiest going do you think harder and feel more.

The chassis works great, too. The WP suspension is lovely stuff, it feels firm but is fairly plush and rides mostly high, so you're not riding low and saggy. The Showa kit on the very first Tiger 800s was a let down, but the Triumph engineers have clearly worked hard on this aspect and this helps the Tiger to ride confidently and assured into almost any terrain. The fussy-man in me would argue that the set-up could be even plusher, but we're talking almost bespoke levels

here. Allied to this, those Brembo brakes offer feel and just about the right amount of strength for off-road; backed-up by the excellent adjustable ABS you can fine tune the responses there as well.

The standing riding position is very good. It's probably excellent for those 5'10" or shorter, but being 6'0" for me it was probably 10mm of bar riser away from being spot on. The 19-litre fuel tank is broad across the front but it narrows perfectly toward the rear to allow comfortable standing and is good to lean against when you want to load up the front end. Likewise the footpegs aren't too far forward – ideally placed. With the wide-ish handlebars, in all you get very close to what feels like an authentic dirt bike riding position.

Overall

Let it be said I like BMWs, but the Tiger really does knock the spots off the F800GS. There is no competition in my



mind as to which of these I prefer to ride. On virtually every point of comparison the Tiger feels superior and the clincher (after the great on-road engine performance) is the great level of confidence it instills when ridden off-road. This is a bike you trust, implicitly. It is, I feel sure, because of this bike that BMW had to develop the 850GS. They needed to anyway, because the 800GS was never quite right, but the Tiger made sure they worked all the harder. How good the 850GS is remains to be seen and first reports from the world launch (hey, where was our invite?!) aren't entirely favourable so the new GS really does have its work cut out if it's to match this latest and greatest Tiger.

Ah, an unfortunate last word (in fact a number): £12,450 (for the XCa) in the UK. Boy, that is not cheap (the opposite). But this is 2018, check out the list RRP on all manner of things, but cars and bikes especially – costs of production worldwide are escalating. It's going to need some recalibration for us to get used to that.

TIGER 1200

Having been significantly updated as recently as 2016, the Tiger 1200's list of updates is about half that of the Tiger 800's, 'up to 100' say Triumph. Again they don't detail every last one (we'll take their word) instead listing a very similar top-10.

Big news for 2018 is a 10kg weight saving. That's good news, but Triumph's 1200 has always been the woolly mammoth of adventure bikes, so even 10kg still leaves it short of the competition. Yeah, 248kg dry compares to 244kg wet for a BMW R 1200 GS – don't stop with the Slimfast Plan just yet, Tiger...





2018 Triumph Tiger 800 & 1200



SPECIFICATION

TRIUMPH Tiger 1200 XCa

ENGINE: Liquid-cooled DOHC 12 valve, in-line three-cylinder four-stroke

DISPLACEMENT: 1215cc

BORE & STROKE: 85.0 x 71.4mm

MAX POWER: 104kW (141bhp) @ 9350rpm

MAX TORQUE: 122Nm (90lb.ft) @ 7600rpm

FUELING: EFI

STARTER: Electric

TRANSMISSION: Six-speed gearbox, wet multiplate clutch

FRAME: Tubular steel trellis frame

FRONT SUSPENSION: WP 48mm USD forks (electronically adjustable damping), 190mm travel

REAR SUSPENSION: WP monoshock (semi-active), electronically adjustable preload 193mm travel

TYRES: 120/70-19 170/60-17 (tubeless Pirelli Scorpion Rally for the test)

WHEELS: wire-laced spoked wheels

BRAKES: Front disc 305mm, Brembo four-piston radially mounted caliper – Rear disc 282mm, Nissin twin-piston caliper, switchable ABS

SEAT HEIGHT: 835-855mm

WHEELBASE: 1520mm

WEIGHT: 248kg (dry)

FUEL CAPACITY: 20 l

COLOURS: marine / crystal white

CONTACT: www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

UK PRICE: £16,950

US PRICE: \$21,750

Again many of the upgrades and refinements are electronic rider-aid biased, so we again see a TFT screen for the instruments, LED lights, backlit switchgear, Off-Road Pro (and programmable) rider mode. Add to that adaptive cornering lighting, shift assist for the gearbox and keyless ignition, along with existing aids like hill hold and cornering ABS.

The big fat Tiger has a sharper look this year, though. Maybe still not as sharp as the competition – forget ‘maybe’, it’s just not – but its another improvement at least. And when you’re sat in the super-satisfying heated seat with heated grips behind an electronically adjustable screen (on a cold day) maybe sharp looks don’t matter so much.

What’s it like?

On Road

Big, smooth, quiet, assured, comfortable. On road the Tiger 1200 feels like a regular big-capacity tourer. In fact it almost matches dedicated the road tourers for comfort and equipment, so on this account there should be zero criticism. Yeah, there are sufficient whistles and bells to keep

a tech-head fully occupied, while ample saddles will keep even the broadest of rumps comfortable.

The Tiger 1200 produces a good 15hp more than the BMW R 1200 GS and you can hear that extra go in the engine and exhaust noise when you hit WFO – the beast rips. But where the Tiger 800 is a fighter plane the Tiger 1200 is more bomber – impressive, but don’t get too carried away, eh chaps? Again it impresses, and comfort is a major ace card, so long distance work is a doddle.

What’s it like?

Off-Road

It’s not a big fat Tiger. It’s THE big fat Tiger. Ever since I got to ride a 2014 Tiger 1200 deep into the Madagascan bush (back in 2016) I’ve known the Tiger has better dirt credentials than most care to credit it. That bike followed a KTM 1190 Adventure and BMW R1200 GS everywhere, was never left behind, and when we got to deep sand – you may not believe this – it killed them both. The Tiger loved the sand, revved hard and ridden with marginal self-preservation it was quite

▷ the weapon.

And the 2018 Tiger 1200 is somehow advanced from that first generation model. It doesn't feel as tall, nor as top heavy and the power feels strong everywhere. The ride position feels a lot better sorted, too, it's very natural and so despite being the size it is you can still boss it. Just like all those countless self-gratifying Facebook and YouTube clips of guys skidding their GSs in ever more daring displays, you can play silly-buggers on the Tiger, too.

As with the earlier model the only place it feels to let you down is in slow first-gear slippery going, where the 141hp can come in just a little too abruptly prompting wheelspin. But even that we found we could sort. In the rider programmable mode we combined an off road pro setting with a rain setting on the engine map. This combined with the new low first gear brought decent traction. Job done!

Big mention again here for the WP suspension. On the Tiger 1200 it's a semi-active set-up and it works so well, feeling plusher, easier on the rider than that of the 800. There's no jarring and even when we did some cheeky hops off banks and bumps there's no crashing

through the stroke. This is quality kit and for sure helps the big Tiger be as assured and light on its feet as it is.

If anything the Tiger 1200 sells itself better off-road than on. It's more impressive and its capabilities defy belief. And that makes it all the more satisfying. Of course we're stopping short of saying it's better than a 1200 GS or a KTM 1290 Super Adventure, but it's so much closer than you think.

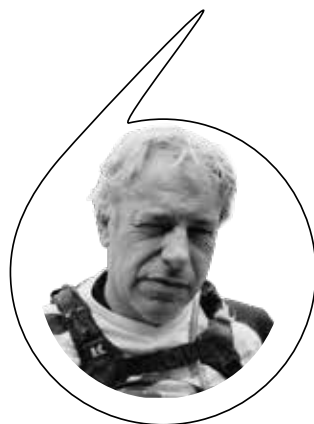
Overall

Can the Tiger 1200 beat a 1200 GS? Maybe, maybe not. The GS is still the benchmark, still has all that history. But the Triumph engineers are evidently tireless workers, they're looking to their own premium measures and so there's no question this is a great bike. We love the Tiger 800, but riding the Tiger 1200 off-road is a special thrill, so much so that on the (test) day we spent more time riding the 1200, exploring its limits (much further off than you'd think). And so while as a road bike it's very good, it's as dirt roads adventurer that this bike has us coming back for more, again and again. Yep, like we said, it's not a big fat Tiger. It's THE big fat Tiger. Skidoosh! 🇬🇧

THE WRAP

Boy, has Triumph come out swinging in 2018. The new Tiger 800 is solid gold – such the natural performer off-road, yet so very much a road bike on the tarmac – somebody show me where the compromise came, I can't see it? And it's so darn characterful, so darn good. Triumph have taken a seriously good model and made it even better. It stands to become the market benchmark. And it's a triple?! Woah. The Tiger 1200 is another case of making the impossible possible. You hear how the pilots of these new super-airliners (Airbus A380, Boeing Dreamliner etc) tell of the pussycat handling of these new-era super planes – well, the Tiger 1200 must have some of that stuff. So big and yet so useable – off road... Bigger is better! In all a vintage year for Triumph adventure, for sure.





