



ISSUE #1



# WELCOME TO RUST MAGAZINE

BY SI MELBER, PHOTO: SELFIE

*"Rust Never Sleeps"*  
-Neil Young-

## HI THERE

WE'RE RUST. A new dirtbike Sports Media Company, and a whole new brand founded on 20 years of industry experience. RUST takes over from the highly acclaimed TrailBike & Enduro Magazine (TBM), bringing together modern multimedia content with 20 years worth of resources, case-hardened knowledge and incredible imagery.

Why RUST? Because rust is what happens when we stop riding: metal corrodes and decays, and our bodies weaken. In short we become 'rusty'. RUST is all about challenging that notion. RUST is an anti-brand.

Moreover RUST encompasses our own experiences. RUST is the 'witness mark' of a lifetime of dirt and grime. It's the proof you ride in all seasons, irrespective of the conditions. And it's the knowledge we've gathered over the years that reflects our hard-won experiences. Ultimately RUST is the piece of grit in the oyster that makes the pearl...



# RUST

RUST aims to be maverick, opinionated and hard-hitting, but it will also be honest and fair. RUST will blend wit and wisdom: in-depth stories with considered editorial, expert advice with a real-world angle. RUST is about people, places and points of view as much as the bikes, the kit and the performance.

And shortly every RUSTafarian like you and me will have a new dropping-off point. A place to go with your morning coffee, lunchtime sandwich or evening beer. Where you can sit and read about dirtbikes and simply chill.

In the meantime we want you to get a taste for what RUST is all about, so here's the first issue of our new digital magazine absolutely free. Future issues will remain free to download from our website. We hope it inspires you to get out there and ride...

**SI MELBER**

We want to hear from you. Contact [editorial@rustsports.com](mailto:editorial@rustsports.com) with your feedback.



Si Melber is the founding editor of TrailBike & Enduro Magazine, former features editor of Motorcycle International Magazine and a winner of the Rookie-of-the-year award in the 24hour Citroen 2CV endurance challenge. As a kid he built his own sidecar push-bike, but now rebuilds various dirt bikes, a '57 Chevy pick-up and his crumbling old house. His work has appeared on the Advertising Standard Authority's 'Wall of Shame'.



Rick Kemp cut his teeth as an assistant photographer (and fluffer) at Vogue Studios. Riding from the age of 15 he raced enduro on a Yam IT175, worked on Dirt Bike Rider and scooped top journo at the inaugural Weston Beach Race. The former editor of F1 News and founder member of the Groucho club, he now lives with two dogs, an old Mercedes wagon and several motorcycles old and new. He is currently tuning up his Stannah stairlift.



Andy Riley is a cantankerous, hairy old biker, who has been designing magazines since '81 (that's 1881). He has worked on Custom Car, Hot Rod & Custom, Auto Performance, Automotive & Commercial Refinisher, Auto Trade, Heavy Duty, Back Street Heroes, Which Bike, Breaker, HOG, MotorCycle International and TBM. And in that time he has learnt virtually nothing. He still owns a Harley, though like him it hasn't run in years.



Jon Bentman is the founding editor of Moto X magazine, and former editor of Enduro Extreme, Motorcycle Sport & Leisure and Kiwi Rider. He is a two-time winner of the New Zealand Dusk-till-Dawn Dog Sled Race and once edited Good Woodworking Magazine. Nevertheless he admits he doesn't actually own a saw and all the shelves in his house in Kent are crooked.



David Knight is a three-time World Enduro champion (E3), twice American GNCC champion, 19 times British champion, double Erzberg Enduro winner, multi-time ISDE gold-medal winner and victor of countless other outdoor and indoor extreme enduros. He lives on the Isle of Man with his two dogs Daisy and Rosco. And loves to compete on old trials bikes with his brother. Occasionally he likes to vigourously polish his MBE medal.



Warren Malschinger (aka Gunslinger) is a South African born Australian, pescatarian, gym-going, reggae-loving dirt bike nut. He hides in plain view disguised as an owner of a private equity firm (and what was previously TBM) but secretly his true identity is an anarchistic motorcycle enthusiast. He lives in Guernsey in the Channel Islands with his wife, son and cat, Purlock Holmes. His favourite words are; travel, ride, anywhere...



Georgia Wells (aka PitGirl) describes herself as addicted to Enduro, crazy about animals, mad for music, daft for dancing, obsessed with MotoGP and generally awash with Red Bull. We know her as the most erudite enduro journalist we've ever met. This social media geek lives in Wiltshire with two Burmese cats and says her favourite perfume is the scent of two-stroke oil.



Chris Evans is a gastronomic refugee living in Paris. Born in England to a New Zealand mother, a Welsh father and now based in France he always manages to claim the winning side of any rugby match. His passions include exploring parts of France no-one's ever heard of, with his dog Kenneth. He has a licence to fly drones, but the allegation he used one to spy on his attractive neighbour whilst she was undressing was never proven.