CHRIS EVANS

CLUTCHING AT ONE'S BALLS

With winter's grip reluctant to let go, our man in France, Chris Evans, has converted bike time into workshop time, and after a few rollercoaster moments mostly this has led to some considerable betterment for two of his steeds ...

It's not something I suffer from often, but after reading JB's latest words about his Honda trials bike I felt a little bit guilty. For those of you who don't read the mag from cover to cover, he recounted a telephone conversation we'd had where I said that I couldn't just put a bike back together without paying attention to the cosmetics. I mean here's a bloke who's trying to juggle a family, a magazine, a budget and a ruin of a motorcycle and I was just unnecessarily adding to the pressure. Not only did I feel guilty but also a bit of a hypocrite. Cos I too have a couple of trials bikes quietly rotting away in my workshop that are far from pristine. The 200 Fantic doesn't run at all (no spark, not much of a carb), while the Montesa 315 just gets used for 'walking' the dog and doesn't get a whole lot of love in between...

Obviously I wasn't going to assuage my guilt by sorting out the Fantic – way too much work. The Montesa was however a reasonable proposition. So after getting a reply to a question I posted on the Montesa 315 Facebook page (no doubt

inadvertently helping some extreme right wing politician to get elected in the process) I ordered some red 'Montesa' stickers to run down the side of the ally frame beam. When they arrived by post I was relieved to discover they were of the highest quality and looked an absolute treat on the bike. Just after I'd stuck them on I went back to the computer to check the year of my bike (1999) and it was then that I realised that the stickers I ordered weren't actually age appropriate. Given that pretty much nothing that I do is age appropriate I'm not going to lose any sleep over it – especially as the correct year stickers aren't nearly as pretty.

While I had the bike in hand I tightened up the headrace bearings, sand-blasted and repainted the front brake hose bracket and failed to repair the side-stand – it needs a blob of weld to stop it leaning over too far and I don't have a welder... yet. And then I took the dog for a walk.

The very next day I was back in workshop with the slightly daunting task of fitting a Rekluse clutch to my Yamaha





WR250F. And obviously for such a major job I'd drafted in the support and cool methodical approach of my ex-neighbour Ruud Van Driver. Together we watched the YouTube video tutorial 10 times, which made it all look really easy, and then got to work.

And in fact it really was easy – or at least it would have been if we hadn't made one fatal mistake. Basically, as the vid explains in crystal clear detail, you have to lay the bike on its side, remove the clutch plates and basket, and bolt in the new unit. And this is where we messed up. The vid tells you to torque the new basket up to 70Nm, which is quite a lot. You see their mechanic blocking the rear wheel by putting the bike in top gear and pulling down on the rear brake lever. We did the same but couldn't stop the wheel (and hence the clutch basket nut) from turning. So I had the brilliant idea of lifting the bike up and blocking the rear wheel with a metal bar. We were then able to tighten the nut up, put all the rest of the gubbins in and realise that something wasn't right...

What wasn't right was that the ball bearing that sits at the end of the clutch pushrod thing was no longer there. It was a very black moment in the Evans garage as logically it had fallen into the engine. We had a poke around with a magnet but nothing ball bearing sized stuck to it and together we started to look down the barrel of the sort of intervention we just weren't capable of doing – as I had already more than convincingly proved.

Ruud, to his credit, was looking even more depressed than me and so to try and restore our collective morale I said something along the lines of: 'look, let's not panic. Let's lift the bike up again, clear away all the tools and have a good search of the floor' – which miraculously I'd vacuumed cleaned just before starting work. Two seconds later I was literally dancing around the workshop



holding aloft the errant ball bearing betwixt thumb and forefinger. It was a truly magic moment. Ruud and I actually hugged each other. It was almost worth losing the ball bearing just to experience the joy of finding it again. We went and celebrated with a cup of coffee and some of Mrs Van Driver's homemade chocolate cake. After that everything went exactly as the video said it would. We adjusted the adjuster, put the rubber band around the clutch lever and the handlebar grip, watched it dip when we revved the engine and then accelerated the bike in first gear 20 times to run the clutch in. As it had started snowing (again) I packed Ruud off to Mrs Ruud and tidied up the workshop (again).

The next Saturday I rode over to another neighbour – he's actually four kilometres away but is my nearest neighbour if I turn right out of the house – and went for a ride with him and his son. It turned out to be exactly the sort of day I hoped I would have when I first moved to the middle of nowhere. His son, having grown up on bikes is as handy on his 2011 300 EXC as you'd expect him to be. His dad less so – though in his defence he was riding an enduroised 1985 Fantic 240, rendered even more unstable by the addition of longer rear shocks. It meant that I could charge after the son and then have a legitimate breather while we waited for the dad. It also gave me

Chris Evans

IT WAS THEN THAT I REALISED THAT THE STICKERS I ORDERED WEREN'T ACTUALLY AGE APPROPRIATE. GIVEN THAT PRETTY MUCH NOTHING THAT I DO IS AGE APPROPRIATE I'M NOT GOING TO LOSE ANY SLEEP OVER IT



time to get my head around having an automatic clutch. Which performed just as I had hoped it would. We didn't do anything mega technical but I can see the potential and can't wait to try it under more testing conditions. First impressions though suggest that a handlebar mounted rear brake would be a useful addition...

And then after a couple of hours riding in glorious spring sunshine we went back to Claude's place and had a fantastic lunch, washed down by several glasses of wine brought along by his god daughter who works in a very posh vineyard near Beaune. Despite years of practice I know next to nothing about wine but even I could tell it was as excellent as our morning ride, the company, the lunch and my new Rekluse clutch. A perfect day, rounded off by a siesta on my sofa with the dog gently farting away beside me... 🍷



Road-book Enduro Tours in France

DATES FOR 2018

30/31 May – 1 June	Pyrénées SOLD OUT
29/30/31 May	Cantal EXTRA DATE 4 PLACES LEFT
13/14/15 June	Dordogne
5/6/7 Sept	Cantal SOLD OUT
19/20/21 Sept	Pyrénées SOLD OUT
24/25/26 Oct	Tréfle du Morvan
7/8/9 Nov	Dordogne
21/22/23 Nov	Normandie



All trips are priced at £560 (payable to ABTA bonded and ATOL protected UK travel agency S&N Pickford). Price includes 3 days riding, 2 nights half-board accommodation, loan of road book and road book reader, support vehicle and driver, an opener and sweeper and a classy T-shirt. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like any further information.

Chris Evans, Sport Adventure,
15 Faye, 71550 Cussy en Morvan, France
Tel: 0033 662 487190
chris.evans@sport-adventure.com
www.sport-adventure.com



TRIUMPH ADVENTURE EXPERIENCE

Triumph is ramping up its adventure motorcycling offer. For 2018 the bikes have been seriously improved. But now they can improve you, too – at their all-new Triumph Adventure Experience in South Wales.

words: JB & images: Chippy Wood & JB



Global Adventure Training Academy' reads the sign. Which seems a touch grandiose for a converted light-industrial unit in South Wales. But then in their presentation the Triumph guys revealed this centre is just the first of many planned to open around the world, kind of one on each continent, at least. Ahh, we get it!

As a blueprint for the future it bodes well. The fit-out at the centre is quality through and through. There's a great meeting hall, double height to the roof, with trestles and bench seating, a coffee bar and reception. Then there's a media room, a meeting room, changing rooms, showers, drying room, plus the workshop for the bikes and offices for the staff. Secure parking too. Giant oversize posters of Tigers in action adorn the walls, not taken in the Rhondda (the coal-mining valleys of Wales) more

likely the Rockies given the registration plates on those bikes and vast mountain landscapes. But that's part of the message, this isn't about coming to Wales, it's about this place being your launch pad into the world.

So the Triumph Adventure Experience offers something for everyone. Training on Triumph's own extensive training grounds that are just a six-mile country ride from the centre, suitable for absolute beginners through to the super-experienced (we can all learn something). And experience days, like the two-day Gravel Tours, which take in the great network of trails that are all easy-access from the centre. There's a fleet of brand new 2018 Tiger 1200 and 800s plus Street Scramblers all suitably equipped with off-road tyres ready to go. And if you haven't any kit yet, Triumph has that covered too

with their own-brand adventure clothing in all sizes waiting for you.

Nick Plumb, ex-Dakar racer and head of Touratech UK, heads up the operation. He's the perfect front man, with the bike skills, a vast knowledge of all things adventure and the enthusiasm and personality to communicate and educate effectively. He trains and he inspires. He's assembled a great team, too. The kind of guys who'll gently reassure you and give you the confidence to reach for talents you didn't think you had. Yep, Matt, Jon and Keith will cheerfully, almost quietly, get you there. If the assorted axioms dotted around the centre's walls don't get you believing then these guys will. Learn skills here – and by heck if you can ride Wales you can ride anywhere – and then tackle with confidence the world's trails. 🇬🇧

FIND OUT MORE

All details can be found at www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk/adventure-experience

The action starts beginning of May.

PRICES: start at £299 for the one-day courses and experiences, which includes the use of Triumph Tiger 800/1200 and Street Scramblers, fuel, lunch and refreshments

LOCATION: Unit 14, Woodlands Business Park, Ystradgynlais, Swansea, South Wales, SA9 1JW

CONTACT: 00 44 (0)1639 508916
bookings@triumphadventureexperience.co.uk



STILLWELL'S SUSPENSION SMARTS #1 TYRES



Following on from last issue's huge opening salvo on suspension setup, this issue we start Alan Stillwell's regular suspension column, explaining individual facets one by one so we all gain a better understanding. And he starts with tyres! You'll understand why when you read on...

Words: Alan Stillwell, Stillwell Performance Suspension

Images: JB

In my opening feature in RUST #34 I talked about the basics when tuning your bike's suspension. Understanding your available adjustments, setting sag and finding a basic chassis balance. By now you should have some time on the adjustments you made and become comfortable with your bike in general. With that in mind, it's time to take it to the next level.

So, let's dive into the next step in finding the optimum next level tune for your machine. We will assume that you have the clickers set in the best position for your overall situation as a result of your prior testing. Your spring rates are good, and your sag is within spec. If you have questions about these basics, refer to the first tuning article in RUST #34.

The point being here, there are still several basic things you can do to fine tune the suspension and chassis after finding your baseline settings, and here's the first:

TYRE CONDITION, PRESSURE AND STYLE

You might not think that tyres play an important role in your suspension performance, but you would be wrong. Think of your tyres as another critical part of bump absorption. The first tip is to choose a tyre that is designed for the type of riding you do. If you are an extreme terrain type rider for instance, choosing an ultra hard sidewall desert tyre (because it was the one on sale) is going to set you back in performance. The different tyres from say, Dunlop or Bridgestone are designed with different sidewall stiffness that match their intended purposes. Motocross and desert tyres tend to have very stiff sidewalls while GoldenTyre is on the soft and flexy side with their sidewall stiffness. Great for off-road, not so hot for desert and motocross. A stiff tyre transmits into an overall firmer feeling to your suspension, the opposite with a soft tyre. Keep that in mind as you select your knobbies.



CLASS NOTES

- 1 Are you riding on the right tyre for your local conditions?
- 2 Do you check your tyre pressures every ride?
- 3 Tyre wear is about more than rounded knobs – swap 'em out before they cost you bad results
- 4 Mousses affect the rebound performance of your suspension
- 5 Mousses love lube – keep 'em sweet by regular re-lubes



▷ The second item is the type of air system you run within the tyre. Tubes, Tubeless and TireBalls all use air as the medium for keeping the tyre inflated. Air is a tuning component of your suspension, especially on the forks. As a test, put 16psi of air in your front tyre and go smack some square-edged bumps or rocks with your clickers in their optimum positions. Now do the same test at 11psi. Amazing the difference! 16 psi in this example creates much more rebound force, wants to deflect more off obstacles, etc. Choosing the best pressure is a bit of a personal thing, we tend to stay within a range of 10-14psi in general for most conditions. TireBalls and Tubeless setups allow for less pressure, as always test test test to find the best setup for you!

Many riders and racers run bib mousse systems. As with tyre manufacturers, these bib mousses have different psi equivalents within their compounds, and can be very specific on the sizes required to match the tyre you are running. Do your homework here – the goal is to match the mousse to the type of riding you enjoy the most. A couple of tips for mousses: first, lube the heck out of both it and the tyre carcass – mousses hate dry tyres and will wear much faster if they are dry. In dry climates some guys will use baby powder as a substitute for lube, our experience says stay away from baby powder as it will find moisture to absorb and then turn to muddy goo.

Now, once you ride a mousse system



two things will become instantly apparent. First, your rebound will feel slower and the suspension in general will have a more 'dead' feel. If you like a springy, fast rebound mousses will take away some of that feeling, as the tradeoff for no flats. If you are on the fence about whether to buy mousses, try to borrow a buddy's bike for a quick ride to sort out the feel before you purchase – they are not for everybody. If you go that route, expect to speed up/soften your rebound by 2-4 clicks on each end to compensate for the mousse absorb-

ing energy as opposed to redirecting it.

The last note I bring up on tyres is wear – not to the knobs, but to that all-important sidewall. A worn sidewall can disguise itself as suspension related issues. A good example of that is a worn out, overly soft front tyre sidewall. The Dunlop D756 (one of my all time favorites) comes to mind. That tyre provided awesome grip, was consistent in its feel and was an all around great tyre – until the point where the knobs had their sharp edges worn away. Most guys would look at that point and say 'I have several more good rides left on that tyre,' which from that standpoint was true. BUT, our riders would start to complain about the front end pushing out in flat turns, the grip 'letting go' all at once under hard braking, etc. These symptoms might be traced to overly fast rebound, stiff compression or too much air pressure, but in this example it was actually the tyre sidewall flexing and collapsing for just a second. One of our Pro riders could actually pinpoint the exact time within a US Outdoor National moto that a new tyre

would give out – the knobs looked great, the suspension tune was on point – it was the side wall wearing and breaking down! (Yes, these guys can wear out a tyre sidewall in 35 minutes + 2 laps, lol!)

Food for thought, in general you want to be replacing your tyres well before the knobbies are ground down if you are looking for peak suspension performance. Lastly, find the right air pressure and stick with it. Check it before every ride – and if the temperature changes more than 20 degrees during the ride. 🚗

NEXT TIME

In our next column we will check out how fork height and shock sag affect handling and suspension performance.

ASK ALAN

If you have any comments or questions for Alan, or would like him to address any specific topics, please drop him an email at SP@rustsports.com He'll endeavour to address these in his ongoing series on suspension.



Avade Compression Heated Top

£130.00 / AU\$199.00

Contact: www.adavde.co.uk www.avade.com.au

Standing on top of Welsh mountain last month for the first (and sadly last) day of Brechfa Rally was about as cold as I have ever been in the UK. Stupidly not bringing anything other than wafer thin MX gloves I lost all feeling in my hands before we even had the bikes unloaded... Suitable test conditions then for the heated shirt from Australian company Avade. We had heard about them some time ago and when the UK importer offered us a couple to test we jumped at the chance.