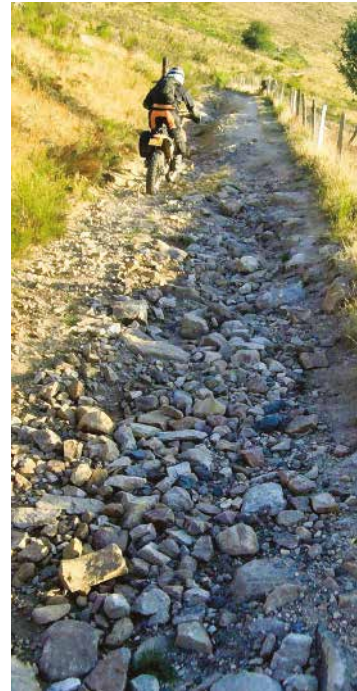
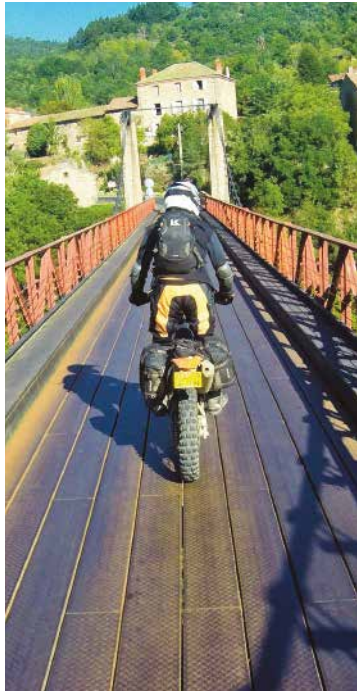
Gary Freeman - Gazza - is a full-time bike photographer with over two decades spent in the fields of MXGP and new model launches. In that time he's worked with the best, be it Stefan Everts or Ryan Villipoto; and the worst - that's probably RUST's Si and JB. If he has a claim to fame it's that Ricky Carmichael once mistook him for a Team GB MXdN rider - which probably says as much about how RC viewed our team as it does about Gazza.





# FRENCH LESSONS

BY CHRIS EVANS,  
PHOTOS BY CHRIS EVANS  
DOG: KENNETH



THEY SAY DRESSING in a 'casual chic' style takes an inordinate amount of time whereas putting on a suit and tie is a much quicker option. I wouldn't know - I do neither. Writing this column however is a similar proposition. You might think that its charismatic chaotic construction and rambling stream of consciousness takes merely minutes to concoct. Tragically the desired effect can take days, even weeks to achieve. Which is why, saddened though I was by the demise of TBM and the resulting hiatus in my writing schedule, it did at least give me the necessary time to embark on a project that I have dreamed of since first setting a knobbly tyre on French soil 27 years ago... A north to south diagonal crossing of the country, off-road.

An homage to the rural France I have grown to love.

In actual fact this project began back in 1995 when I launched off-road travel company Sport Adventure. I'd planned just such a trip back then but after a week of reconnoitring tracks south from Le Havre I realised the true enormity of the task involved and ended up creating a Normandie trip instead. But as Neil Young sang, '*Rust Never Sleeps*' (had to get that in somewhere). And so more than two decades later, in August this year I was back in Le Havre, again on a 350, though this time an EXC not a DR, for the run through of the 'Trans-France' route. Destination St Tropez...

In the intervening 20yrs I'd learnt a few things about making routes and running off-road trips, the most important of which is that preparation is everything. Before you even start the months of riding around, you need to have a very clear idea of what you're going to do and how you're going to do it. The French call it a 'cahier de charge', a sort of flow chart where the basic principle of what you are trying to achieve leads you to make the right choices from the outset. My cahier de charge went something like this: The trip must take no longer than seven days to complete, as nobody has either the time or energy to ride any further. The route



## Chris Evans

should be no more than 2000km and no more than 50% off-road. And as motorways and A-roads are agony on a dirt bike the rest of the route would have to be made up of those empty little tarmac byways France has in abundance. It had to be do-able and enjoyable for a rider on anything from a 125 to a 1200. The solution: a bale-out option for virtually every off-road section on the route. I wasn't intending to put in anything too extreme, but I nevertheless wanted to give all my enduro riding regulars something to get their teeth into. To navigate I'd have to ditch my beloved road book system and issue everybody with a preloaded GPS. This was the most difficult decision to take but the alternative was handing out four rolls of road book per rider per day.

Once I was happy with my flowchart I needed to actually write the route, but before I started the days of riding around linking tracks and B-roads together, I decided to get out my address book, containing all the off-road friends and acquaintances I'd made since arriving on the other side of the channel and enlist their help. Happily for me they covered virtually the whole length of the route from Le Havre to St Tropez and I owe them all a huge debt of thanks. Without them I'd never have completed my mission.

But complete it I did which is how I found myself rolling out of Le Havre on a blustery, late summer's day in the company of Sport Adventure's only socialist customer, Ian Golton, who'd bravely agreed to accompany me on the inaugural run through.

The first day I already knew well and if you have ever ridden our original Normandie route that started from Le Havre you'd recognise bits of it as well. As I'm only planning to run the route in the summer months I wasn't bothered about avoiding the boggy bits and it was a pleasure to be back there and say hello to bar owners that I hadn't seen in over 15 years.

The second day was the one I'd been most

Some say the digital revolution will repopulate the French countryside, but they'll have to work on their 4G network first...

concerned about, and waking up in the morning to pouring rain did nothing to dampen my disquiet. Those of you who know France well will know that south of Normandie you get into a long flat plain all the way to the Loire Valley. And while there are plenty of tracks criss-crossing the area, the countryside they run through isn't particularly interesting. To respect my seven day limit I'd decided therefore to cross this region as quickly as possible, cut the off-road ratio down to about 25% and get 340km under my belt lickety-split. The Dakar organisers would have called it a liaison day - but as we squelched into a café cold and wet, my riding companion Ian was calling it other things, unprintable in a family journal. But then magically, as we crossed the Loire, the weather brightened up, as I had promised, and everything came right.

From then on as we headed across the Limousin, the Rhone Valley, Chantal, the Ardeche, towards the Var, the temperatures rose along with the altitude of the terrain. The off-road ratio increased, the tracks got stonier and the scenery became progressively more arid. But if the scenery changed, what remained the same, from start to finish was the impression of a countryside abandoned by its former inhabitants.

The 1957 French population census showed that - at the time - more than 50% of them earned their living directly from the land. This was barely more than a decade after the Second World War had ended and essentially France was a population of low-paid peasant-farmers. However the last census a couple of years ago, revealed that in modern-day France 75% of

people now live in an urban environment. In the intervening years there has been a mass exodus from the countryside that has left farms abandoned, villages deserted and roads and tracks empty. Only the very old remain, waving at us from their porches as we rode by. All this interspersed with inexplicably tarted-up enclaves where the richer northern Europeans had decided (on a seemingly random basis), to make their second home. It makes undertaking such a trip infinitely easier, but I couldn't help wondering what will happen when the current inhabitants of rural France die off. Some say that the digital revolution will repopulate the French countryside, but they'll have to work on their 4G network first...

And then 60km out from St Tropez the world turned on its head. Renault 4s and Citroen Xantias were suddenly replaced by Rollers and Ferraris; old ladies in pinafores by Russian supermodels wearing very little at all, and we actually got stuck in a traffic jam of wall-to-wall Bentleys driven by richly coiffured playboys wearing chinos and light blue shirts. St Tropez itself was an almost unbearable culture shock and our peaceful hymn to rural France transformed into an ear splitting rap to excess.

Tired and somewhat surprised to have reached our goal, Ian and I treated ourselves to a celebratory pizza on the waterfront and watched the Lambos ooze past as we tried to hold onto the memories of the endless woods, fields and tracks, mountains and plains, roads and tiny villages that now seemed to exist in some parallel universe but which our passion for off-road riding had given us privileged access to.

The next morning we wearily climbed aboard a TGV back to Le Havre and did the whole trip backwards in hyperdrive. A strange experience. If you feel a yearning to see the true face of rural France - a visage that has changed little in centuries - then there is no better way of doing it than from the seat of a dirt bike...





# The King is Dead...

Words: Jon Bentman Pics: Jon Bentman & Iain McGee

## WHAT'S THE STORY?

### It's a shootout!

End of 2014 - after an eight year wait - Yamaha has at last updated the WR250F. And how! It has the same radical reverse cylinder head, backward slanting motor and curly-wurly exhaust as their fantastic YZ250F motocrosser. It has the same under-seat fuel tank too. It's all about mass centralisation. Yamaha says it has the same engine spec and the ultimate performance is decided by the electronics. So if you want 40hp you've got it...

### When?

The WR has only recently arrived in the UK, so we immediately set up a comparison test against the class leader, the KTM 250EXC-F. Forget the specs, the battle will be won and lost on the dirt.

2015 KTM 250EXC-F £7199

2015 YAMAHA WR250F £7249



2015 YAMAHA WR250F v 2015 KTM 250EXC-F





## Where?

We're at the Yamaha Off-Road Experience in Powys, Wales. Home ground for the blue team, but when it comes to mud, roots, ruts and rocks there's never a home advantage.

## Who?

The test team are: Jon Bentman, long standing test rider and features writer for RUST, he's been testing enduro bikes non-stop since 2003; Dylan Jones, ahh yes a Yamaha man, but we all know the Jones boys can't lie, even if it hurts, 'DJ' is a former championship level racer and ISDE gold medalist; Iain McGee is a proper trail rider, a road rider turned dirt bunny and fan of two-strokes who rides an old but nicely-kept 250EXC.

## Why?

Because the new Yamaha is the most dynamic new enduro model to come to the market in years and we need to know if it changes everything. Or not...

IT'S LIKE, 'BAM! In your face, dude'. Proper punch in the nose delivery... that's how the new Yamaha WR250F hits you. A little 'two-fiddy' four-stroke shouldn't make your eyes water like that. But this is 2015, the world is changing. Heck, some people are driving mid-range cars with nothing more than a 900cc three-cylinder engine under the bonnet; across the board - cars, bikes, trucks, outboards - there's a new age of engine-tech going on - smaller, more powerful and much more efficient - and this new WR is very much part of that ethos. So as it goes, yes the WR is proving that a 250F enduro really can have mind-warping, hair-stripping performance. Which is great news. Unless you're KTM that is.

The  
King  
is  
Dead...



So let's set the scene... Here we are, at the Yamaha Off-Road Experience (YORE) in Wales, run by ten-time British enduro champ Geraint Jones. We're here to see if the promise that the new WR250F showed at the world launch back in Sardinia (last December) really does parlay into the real world of UK enduro. The first 2015 WRs in the UK had arrived here on the Friday before our test and we gave Dylan Jones and John Begley (the day-to-day driving force of YORE) just three working





days to get one out of a crate, built-up, run-in and de-bugged (emission laws can stifle the life out of a competition bike). In fact there was good news on set-up: whereas in the US they need a whole new ECU to replace the super-restrictive one fitted to meet Californian laws, here in Europe we get the full-power race ECU as standard. So no faffs, no added expense. The bike's even fitted with Metzeler Six-Days FIM-spec knobbles so there's no need to change the rubber either, just set the pressures (mousses can wait for serious competition days) and go. As PDI/prep goes it was actually quite straightforward.

### **And in the Orange Corner...**

Course RUST haven't arrived at the Jones' empty-handed, we've brought along a 2015 KTM 250EXC-F with us, care of KTM UK. This bike is the reigning class champion: it won the 2014 E1 world championship (care of Christoph Nambotin) - oh, and the 2013 and 2012 titles as well - so it's pretty much considered the best 250F on the market.

No quibbles. It's worth remembering exactly what this bike is about. This model started out in the 2014 model year (which means it was first sold mid-2013) and was considered all-new at that time since it featured a brand new motor shared with the 2013 250SX-F (and 350F). This was a bigger-bore shorter-stroke motor than the pred-





ecessor, which very much changed the bikes' character. On its launch the MX version was described as a 'screamer' given the heady 14,000rpm rev-limit. And the bigger valves allowed by the bigger bore meant it could really breathe deep and long, making for a bike that was measurably more powerful than any other 250F in the paddock (the SX-F has also won three world championships, back-to-back). KTM enduroised the SX-F motor into EXC-F spec by way of a heavier crank, a counter balancer, a six-speed gearbox and a lot more, and where the previous 250F felt rapid, this one felt rapid and torquey. Just what you want in a small-bore enduro thumper.