The idea is simplicity itself – add some heated elements to a base layer shirt – but it needs to be well executed to be comfortable and reliable while riding. The USP here being this is a shirt that doesn't require wiring to your bike's power outlet. This is a self-contained unit with a small rechargeable battery sitting in a pocket on the shirt. There are three heat settings, which are adjusted in seconds by an LED button on the right hand cuff that glows green, amber and red to let you know which level you have selected. It is a slightly weird sensation the first time you use it but you get used to it very quickly.

After a quick test run on the road on its lowest setting, I was intrigued to see how it would fare off-road with the variation in body temperature through more technical sections when the body is creating its own heat. At the Brechfa it was a lifesaver (quite literally) when standing around, on the road sections and faster flowing forest roads (where full heat was the call). Entering the woods for the more nadgery bits I knocked it back to the lowest setting... simples. Now if you are doing a competitive event you might think you won't want to waste time fiddling with buttons, but honestly it's so quick you will be doing it on the move after the first few times. How long did the battery last, on this occasion a full six hours of the competition. The battery is good for 500 recharges and replacement is just £25. And given the Siberian weather of late it could even be a positive performance enhancer. Oh, and it's 'water safe' so if you do get drenched, no, you won't be electrocuted.

In all, a great functional piece of kit that just works, backed-up by a 12 month warranty. Ideal for a day on the trails, on the road, pretty much anywhere. My only complaint – there weren't a matching set of heated gloves! *Alex Waters*





MIND THE GAP

THE CARIBBEAN CATHARSIS

RUST has been following July Behl as he's been adventuring on his BMW RnineT Scrambler north to south across the American continents. You can read his previous stories in RUST #27 (planning & prep) and #29 (North America into Mexico). In this installment July has reached the Darien Gap, the no-roads jungle barrier between Panama and Colombia. You could fly it in minutes, or take a five-day boat trip. Yeah, no prizes for the right answer...

words: July Behl images: July Behl & Jon Bentman

As I rode through the large swath of undeveloped swampland and forest between Panama and Colombia infamously known as the Darién Gap, I felt a huge sense of achievement – I've done it - I've crossed the Darién Gap by motorcycle! I'm the first British man to cross the so-called impenetrable 66 mile marshland! And right at the exit, there was my family, friends and the Prime Minister of Colombia cheering my achievement eating a big bucket of fried chicken and sausage rolls! Prime Minister.... sausage rolls.... family...friends.... I can't believe it... and neither should you, as this was nothing but a vivid dream aboard a sailing vessel in the Caribbean. Yes, I was under medication (read side effects of strong sea sickness tablets) Bugger! 'Sally the Scrambler' (a 2017 BMW R nineT Scrambler) and I did get from Panama to Colombia, but by boat.

WHAT THE FARC?

In this age of extremely competent motorcycles and riders, there's very little left in the world that can't be conquered, however the Darién Gap is one of the few challenges still out there that most overlanders shy away from. Is it the wildlife? Is it the FARC rebels? Or is it simply the fear of the unknown? It's quite possibly a combination of all three. The Darién is one of the least visited places on the planet.

This roadless kingdom of hell is inundated with poisonous frogs and scorpions, painful fire ants, jaguars, fer-de-lance snakes, wild pigs, bot flies that lay eggs under your skin –



among other nasty creatures. To add insult to injury, it's controlled by the notorious FARC guerillas infamous for drug trafficking, arms smuggling, kidnappings and bombings – yes, even today. In a nutshell, everything that moves in the Darién can and will kill you. As most overlanders don't fancy getting shot, stung or just dying, they 'fly' or sail across 'the gap'.

Much to my wife's disappointment, I too chose the sane option and sailed 'the gap' on the 'Stahlratte' – a 110-year-old German vessel that ferries motorcyclists across. It's no Cunard's Queen Mary but to overlanders it's better than that - for five days, we don't have to worry about routes, accommodation, food, fuel, packing - repacking, breakdowns, weather or company. You're fed and watered and taken care of by the fantastic crew who treat you like royalty for USD 1200.

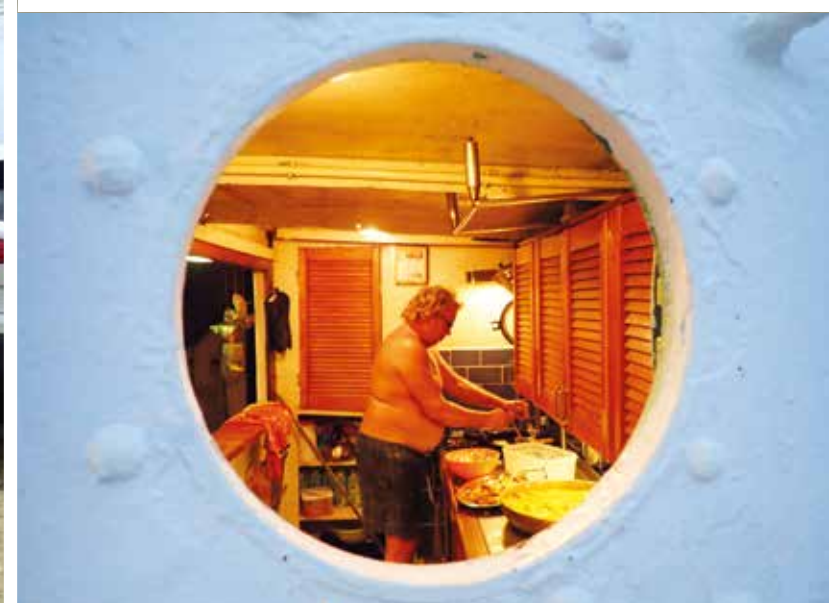
Of course, flying over 'the gap' is probably the efficient option but then you miss out on visiting the gorgeous San Blas islands, eating fresh lobsters, snorkeling and – most importantly – meeting, hanging out and getting drunk with other overlanders on the Pan Americas, just like I did. When I was in the planning stages of my adventure, I wondered what it would be like to sail 'the gap' with other

overlanders, the logistics, the documentation etc... and scoured the internet on information, but to my disdain I didn't come across any tangible info and that's exactly what I hope to achieve through this article – to give you a feel for what's it like to be on the Stahlratte, and other relevant information that'll get you excited about the sailing.

MEET THE CREW

Before we do that, let me introduce fellow adventurers that I met in Central America who were on the same boat as it'll give you a sense of the sociality both found on the boat and the road.

When on the road online interactions soon become realities, as there's an unsaid agreement of loose interdependency between travellers on anything from routes to accommodation to places to eat etc... and that's how I met Matt and Karen, a Dutch couple on two BMW 650s, who suggested biker friendly accommodation to me in San Juan Del Sur – the party town in Nicaragua. All decent (read non sticky sheets) hostels and hotels were sold out to Twinkies with raging hormones for 'Sunday Funday' – a debauchorous Sunday pub-crawl that attracts the majority of the backpacker population in Nicaragua.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE STAHLRATTE SAILING

- All meals are included in the price
- Beer and Cold Drinks are a USD 1 each and are extra
- Stahlratte have a seawater desalinator on board and there's unlimited water for drinking, cooking etc
- Snorkeling equipment and 'noodles' are provided
- A 1.5 ton electrical winch is used to load and unload the bikes and the Stahlratte people are liable for any damage to the bike during this process
- Maximum capacity on-board is 27 including 4-5 members of crew
- There are seven double cabins and 13 single berths
- Charging points are next to most berths
- There's one toilet and one shower. While I was on board there was never a queue for either.

DOCUMENTATION

- While booking you'll need to send a copy of your passport and a non refundable deposit
- Stahlratte will organise the exit paperwork from Panama for you and your bike
- Stahlratte will organise the entry paperwork into Colombia for you and your bike. This includes immigration stamp, motorcycle insurance and the TIP.