Suffice to say it was a weapon, Antoine Meo (factory racer) loved it and simply coasted to two world championships before Nambo' made it three. In 2013 we got to compare the then new 250EXC-F factory racer in a back-to-back test with Juha Salminen's works Husqvarna TE250R (back when Husky was still Italian) and the KTM was easily more torquey and plain faster - better, in every dimension then.

So Yamaha's opposition in this segment is no lame duck. The KTM is serious kit that's got a serious amount of fight in it. Forget handbags at dawn, this is going to be one full-on, bloodied-knuckle conflict.



It's a familiar layout to the KTM cockpit: simple, functional, neat. Rear Brembo lacks the plastic protector found on the Yamaha but is not particularly vulnerable and works well. KTM claims the torque war...



Yamaha cockpit super neat and functional too - front brake hose doesn't obscure the view as much as you might think. Yam's Nissin brakes are magnificent. But it's the yam's engine that impresses most...





### A Matter of Scales

With dirt bikes, weight really is an inescapable truth - and it's the enemy of dynamism, ask any DR-Z400 owner. Now, in our launch test we reported with some concern that Yamaha's claimed (wet) weight of 118kg for the WR250F was heavier than the class-leading KTM. We said at the time that it didn't feel at all that heavy and we thought that Yamaha were being pessimistic.

Well, by good fortune we had the Jones's unbelievably accurate sheep-weighing scales at our disposal so we took the time to find the truth. Both bikes were immaculately clean with brimmed fuel tanks so that we'd get a truly comparable measure.

First on the scales, the KTM: 114.5kg brimmed. That compares to their stated weight of 105.5kg (dry). Next up, the Yamaha: 116kg fuelled. That's actually two kilos lighter than their claimed (wet) weight. We looked at Dylan, who looked at John, who pointed to a box of bits at the back of the YORE garage. The Yamaha comes with a fair bunch of road bits to meet homologation requirements, but of no real use to an enduro or trail rider, so the guys had stripped this stuff off. We didn't argue, and besides the KTM was as stripped as the Yamaha, with no indicators, no horn etc. The bottom line however is that the Yamaha







is slightly heavier - and it carries 1.5-litres less fuel too. All that said, if you were to fit the Akrapovic muffler and remove the weighty electric fan from the radiator (it never triggered once in two days riding) you'd probably come right down to the KTM's weight. So the KTM is the winner of the weightwatcher's competition, but it's damn close.

### Tippy Toes

We didn't hang about. Next job: get on the bikes and head into the woods. Straight away there's a marked difference - Yamaha to KTM - with the WR being so tall. The stats sheet suggest the KTM is only marginally taller (970mm to the WR's 965mm) but that wasn't what we found, the WR seeming to stand a good two-inches taller (we love the old measures) in the saddle. That was okay for this tester, but for Dylan (a more compact specimen) there was definitely some tip-toeing going on. It was noticeable too that the handlebars were a fair bit higher than the KTM's, which by comparison felt very flat, very low and even a bit wide. I was definitely more comfortable on the WR, without it feeling at all 'trailie'.

A quick word here, and a 'sorry' to KTM for this, but the 250EXC-F didn't start on the e-start when cold. There just wasn't the juice in the battery to light it up, despite the bike



coming direct from KTM UK's workshops. KTM UK said this is normal, first start you're better off using the kickstart, after that the e-start works just fine. And they were right about that.

Both days, first start we had to kick, then for the rest of the day, probably given a bit of charge feeding into the battery, it would start promptly on the button. That could be a result of KTM's weight-saving policy. You could spec a bigger battery and have e-start right from the word go, but then carry a weight penalty of 250-500 grammes for the rest of the day. As it is the kickstart works well enough, maybe not first kick, or even second, but mostly before the sixth - it was not a sweat. But, by comparison, the Yamaha, just days old, sprung into life first twitch of its button, hot or cold. That's very Japanese, that is. The Yamaha possesses a kick-starter but it was never called into action.

### **On the Trail**

We expected some difference in feel and performance between these two, but frankly not as much as we found. Somewhat reassuringly, the Yamaha was exactly the machine it had been at the launch. 'Lithe and athletic' is how I'd described it back then, and that is exactly how it felt in Wales. The

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motor revs-up instantly and the bike simply bounds its way up the trail, springing keenly off the bumps, and spinning its rear tyre at every opportunity. If you doze for even a minute on the KTM then the Yamaha disappears out of sight.

By comparison the KTM felt almost slow revving (despite being described as a screamer just two years ago...). And it's not just the engine where the KTM feels older either. When it came to the handling, the Yamaha felt light years ahead.

Just to be clear the KTM was doing nothing wrong; it was steering sweetly, and carving tight lines through the corners. But somehow the Yamaha always felt sharper, more focussed, better defined. And not just by a small amount either.

It has to be said, it all comes at you thick and fast on the Yamaha. The motor is not immediately torquey. It doesn't seem to care for such niceties, it simply revs quickly and lightly through the bottom third of the rev range, keen-as-you-like to reach its mid-to-top, whereupon it lights up like a MotoGP racer, just howling as it races up the rev scale, creating fantastic pace.

The wide-ratio six-speed box feels close-ratio, because as you shift up, there's no discernible gaps between gears, the motor just keeps singing and the front end stays

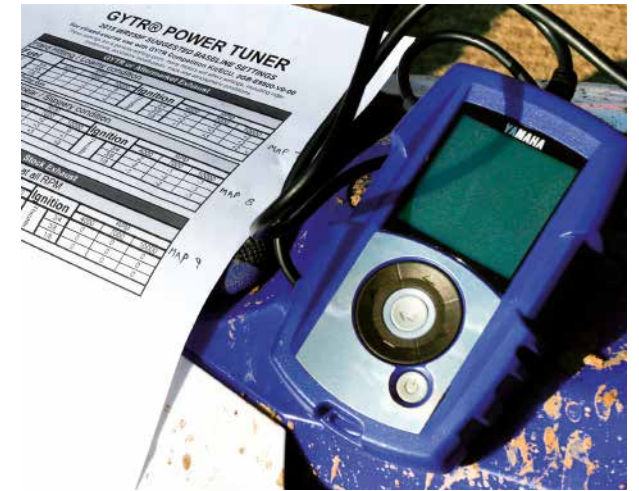






Right: Using the optional Yam Power Commander it takes only 30sec to change the WRF's power characteristics.  
Main Pic: Yam rides taller in the ruts but it takes a good rider to exploit the advantage!

The King is Dead



light, floating in mid-air whilst the Kayaba shock dutifully tracks the bumps and whoops. It is amazingly fast for a 250F. Stupidly so? No, but hey, you do question if you really need more.

The KTM meanwhile feels a whole generation older. It picks up nice and smoothly off the bottom, and over that first third it's noticeably punchier than the WR - it's got good grunt for a 250F. But then mid-to-top, there's just this vast plateau, not of torque or power, just revs.

The revs come up but the front end falls down. The torque seems to be ebbing away and so the front drops into the hollows and gets loaded up as the bike tracks the upslope of the next whoop. And that feels like it's creating a whole load of drag, it even makes the handling feel a bit imprecise. And



when the Yam - running arrow straight - has screamed off down the next section of track, the KTM is still puffing along, wallowing ever so slightly as it feels the strain of tracking every peak and hollow. With more effort, and with a fanned clutch, you can really get the KTM to scream, but the effect isn't the same - the WR smokes it every time.

### Lunge & Parry

There was for a good while a sense that the WR was going to simply run away with this test. Arriving at a fast triangular special test laid out across a hilltop it zipped round feeling way quicker than the KTM. On the brakes it once again felt precision-cut - you could pin the front on the anchors (the Nissins were more than a match for the KTM's Brembos) and the forks never felt troubled. It would then spring its way through a section of small bumps, jumps and rocks, before skipping its springy way down a downhill cut. Almost effortless.

The KTM on the same terrain was simply unable to match it. On the fast straight it felt like it lost an easy half-second (just on one straight!), and when it came to the 90° turn at the end it felt slow to turn-in (surely not?). However, over the bumps and rocks, it was reassuringly secure running low and tracking resolutely straight, able to make good







drive. Even then there was a sense it was gamely trying to keep up, choking in the dust cloud left by the WR. Then through a rocky section of chicanes leading into the downhill cut, while feeling secure the steering simply didn't feel fast enough, akin to the sensation of water dragging on a rudder when changing course on a sailboat - the opposite of 'rapier' sharp. It didn't help that when swapping between the KTM and the Yamaha, the EXC-F's low-set handlebars felt lower than ever (oh, my aching back).

Fortunately in the woods - and these being typically Welsh, they came with pronounced roots, off-cambers, mud and deep ruts - the KTM's enduro pedigree began to shine. Here's where the WR's bounding gait is of less advantage. It remains light on its feet, but sometimes it jumps around a little too much for its own good and so you spend a little energy reining it in, forcing it to be more deliberate, less carefree, so as not to bounce unwittingly into a tree. As well, you're measuring the power as you exit those tight turns, it's not pulling quite so firmly from the bottom, and if you accidentally reach too far into that boisterous mid-range then things might get a little too exciting for your own good. It's not putting a foot wrong, but you're checking its progress, for safety's sake.

The KTM meanwhile is a safe pair of hands in this terrain. It knows this stuff from



years in the game. It tracks a rut more naturally and it uses that grunty bottom end to punch itself free from one rut to another. It rides lower in its suspension too, and that makes it feel less tippy and reassuringly ground-hugging when you're leaning it through the deeply cut-out turns. It pulls strongly from zero, finding good grip as it pulls its way over the banks and cambers. The WR will also find grip, but you have to force it to slow down to engage its tractor-like low gear plod - and any time you allow it to rev up you're encouraging unwanted wheelspin. So you're inclined to lug-n-bog the motor on the WR slightly just to keep everything inline. And that gives the KTM - for once - an advantage.

### Fightback

On our second day of testing, picking more woods riding over the open test-type terrain of the previous day, the KTM continued to work hard to claw back the lost ground. In a leafy, loamy wood with not so much in the way of roots and ruts, it was close.

The KTM again relied on its grunt and its predictable cornering manners to pick up time. We set up a loop with two uphill switchback corners, one with positive camber, one without. In both corners the KTM was able to pull strongly, finding good



grip and not taxing the rider. Meanwhile, in both those corners the lively Yamaha was by comparison a more hectic ride. To make the WR stick in the shallow ruts you needed to ride quicker and more decisively, looking to compress the forks a little more so as to find the grip. And then you had the task of fighting the wheelspin on the way out; it being an uncertain matter as to whether you should rev it harder and spin your way ahead or try to force the motor to bog and find grip.

Once out of the corners, upshifting into third gear, and with momentum overcoming the wheelspin, the Yamaha's youthfulness shone through and it sprinted away where the KTM lacked that killer mid-range kick.

And that light touch was handy through some of the technical climbing where you could jump the WR over hollows that the KTM was inclined to drop into. The WR did risk getting wrong-footed, but if it ever went wrong it could play its emergency-issue slow-slog card and still scale the hill.