▷ We decided to hang out and ride to Panama together. Matt and Karen had gotten engaged on the trip and were harmoniously in love. Karen made the majority of the decisions and Matt said, “Yes Karen”- this was the secret to their loving relationship. Matt had the GoPro but Karen had the remote, Matt knew the routes but Karen had the Sat Nav – it was a delight to hang out and ride with them.

Matt and Karen’s other online acquaintances included Australians, Neake and Paul – an extremely chilled-out bohemian couple with a cracking sense of humour. They are on an open-ended adventure and have already been on the road for close to two years. We were all keen to meet and share stories, so they stayed on in Jaco, Costa Rica for another couple of days. Jaco is famously known for its surf and hosted the 2016 International Surfing Championship. Infamously its known for in-your-face rampant prostitution – a bit like Vegas on steroids. Hey- ho! Different strokes for different folks (pun intended).

Our online community had snowballed in reality to form a small overlander family of motorcyclists and before we knew it, we were all riding to Panama together.

Panama House B&B acts as the nucleus for all Stahlratte clients (who are predominantly motor-

cyclists). Nestled in the centre of Panama City, it’s a clean vibrant hostel, with secure motorcycle parking (the most important aspect of accommodation for the motorcycling overlander) and is within walking distance of about ten motorcycle shops, as we found out. We got there a few days ahead of the departure date and spent the next few days visiting the Panama Canal, Old Town and sampling fresh seafood ceviche at the Fish Market. The hostel was soon buzzing and you could hear accents and motorcycles from all over the world. We were now a day away from the sailing trip. Below is a linear/factual...almost dry, breakdown of the Stahlratte journey...

DAY 1

Port Carti is the meet-up point for loading the bikes and it takes anything between two to three hours to ride there from Panama House. The ride starts out fairly mundane like any city ride but gets the blood flowing for the last 30 miles in the indigenous Kuna territory. The road snakes through the mountains, through dense forest and each twist and turn exposes to you the beautiful jungle landscape. I would’ve personally preferred the last 30 odd miles to be off-road as the terrain lent it self to some exciting riding but unfortunately it got paved some 15 years

back. Though this may be deemed as progress for the locals, for us so called Adventurers it’s unfortunate as the world is getting ‘tarmacked’ at an alarming rate – yet, another reason to get out there and ‘play’ before everything goes tits up.

The atmosphere at Port Carti is one of excitement and camaraderie. The self-inducted warm meet and greet with other overlanders is both delightful and interesting. Mud caked bikes of all shapes and sizes from all over the world adorn the parking lot; the travel stories and anecdotes start unraveling and the stripping begins. Yes, that’s right – the stripping. In order for efficient loading of the bikes, all the hard and soft luggage is taken off the bikes, the mirrors are tucked in and in some cases the fairings come off making them lighter and leaner. The riders and their belongings are ferried in dinghies to the Stahlratte, where Captain Ludwig Hoffman and crew welcome everyone aboard and soon lunch is served.

Post lunch, everyone is asked to pack a night bag and then ferried onto the small island of El Porvenir. This wee island is about a square kilometer and houses a ‘hotel’, an airstrip and a few other houses. The so-called hotel consists of about 12-13 rooms, which have running water and electricity till 9pm, after which you’re at the mercy of the wind

gods and local mosquitoes. It’s basic and does the job. To keep our ADHD under control, a few of us decided to circumnavigate the island by foot, drank plenty of beers, swam in the beautiful waters – the water surrounding the island is crystal clear with a mix of coral reef and sea grass beds – and played pool. Before we knew it, dinner was served which consisted of rice, beans, coleslaw, papas fritas, fried mahi-mahi and chicken curry which had all bits of the chicken including the feet, neck and head – a curry in a hurry. Beer, food and friends – good fun was had by all.

DAY 2

After a lightning and thunderstormy night, which we were told was unusual for this time of the year, most of us woke up slightly hung-over – not in the post alcoholic sense but more in a bit of a daze. Nobody was sure when and where breakfast was, and when we were being ‘lifted’ to get back to the Stahlratte. Lo and behold, soon we were aboard the tiny little dinghy again and back onto the Stahlratte, where breakfast was served. More importantly, all 14 bikes were aboard and like infants in a topless bar we were all scurrying around to find our bikes and to ensure they were all right. The bikes were all tied down and wrapped under tarp to protect



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them from the salt water. My Scrambler was nicely tucked and looked quite cosy. Right after breakfast, we sailed for three hours to the gorgeous San Blas Islands.

The San Blas Islands are a group of island in the archipelago de San Blas, located in North West of Panama facing the Caribbean Sea. There's a total of 378 islands, out of which the natives, known as Kunas, inhabit only 49. These islands are travel brochure cover material – high palm trees, white sand, intimate islands surrounded by turquoise blue waters with diverse marine life, in pristine condition. The islands have not yet been discovered by the mainstream tourism industry and are fully in control of the Kunas who ensure they stay healthy and beautiful. One can fly from island to island but sailing is still the most popular way to get around. Do check them out if you ever find yourself in Panama or Colombia. We were anchored close to the Coco Bandero Island and spent the rest of the day snorkeling, getting drunk, enjoying the rope swing

and making the most of the 'noodles', relaxing in the balmy waters of the Caribbean.

DAY 3

The 'sign and recline' theme continues and again you end up doing everything or something or absolutely nothing. The only tedious part of the day is the 'sign' bit i.e. having to count and document the number of beers being drunk, which everyone has to do for himself or herself – counting beers, chilling in the Caribbean... it's a tough life, but someone's got to do it!

It's extremely relaxed and the main focus for me, and I suspect most others, was to make the most of the good food that's served aboard the Stahlratte and put back the lost pounds riding from Alaska to Panama. It's amazing how they churn out the quantity and the quality of food they do, from a pantry-sized kitchen. All meals are cooked by Captain Ludwig himself and just like all good chefs his belly is an indicator of his culinary passion – never

BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE

These were the beautiful folks I had the good fortune of meeting and spending time with on the Stahlratte. It's a real eclectic mix of people and also gives you an insight on motorcycles that are popular with overlanders. I've excluded their surnames to make it difficult for sexual predators and nasty online stalkers, however I have included their blogs for any of you interested in following their stories.

NAME	COUNTRY	BIKE	PROFESSION	BLOG
Neake	Australia	BMW 750 GS	Retired Entrepreneur	Two Bikes One Dream
Paul	Australia	BMW 800 GSA	Retired Entrepreneur	Two Bikes One Dream
Matt	Holland	BMW 650 GS	Designer (Sabbatical)	It's not a race
Karen	Holland	BMW 650 GS	Business Analyst (Sabbatical)	It's not a race
Phil	U.K.	Triumph Tiger 800	Retired Anesthetist	Loose Nuts
Tom	U.K.	KTM 1290 SA	Retired Anesthetist	Loose Nuts
Ian	Ireland	Honda Africa Twin 1000	Retired Anesthetist	Loose Nuts
Anthony	Australia	Kawasaki KLR 650	Teacher (Sabbatical)	-
Pascal	Canada	BMW 800 GS	Retired Armed Forces Officer	-
Simon	Australia	Triumph Tiger 800	Entrepreneur (Sabbatical)	-
Manuel	Germany	Kawasaki KLR 650	Corporate Exec. (Sabbatical)	-
Ernie	U.S.A	Triumph Explorer 1200	Carpenter (Sabbatical)	Gringos and Penguins
Tara	U.S.A	Triumph Tiger 800	Professor (Sabbatical)	Gringos and Penguins
July	U.K.	BMW R nineT Scrambler X	Corporate Exec. (Sabbatical)	The Big Moto Adventure

Just like me, if you plan to ride the Pan Americas alone and fancy some company, the Stahlratte acts as a catalyst for meeting potential riding partners. Your new alliance/s might or might not last long, but people are usually open to riding together for a few days as for most it's a new experience riding with someone different who might or might not be from a different part of the world. Most people left in micro groups from the Aduana office in Cartagena. It certainly worked for most aboard the August 2017 sail from Panama to Colombia, including me. Simon and I ended up exploring South America together.

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after five days of sailing (and living in your swim trunks) it's a bit of a shock to the system to be clad in leathers again. The crew's busy sorting out the immigration paperwork for all the clients and this can take anything from an hour to three hours (in our case), as there was a new Aduana/Customs officer in Colombia.

There's a fair bit of waiting around but usually one is used to it after riding through Mexico and Central America. Everyone pays the remainder of the sailing amount today, which is circa USD 1000 – this can either be paid in Colombian Pesos or USD but needs to be in cash as they don't accept cards or wire transfer – not entirely sure why. I'd suggest keeping the remainder amount to hand, else it can get a bit tedious to go into town and return to complete the payment.

The Stahlratte crew are extremely thorough but just like any other border crossing, it's wise to check all the details are correct in your passport including the VIN (Vehicle Identification Number), registration plate etc. These minor mistakes can cost you significant time and money at subsequent border crossings and in some cases even an entry refusal. As a personal example, my VIN number was recorded incorrectly in El Salvador, but I spotted the mistake

and asked the Aduana officer to correct it, which he did including signing and stamping the mistake. Despite the correction, I was given grief at the Honduras border (read worst central American border) and ultimately had to grease palms to get out of it.

Once the paperwork is complete, the Stahlratte sails to the industrial pier, which is 30 minutes away for unloading the bikes. Post unloading, we agreed to ride together to the Aduana office in the city to get our bikes inspected and to receive our motorcycle insurance. Yet again, we waited for over an hour at the Aduana office, as no one knew the whereabouts of our insurance broker. This is the last part of the Colombian entry process and once you receive your TIP (Temporary Importation Permit) and your motorcycle insurance, you're free to explore and ride on. But that's another story – for the next instalment on the PanAmScram. 🇨🇴

NEXT TIME

Yeah, who's Simon and what's his story? I'll go into our highs and lows in the next PanAmScram article – and how we ended up in a porn truck (there is such a thing) with our bikes on the back of it...

▷ trust a skinny chef! The food aboard consists of a variety of meals from pastas, to baked lobsters to stir fried rice and they are always fresh and plentiful. All aboard are on a rota to do the dishes for one meal, as it helps the crew out and is efficient. I personally hate doing the dishes, but luckily paired up with a German lad called Manuel who was super efficient. After dinner the anchor's pulled up and the 30 hours sail to Colombia commences. Unlike the fetching waters of the San Blas, this is open waters sailing and gets extremely choppy at night. This is probably the best time to make the most of seasickness tablets. A fair few people were sea sick on our voyage and all of them looked pretty arse-raped by the next morning. To put it in perspective, the ferry from Portsmouth to Santander via the Bay of Biscay is a doddle compared to this in seasickness terms.

DAY 4

Needless to say, the attendance at Breakfast was thin as most people were still in bed or recuperating from seasickness. Another day to relax and unwind – for me this was the longest I'd been off the bike since the start of my ride in Alaska and honestly

both the bike and I needed this well-deserved rest. The distance does start to take a toll and most definitely after 15,000 miles.

My favorite spot on the Stahlratte was the netting on the bow – there's enough room for three to four people to lay down and just observe. It's an ideal spot for 'me' time and also to look out for marine life – we spotted a pod of bottle nosed dolphins who were playing the bow waves. It was brilliant and it certainly wakes you up no matter how sea sick or hung over one is.

After a slightly monotonous 30 hours of sailing the bright skyline of Colombia welcomed us. It was bittersweet, as I'd had a blast with the folk on board and didn't want to leave, but at the same time was super excited to ride South America. We docked in Cartagena around midnight and spent the night on the Stahlratte.

DAY 5

Viva Colombia! It's a bright and early start and everyone is asked to pack their bags and bring them to the upper deck by 7:30 am. You can choose to and will get the opportunity to get into your riding gear post loading the bikes. It's pretty hot and





TRIUMPH STREET TWIN

Damn this everlasting winter, rain snow and ice have all stopped play. But it hasn't stopped Alex pimping his Street Twin...

Words: Alex Waters images: Jon Bentman & Alex Waters

With the prolonged presence of the 'Beast from the East' (which has caused RUST no end of bother this month) the Street Twin has barely turned a wheel since its trip to London back in January. A call from Triumph in late February asking me to bring it for its first service was a good opportunity for me to get out for a ride – if a little premature with barely 200 miles showing on the clock.

Waiting for a dry day I dutifully donned my base layers (including heated shirt – see Stuff) and headed out



The harsh winter hasn't done the smaller roads in Norfolk any good and having decided to take the scenic route I find myself avoiding a myriad of potholes on a trip that would have suited the Scrambler version better! One oil change, new filter and quick check over later I am on my way home via the A roads to try and avoid the worst of the road sections of my outward journey.

As previously mentioned I have been in touch with a few different companies in recent months looking to try and get hold of some bits to personalise the little Triumph. After a few emails back and forth, Italian exhaust manufacturer Zard kindly agreed to send us a set of their N.2 slip-on silencers in brushed stainless steel. Zard make full systems and slip-ons for most of the big marques covering street, adventure and off-road models.

A couple of weeks later they arrive and don't disappoint... Handmade to order there is a definite feel of quality to their products as well as a considerable weight saving of over 3kg – not all that surprising as they are dwarfed by the original items when placed side-by-side.

Being so much smaller they only utilise one of the two original fastening points of the Triumph cans, thus freeing up the pillion footpeg holes if you wanted to remove the pegs altogether for a cleaner look or were fitting them to the Street Cup.

Fitting is fairly simple, around 15 minutes per side, most of that being taken up removing the originals and for me it transforms the looks of the Twin – particularly from a side view. They create a more stripped-back look to the bike, exposing more of the swing arms and will definitely make oiling the chain an easier job!

Zard offer a 'race' (no baffles) or 'road' version of all their silencers. Being the responsible, understated type I naturally requested baffles in but with them sounding so good fitted it would be plain rude not to have a quick listen with them removed. Keep an eye out on our YouTube channel if you fancy hearing what they sound like...

Up next some heated grips, a bench seat, tail tidy – and hopefully some better weather. Bring on Spring...



Useful contact: Zard exhausts: www.zardlab.com





WORK HORSE

Mercedes Sprinter 314CDI Van (Medium - High Roof)

words: Alex Waters images: Jon Bentman

There is a reason Mercedes' Sprinter panel van is seen everywhere every day – it's because it does the job, no fuss. With big adventure bikes and multiple enduros to take cross-country it was the ideal choice for our latest mission...

With a multi-bike test at two different venues on the horizon down in Wales, RUST once again called on the kind people at Mercedes Benz Vans UK and grovelled for a van with the capacity to lug around multiple bikes and associated kit. Meeting up with editor JB in West London it was lucky we were given a Sprinter as he had packed enough gear to survive a week in the Antarctic (which proved precipitous) – plus an optimistic tent balanced on top of his camera and riding gear.

The tent didn't seem like such a silly idea as we collected the first bike at sunny Silverstone, both in T-shirts – it seemed like Spring had finally arrived... Heading on down to Wales all seemed well, cruising down the M42 gave us a bit of time to assess the Sprinter. It has earned the reputation of a trusty workhorse since its 2006 debut and this latest – and last of – the Mk2 version although fairly low-specced inside had everything we needed for our weekend. With a box-fresh 200 miles on the clock the gearbox was still a little tight but an hour of stop-start in London traffic and a good run on the motorway was starting to loosen it up nicely.

Like the Vito Sport we tested back in RUST #32 there is a definite bias of controls to the left of the wheel with the indicators and windscreen wipers both working

off a single stalk with the cruise control perched just above, not a problem but it does require a moment's recalibration before you stop reaching to the right of the wheel to clean the windscreen.

The cab is reasonably refined, and certainly quiet enough at motorway speeds for a large panel van; my only real gripe was the lack of armrest – just a nice thing to have on a long haul. That said we particularly liked the fold-down unit in the middle seat which provides handy cup holders and a large non-slip surface which is ideal for a couple of phones on charge (there's one USB port on the dash behind the steering wheel and we attached a second to the cigarette lighter) and other bits and pieces you don't want disappearing into the foot well when you hit the anchors.