### He Aint Heavy...

While we'd been weighing the bikes I'd caught myself doing a quick check on the old 'personal baggage allowance'. Turns out this rider, completely togged, knocks over a fair 97kg, which is a lot. Of course Knighter probably weighs more, but most racers must be in the 80+ kilo range. What's interesting



about that figure is that it puts me in a weight range where KTM typically advise stepping up on spring rate in the forks and shock so as to keep the suspension working in the correct part of its stroke.

It was noticeable however that on the Yamaha there was no sense of needing to change the spring rates in the fork or the shock. The suspension seemed to ride mostly in the first half of its stroke, staying high and keeping the pegs clear of trouble.

The altogether lighter Dylan certainly wasn't taxing the suspension like I was and considered adjusting the forks - by reducing the compression damping and adjusting the spring rates - so as to allow them to compress more. Our consensus being that this would lead to a more secure feeling in the ruts and corners.

On the KTM, with my heft, it felt that the bike was riding much more in its mid-stroke and while this meant it didn't feel as nimble in the fast stuff, it certainly helped in tricky woods riding. On balance I could probably have benefitted from slightly firmer springs in the KTM.

### Slowing it Down

The evaluation so far had been led by the Yamaha. We'd spent two days on the trails chasing whoever was riding the WR as it

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is  
Dead...



sprung its way gazelle-like here and there. The opinion is that Yamaha have the race side of the equation very much sorted. For expert-level racers there'll probably be some fine-tuning to be done with the suspension, but this is top-spec Kayaba kit - and chances are they'll arrive quite readily at a high-quality optimal setting. There could also be a little sorting with the Power Tuner, which will allow a fine degree of optimisation in engine response to suit the rider and the terrain. The WR is going to be a truly formidable enduro weapon and in E1 it's bound to make some waves. Even though it didn't win the world championship this year



- Farioli KTM are a tough team to beat - it still stands to be hailed as king of the E1s.

However, here at RUST we're not all racers, in fact globally probably only a few of us really are. And when it comes to trail riding we have to ask do we need a bunch of blue racers bounding excitedly down the green lanes? The new WR is - as you can tell - a very different animal to the old WR.

By nature it struggles to do 'slow', something which the old WR very amiably accommodated. It's going to do green lanes very easily, but maybe too easily and along the way it might just tease its rider into a few tricks, or maybe a little extra squirt of speed here and there. Not always a good thing in the public domain of the byway. Against this the KTM has a steadying personality, it's seriously adept, but it doesn't need to be showy with it. The KTM can deliver satisfaction by dispensing with technical terrain in a quiet, efficient manner. It's a little less hooligan and a little more conservative. Who'da' thought it...

Dylan, John (and Geraint) at YORE are reading this situation as well, their feedback is that the new WR is going to be a great racer but will need a little adapting to trail and school duties. While we were testing, Dylan was inputting various engine maps into the WR via the Power Tuner (a process



that takes just 30-seconds) and we did find a suitably low-power map that finally took the keen-rev out of the WR. It actually gave the WR a very similar character to the KTM, with the same sense of rich-jet low-end 'Bwoooarr' (pull) but it couldn't quite replicate the same sense of flywheel weight that gives the KTM the full stamp (or stomp) of authority. Yep, for the trail you might want to tame your new WR. For now, though, if asked which makes the better trail machine we'd say the KTM.

### In Conclusion

Yamaha have come back with one hell of a spectacular bang. This new WR is revolutionary the way the first (2001) WR250F was. It's a proper game changer. The fact it can - in certain situations - make the KTM 250EXC-F (the reigning world champ) feel almost geriatric really says something. It's extraordinary too, that Yamaha can come straight back in to enduro and do this. KTM are up to their spuds in enduro, month-in month-out. Yamaha meanwhile dips in only when the whim takes them. They did so in 2001 with amazing results, less so in 2007 (with the alloy-framed WR250F) - and we were truly left wondering just what they were thinking with the 2014 WR450F. But now they've come back with this new WR250F and shocked us with their brilliance.

Rest assured, KTM are far from finished





though. This season (the 2016 model year) they have an all-new range of motocrossers coming and we can tell by the buzz from their staff that these are going to be amazing machines. Not that they need them... KTM are already dominant in motocross. Point being what's new in one year for the SX/SX-F range typically flows a year later into the EXC/EXC-Fs. And this will happen, KTM have already confirmed new enduro bikes for 2017. So while Yamaha might have won this battle - and quite convincingly - the war is far from over.

But we can't end like that, it's never fair in love and war, there can only be the one winner, and we should call it. That winner is the new Yamaha WR250F: fast, agile and amazing, it's put Yamaha right back on top of the pile and rocked KTM back onto their heels. If you're a fan of the blue bikes, a fan of enduro, or just a fan of great dirt bikes you owe it to yourself to try one...

**THANKS TO:** KTM UK (Ross Walker arranging and Gareth Edmunds in the workshop) for supplying, prepping and then waiting patiently with the 250EXC-F while the Yamaha fought its way through EU homologation. Thanks to Yamaha UK (Karl Radley) for allowing RUST to be first in the saddle of the WR250F in the UK. Thanks to

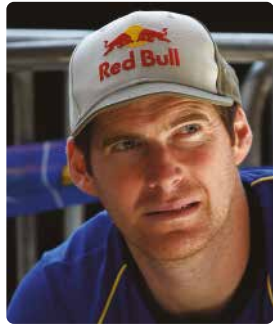


Dylan 'DJ' Jones and John Begley at Yamaha Off-Road Experience for getting the WR sorted in such a short time and then hosting us for two days. You too can ride the new WR250F at YORE, anytime this year, check them out at [www.yamaha-offroad-experience.co.uk](http://www.yamaha-offroad-experience.co.uk) or call them on **01686 413324**. Tell them we sent you!