Having collected the next two bikes in Wales, the short first gear ratio, which had been slightly irritating earlier, began to make sense as we started negotiating steeper hills and descents. Stopping for fuel an envious van driver with a giveaway Alpinestars sticker on the side, complained of on the lack of puff produced by his fully laden, normally aspirated 2.5 Diesel which was struggling with the climbs, asked how we were getting on – just fine thanks... There is plenty of grunt



ice-bound narrow road with some steep climbs and descents to our final destination. JB walked the road trials style, looking for some tarmac between the snow and ice that might offer some grip and after some deliberation we decided to give it a go.

Rear wheel drive makes perfect sense in a van, it allows for a heavier payload and places the weight predominantly over the powered wheels – that's when you're not tackling ice covered roads when the rear can get away from you pretty quickly... However with extreme trepidation we made it (just) while on the return leg the sun had come out and helped our cause by melting the ice on some of the steepest sections of the road. The Sprinter did us proud and got the job done but we were both happy to see a main road after that one...

Interestingly the all-new (Mk3) Sprinter announced back in February is offered with front and rear wheel drive along with the 4x4 option that has always been offered by Mercedes. Along with a new range of engines and on-board tech the Sprinter stands to become more comparable in terms of spec with the Vito Sport. However, as we say goodbye to the current generation, sales remained strong in 2017 and this is encouraging when you consider that bar a few facelifts this version has been on sale for well over a decade.

With plenty more bike tests coming up we hope to be able to get our grubby mitts on the new version before the end of 2018. In the meantime here's goodbye to the Mk2 that showed us there's plenty of life in the old dog yet... 📺

on tap and at no time did the Sprinter feel underpowered while we traversed the valleys. We had the six-speed, 140bhp version of the four-cylinder CDI power plant that sits in the middle of the range with 112bhp and 163bhp versions also available.

Arriving at JB's dad's farm late that evening the Beast from the East (Take 2) hit and the temperature plummeted. A steep and slippery climb up the farm track proved a bit too much for the fully laden Sprinter and the rear wheels lost traction as we neared the top and we decided to get it turned round and leave it there for the night. Not that there's any shame in that, this track has claimed many a delivery driver's truck in far better conditions.

Next morning we headed back out to Day 1 of the Brechfa Rally, and one of the coldest days I can remember for a long time (sub-zero with 30mph winds). Numb hands and a wind that cut through all but the warmest clothing,

the only time I wasn't cold was slogging through mud deep in the forest (on a bike), or in the van. It's days like these that your van becomes more than just a bike hauler and mode of transport, it became your changing room, workshop, camera and phone charger and about the only place to escape the dreaded wind chill. Without a doubt the cab of the Sprinter was my favourite place to be that day...

Sadly (err... kind of) the second day of the rally was cancelled as that night the snow came in properly and settled while we were stuck at base camp and decided not to risk heading out in the van (still got the bikes out though!). Come Monday morning we then had to cancel our planned enduro test as it had frozen even harder overnight making any meaningful comparison impossible, but we still had bikes to drop off and collect before heading back home. A very pretty if slightly treacherous drive north through snow covered Wales left us with a snow and

WE LIKED:
Strong motor
Quiet cab
Good performance
Smart looks for a panel van

WE DIDN'T LIKE:
Fuel economy of around 30mpg
Just a little too basic in the cab for a leisure driver
Basic driver controls

IN BRIEF

Mercedes Sprinter 314CDI Medium wheelbase, high roof

PRICE AS TESTED: £30,525

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A LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

Back in RUST #5 we looked into the Trail Riders Fellowship, the UK's almost unique association of trail riders, formed half a century ago to protect land and trail access rights for motorcyclists. Back then we looked at the directors' vision for the future. Now we're taking a look at what the TRF looks like at grass roots level...

Words: Rick Kemp **Images:** JB, Greg Vilalobos, TRF and others

I first came across the Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF) when I was in Wales crewing for the Which Bike? Enduro Team sometime in the late seventies (WB? was a popular UK monthly motorcycle magazine in its day and it carried a regular On the Rough section). I forget the exact event, the Isca, the Beacons, anyway one of the two-day nationals and at the bottom of the programme it read "Thanks to the Welsh TRF for all their help". Who they? I wondered. But the logistical nightmare that is the job of crew chief for an enduro team, working out everyone's times, fuel stops, time on the road for crew vehicles versus bike time on the course, refreshments etc, etc made me forget to chase down the answer to that particular question at the time.

The TRF has come a long way since those days, it's approaching its half-century, the membership is up 20 percent over the last two years to more than 4,500 and in 2017 it added another UK motorcycle association, the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG)

to its list of affiliates. Hopefully this will give the TRF extra muscle when it comes to fighting for the preservation of our rights of way across this Scepter'd Isle (y'know, the UK). You might say it's on a roll. Interestingly, from the TRF website, 17,000 visitors have registered an interest in trail riding and it can be extrapolated from that figure that there are probably more than 20,000 active trail riders in the UK. Probably.

GRASS ROOTS

Now in RUST #5 we investigated the upper echelons of the TRF, the director's direction (if you like), but here (in this feature) RUST has taken the opportunity to spend some time with the grass roots of the organization to see what the TRF experience is like as an ordinary member. In our case, specifically with the Kent branch, which is incidentally headed by TRF Heritage Director, Steve Neville. We should explain, the TRF has several directors each responsible for their own area of expertise and who, together act as a national council for guiding and shaping the Fellowship's aims and activities.



Steve's day job was monitoring London's air pollution. Sounds simple, but I suspect there's a lot more to it than he let on. Hardly surprising then that Steve has recently taken delivery of a Zero electric motorcycle.

By the way, these being modern times, there's no cloak and dagger, no secret handshake when it comes to finding TRF groups, to make contact with your local TRF go to www.TRF.org.uk and click on Regional Groups and select your nearest. That's how I ended up at The Castle Hotel in Eynsford, Kent at 8.00pm on a Tuesday evening, the group meets every second Tuesday of the month.

On this particular evening I imagined that a bunch of TRF members would be easy to spot in the bar. Not so. I eventually ended up asking one of the bar staff where the TRF meeting was. "Is it the motorbikes?" she asked, "Yes," I affirmed. "They're in the Meeting Room," she replied. "Ah, so where's the ...?" It was one of those conversations. When I eventually found the Meeting

Room, sure enough it was full of guys, all guys, wearing oddments of motorcycle apparel. Was this the TRF meeting? No, it turned out to be the Honda Pan European Owners route planning sub-committee meeting. Phew! That was close.

Anyhow, after that I soon located the like-minded-folk group, turned out they were all a little late arriving. Topic of the night turned out to be membership and its lack of activity. Steve said he tried to organise a regular ride on the Saturday following the monthly meeting and then there was the traditional last Sunday in the month trail ride, some of which only had single-figure attendances. Another warm topic was, as Kent is split into two regions, should they be regarded as two separate TRF Groups? The reason being that otherwise some members would have too far to travel. I was at the west Kent venue and members from the east Kent meet at Bridge near Canterbury, also rides out are already organised to start from different places.

BREAKING FREE

West Kent along with Essex, Surrey and Hertfordshire cater for London-based members who like to break free at the weekends. As if on cue, a young chap from south east London turned up. He wanted some advice on what bike to get. As you can imagine there was a lot of advice flying around but taking in to account his biking history and novice dirt status a 250cc four-stroke was the general consensus. Bearing in mind if you're not in the fortunate position of living within striking distance of a byway then you'll need to either ride there or have a van or vehicle with a bike rack, so there is a school of thought that favours the larger capacity bikes, 450cc-and upward, for their ability to maintain higher road speeds without stressing the motor. In reality, local

knowledge will often dictate choice, you can, pretty much, be on a byway within an hour's travel regardless of where you live. How you get there is up to you.

HORSING AROUND

The first activity RUST joined the TRF on was the Chilham Park Horse Trials held in the considerable grounds of Chilham Castle. This has been a traditional Kent TRF activity for many years and nationwide the TRF has links with many equestrian events. The major task over this particular weekend was to have TRF riders out on the cross-country course periodically taking the scores from the observers at the jumps to the organisers office, thereby enabling a speedy results service and subsequent prize-giving after each event. Who needs computers?

Apart from being very good public relations, it does no harm to get other countryside users on side, particularly those with some money and influence in rural affairs. As Steve explained, "Yes it's good PR but there are other reasons for doing these events; for a start, it's about the only income we get apart from the membership and how else would you be able to ride your motorcycle all over a 'Capability' Brown parkland landscape?" Fair point, I doubt that even the Rathmells or the Lampkins get special dispensation to ride up the cascade at Chatsworth House (yes, I know that was Joseph Paxton designed, not Lancelot Brown).

But speaking of the Equestrian fraternity, it is very mixed; the competitors' parking area at the two-day event was an eye-opener. Horse boxes come in various

shapes and sizes, everything from a DIY conversion of an aged Luton Transit with a tent on the side, to articulated trailers with luxury apartments at the front and stable accommodation at the rear with the staff in a matching motorhome – straight out of a Jilly Cooper novel. The sound effects were just as impressive. Highly-strung thoroughbred bloodstock having their rumps whipped – and that's just the riders – hooves against horse box, the PA system with a running commentary, prize giving, it was a bit like Horse of the Year Show on fast forward and at full volume, quite an experience.

For the TRF chaps the main objectives were achieved, raising public awareness via its TRF-branded gazebo and riders in TRF shirts, while information was transported from the furthest point on the course



to Event Control in the blink of an eye, well, almost. Steve was right, an exclusive, interesting and different couple of days and all in a good cause, plus we all got some cake. Tea and cake are the lifeblood of this country.

A RIDE OUT

Our next appointment with the TRF was a ride out with Steve. By this time we were into high summer; it hadn't rained for weeks, the ground was hard and the brambles vicious. Steve arrived on his AJS 350 road bike shod with road tyres. He claimed this was necessary because his normal mount, a Yamaha WR450F, was waiting a gear-selector shaft oil seal (the wrong one had been sent). A likely tale, I suspect he just wanted to point out that actually, in the right hands, in dry conditions anyone can take to the byways on almost anything, including ancient Aye Jays.

In keeping with the old-technology theme, Steve was using a marked-up OS map (Ordnance Survey is the UK's national mapping agency) for the day's route, no Smartphones, GPS or haptic helmet alerts here. Not a bad choice as it turned out because we weren't in a hurry and stopped frequently to take in the view and a map helps to put where you are in context rather than just following the runway on a screen. Curiously, in this day and age we call this kind of thing 'slow culture', but really it's just the old ways albeit it has its charms and advantages. We had a great day out riding the East Kent trails some of which I knew and many I didn't. You can't really go wrong with downland trails, the scenery is great including the villages, then you encounter bits of old Roman road coming up from Dover, and the Wye and Crundale Downs are a delight. Don't forget to look where you're going, it might all seem serene but as ever, expect the unexpected.

NO MOTOR VEHICLES?

As we got on to the old Canterbury to Ashford road which, in parts, is now paralleled by the current A28, there's a 'No Motor Vehicles' sign. Steve explains that as there isn't one at the other end, there's nothing to prevent you coming at it from the other direction. As Steve also points out, signage is very important, as most prosecutions tend to be based around disobeying traffic signs. Ironically it's also the reason why many prosecutions fail as signs aren't legal unless they're backed up by a change in legislation and also they have to conform to a certain physical specification.

One of the main problems facing trail riders are Temporary Restriction Orders (TROs), usually indicated by said 'No Motor Vehicles' signs. These can be seasonal restrictions to prevent byways becoming too churned up in the wetter months and in Kent that's November 1 to April 20. But No Motor Vehicles doesn't necessarily include motorcycles, normally this can be checked on the county council website highways/rights of way section and you often find that the ban doesn't apply to motorcycles, quadricycles or horse-drawn vehicles.

CHANGES

These seasonal restrictions have been in place for quite some time and over that period it's the four-wheel vehicle that's changed more than the motorcycle in terms of their effect on the byway. Modern motorcycles, despite their improved grip capabilities over the years, when compared with their pre-WW2 counterparts may be slightly more powerful but are certainly lighter, weight being a major factor when it comes to soil and tree-root damage. By contrast, the modern 4x4 or agricultural behemoth is a completely different beast to a pre-war Austin Seven or Ferguson tractor.





TRACTOR RACING SEASON

To give farmers their due, in East Kent anyway, they do a lot of work either up-keeping byways themselves or getting the local council to do so, just prior to the tractor and trailer racing season, or harvest time as it's more generally known.

In many ways it's this sharing of a limited resource which promotes areas of conflict and the fact that, in a couple of cases you're dealing with already 'persecuted minorities', motorcyclists and pedal cyclists with entrenched us-and-them views. Again, like the byway issues, footpath users of even ten years ago wouldn't expect to be confronted by downhill mountain bikers doing 30mph. Then there's the whole electric-power question, is an electrically-assisted bicycle a Powered Two Wheeler (PTW – another legal description) and if so then what? As the Nobel literature prize-winner put it, "Times They Are a Changin' "

SAFETY IN NUMBERS?

The TRF's Marketing Director Mario Costa-Sa can provide an overview of what's happening nationwide. The membership has grown by 1500 in the last three

years. "In my own group in Hertfordshire there used to be 80 members, there are now 350. All I want to do is repeat what I've done in Herts, what they've done in Northumbria and what the High Peak Group has done in the Peak District, and reach out to trail riders in the area and say we want you to ride with us, we'll show you how to do it responsibly, legally and with skill. We will train you, we'll show you where the lanes are and we'll have loads of fun. Now why wouldn't you want to join?"

The current recruitment campaign leaflet, 'Not all roads are black' covers pretty much what Mario has said plus it highlights the fact that many roads are unsurfaced or 'unmetalled' as they're labeled in the South West and on maps often referred to as unclassified but are legally usable providing you observe any dependent regulations.

The outcome of Brexit negotiations will probably determine how useful the association with MAG will turn out to be. Either way, it does no harm politically for trail riders to be classified as motorcyclists and MAG will undoubtedly benefit from the TRF's bare-knuckle approach when

ISSUES, FIGHTS, CAUSES, ACTIONS



Number of green roads saved in 2016 and still open: 32
 Number of green roads subject of TRF intervention: 53
 32 green roads saved from restriction in 2017
 The number of TRF directors has increased from five to nine
 The TRF had a presence at the Game Fair, BBC Countryfile Live and the main motorcycle shows
 Membership is £45 per year
 Contact: www.TRF.org.uk

it comes to incorrect or misleading information created by county councils which penalises its members.

Most recently, and recognising the TRF's influence in countryside matters, it was invited to attend the enquiry into the effect of the NERC (Natural Environment and Rural Communities) Act 2006. This act was the most recent kick in the nuts for any vehicular use of the green road network when it turned many Roads Used as a Public Path (RUPPs) into Restricted Byways without vehicle access.

For the main part, green roads riders are engaging in a recreational pastime which is comparatively low-impact environmentally. But the more vehicular access is denied the more crowded the surviving green roads will become with the consequent

environmental issues. Trouble is, that unlike with the metalled road network with its urban congestion and air-quality concerns, creating a bypass round a byway is not an option. As to the secondary charge of irresponsible riding, often made by those who would like it banned altogether, this is usually down to a few bad apples. Just because a few dog owners allow their charges to eat sheep, should all dog walking on footpaths be banned? Probably not.

Whatever your view of the typical TRF member might be, by-law nerd or Swampy on a bike, it doesn't matter, all fans and enthusiasts of dirt riding should be supportive on a use it or lose it basis. Besides, all the Kent members we met were smiling. 🍷





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