SPECIFICATIONS	
<b>KTM 250EXC-F</b> <b>Price:</b> £7199 <b>Engine:</b> liquid-cooled DOHC single cylinder four-stroke <b>Displacement:</b> 249.91cc <b>Bore &amp; stroke:</b> 78x52.3mm <b>Carburetion:</b> Fuel injected <b>Gearbox:</b> Six speed, hydraulically actuated DDS clutch <b>Starting:</b> electric and kick <b>Frame:</b> Chro-mo central tube frame, alloy sub frame <b>Front susp:</b> WP USD 4860 MXMA PA forks, 300mm travel <b>Rear susp:</b> WP PDS 5018DCC shock, 335mm travel <b>Front brake:</b> 260mm disc, twin piston Brembo caliper <b>Wheelbase:</b> 1482 +/-10mm <b>Seat height:</b> 970mm <b>Ground clearance:</b> 345mm <b>Fuel capacity:</b> 9 litres <b>Weight (claimed):</b> 105.5kg without fuel <b>Weight (tested):</b> 114.5kg fully fuelled <b>Contact:</b> 01280 709500 <b><a href="http://www.ktm.com">www.ktm.com</a></b>	<b>Yamaha WR250F</b> <b>Price:</b> £7249 <b>Engine:</b> liquid-cooled DOHC single cylinder four-stroke <b>Displacement:</b> 250cc <b>Bore &amp; stroke:</b> 77x53.6mm <b>Carburetion:</b> Fuel injected <b>Gearbox:</b> Six speed, cable actuated wet multiplate clutch <b>Starting:</b> Electric and kick <b>Frame:</b> Aluminium double cradle <b>Front susp:</b> Kayaba 48mm USD forks, 310mm travel <b>Rear susp:</b> Kayaba shock with linkage, 318mm travel <b>Front brake:</b> 250mm disc, twin piston Nissin caliper <b>Wheelbase:</b> 1485mm <b>Seat height:</b> 965mm <b>Ground clearance:</b> 325mm <b>Fuel capacity:</b> 7.5 litres <b>Weight (claimed):</b> 118kg fully fuelled <b>Weight (tested):</b> 116kg fully fuelled (minus road kit) <b>Contact:</b> 01932 358000 <b><a href="http://www.yamaha-motor.eu/uk">www.yamaha-motor.eu/uk</a></b>







# TRIPLE WORLD CHAMP

DAVID KNIGHT WRITES FOR RUST...

WELCOME TO MY new column in RUST magazine. I've missed having a column since TBM's demise, so it will be nice to let everyone know what's happening in Knighter's world at the minute.

So since the start of the year, the Indoor Championship started well until I was struggling with energy and tiredness. After many tests and a lot of money spent I was diagnosed with CMV virus and EBS. These are chronic fatigue viruses that have been absolutely horrible, and apart from rest, rest and more rest, nothing can be done to get rid of them. No drugs or anything, just simple things like get plenty of rest, eat a good diet and hopefully it'll go. Which mine has now - but post viral fatigue syndrome can last for up to a year whilst the body repairs itself. It's hard to begin to understand how difficult and tired you can get unless you have been through it but thankfully I'm over the worst so can plod on steadily until I'm back to feeling 100%, hopefully by the beginning of 2016.

Obviously my year started well over the winter - winning the British Extreme Championship - and I had a good beginning to the indoors, then went downhill rapidly with the virus. But I have become stronger and stronger throughout the year, winning the British Cross Country Championship and still in with a shout of the British Enduro title after missing rounds 1&2. Also the ISDE went well too: I was slowly improving and had a cracking final couple of days.

One of the questions I'm often asked about is how have the bikes and courses changed over the years I've been racing? Well my take on the bikes from let's say 2005 (10 years ago) to now is that they have changed - but have they improved at all? During the past 10 years we have seen a more MX orientated enduro bike: fuel injection arrived, stiffer chassis, suspension has got firmer, air forks have arrived. Things that haven't changed much are the brakes are nearly identical, the clutch system is identical, tyres and mousse are pretty much an identical model and compound so on that front nothing has changed.

Fuel injection is the biggest change and in my opinion it's a backward step. Don't get me wrong, it definitely has its advantages - like being able to easily change the mapping and fuelling - but you cannot beat the feeling that a carburettor gives you. Maybe coming from a trials background where a carb has much more feel and connectivity with the rear wheel makes the on/off type feel of fuel injection more difficult for me to use. It has got better in the past few years and will eventually surpass the feeling a carb gives you, but this is one area I struggle with on the latest bikes.

Chassis stiffness is another thing that has changed a lot. On the older bikes you had loads more feel on stones, roots and slippery surfaces whereas the new bikes feel a lot more nervous on this type of going. This is a change that has definitely got to do with the special tests becoming more motocross orientated over the past 10 years. A modern chassis will cope



much better in motocross conditions but offers a little less feel on an old school enduro special test.

Times are changing and bikes have to evolve to cope with the changes. I for one love evolution but I also love mechanical simplicity, which is disappearing from modern enduro bikes. I love testing and playing with stuff; I always believe you can make something better and this has always made me a bit of a thorn in the side of factory teams as they think I'm never happy with a bike. But in reality I'm looking for minor improvements to gain time on the competition. Which to my mind should be the normal mentality if you want to win.

My 2005/2006 EWC bikes and 2007 GNCC bike were pretty much identical - only the capacity was different (one was a 525, the other a 450). They were, and still are - I believe - as near to perfection as you can get. I still give them a run-out now and again and they are shockingly good still - from suspension to engine. So yes, modern bikes have changed a lot but as far as I'm concerned they haven't necessarily improved, they have just changed along the lines that enduro has changed...

I'm always looking for minor improvements to gain time on the competition...

AT THE ISDE this year, people were asking me why the Australians and Americans were so fast compared to the top European riders? I know how fast they both can be, having raced against the Aussies in the Australian 4 Day, and the Americans in the GNCC series.

And here's the thing... in Europe races have become way too easy of late. Being able to walk the tests for five days or so beforehand allows you to remember every corner, bump and root, whilst having fewer riders competing (normally 80 or so in an EWC race), means that the terrain never gets badly cut-up. This - to a

large extent - removes the need to learn to read the terrain on the hoof. This is different to how it is in a GNCC or National Enduro in the USA for example.

At this year's event, near the end of the week I started to ride the special tests looking ahead more and riding on instinct - reading the ground and not even trying to think about what was coming next, something I used to be exceptionally good at, but haven't had to do since probably GNCC in 2008.

At the 6 Days there are 500 or more riders so tests get very rough and change a lot, something that doesn't really happen at EWC or British enduros anymore. There were some long tests and I found that when I rode them choosing lines on instinct I was certainly fast and it came easily.

I really enjoyed the ISDE this year and had loads of fun figuring things out again. World Enduro has made the riders soft and the Europeans are losing out. Meantime the Yanks and Aussies don't have to know each and every bump and root that's coming their way and can just twist it regardless. And they are now beginning to reap the rewards for it... **KNIGHTER**



Adventure

# TRAVELLING Light

In search of the ultimate travel bike...

Words & images: Jon Bentman

## WK400 TRAIL







FOR YEARS SERIOUS adventure riders have bemoaned the paucity of choice for those seeking a robust light-middleweight adventure machine. So far both Japan and European Enterprises have turned a deaf ear. Now the Chinese are answering the call. But with Chinese bikes having a historically poor reputation for quality, can we really take the WK 400 Trail seriously?

I think I can define my state of mind as I prepared to test the WK 400 Trail as.... High hopes and low expectations. It's a different mindset to that of testing a new KTM or Honda. There's no sense of fait accompli. Instead everything is to play for, anything can happen. The Chinese are learning fast, and with each year the quality improves, the shortfalls diminish and they get closer to parity with the establishment. But by the same token each year we have to ask, are they there yet?

The latest offering from China is a mid-size, mid-capacity, mid-everything adventure bike has been the dream of many a serious overland traveller for years. And a light-middleweight adventure bike is what we're really saying, for there are already plenty of options in the 650cc capacity; bikes like Yamaha's Ténéré and BMW's Sertão. And some markets also see the likes of Honda's XR650L, Kawasaki's KLR650 or Suzuki's DR650. But even those can be a bit too big for some; too tall, too heavy, maybe too expensive as well?



And that brings us to this light-mid-dleweight segment. Bikes that follow the trail blazed by machinery like the Suzuki DR350, XR400 and then the DR-Z400. That's where the WK 400 Trail comes in. It's a new bike, fresh to the market and - importantly - where the DR/XR/DRZ offerings were essentially trail bikes that owners had to adapt in order to undertake long-distance work, the 400 Trail is built to be a long distance machine right from the get-go (*and ultimately mis-named*). It's a big-tank bike, complete with a screen, comfy seat, even one of those cheeky little rails that run above the speedo to take a GPS. Hey it even has proper aluminium panniers as an optional extra.

It is, correct us if we're wrong, the first factory-standard adventure machine in this capacity class.

## Nice Job

So we can't help but praise the WK 400 Trail right from the outset. It's as if the manufacturer read Chris Scott's website ([www.adventure-motorcyclingh.com](http://www.adventure-motorcyclingh.com) - *the h is correct*) and have taken his every observation to heart. The spec is impressive: a simple SOHC air-cooled motor, big 18-litre tank, mid-to-long travel suspension, 21/18in wheels, a screen and sump-guard. The Chinese have done an amazing job. Simple





where needed, yet sophisticated in the details.

For instance, we like the instrument set: a digital speedo and analogue tacho, then a clock, a fuel gauge, battery health indicator, odometer and trip meter. It's neat and smart looking. If slightly generic - or perhaps optimistic is a better description - there's no redline on the tacho which reads up to 11,000rpm while the bike starts busting a lung at 7000rpm. We also like the use of modern (*low current*) LEDs for the tail light and indicators - right on the money with those. The controls are getting better with each passing year, too. There's a folding gear lever, and well designed switchgear - hell, even the kill switch looks identical to a KTM/Husqvarna one, so their component buyer is clearly watching the marketplace.

The seat is comfy and certainly big enough for cross-continental travel. The optional panniers are frankly Touratech-clones and are both well mounted and feature strong lock mechanisms. We like the gaiters over the fork stanchions too. Little details like that make all the difference on an overland bike.

I guess what we really appreciate though is the simple air-cooled engine. It's reputedly something of a copy of the Honda XBR500 motor. Some have called it an XR400 copy, but those who have dug a bit deeper are suggesting XBR (*the mid 1980s road bike*),

## TRAVELLING Light



sleeved down to a more modest 397cc.

The simplicity is important. No water-cooling means no radiators or hoses to split or crush. With inspection caps on the cylinder head it's a simple job to check and adjust the valve mechanism too. Cable actuated clutch means no hydraulics to fail and fuel injection lends improved fuel economy and hypothetically it's more reliable than a carburettor.

It's not entirely basic though, there's a counter-balancer geared off the crank, so the engine is fairly smooth in operation. Not Honda-smooth, but y'know, not bad, all things considered. Oh, and with just under 30hp available it's fairly modestly powered - but all the better for that. It means the motor is in a relatively low state of tune, so more able to handle the lower grade fuels you get in some parts of the world, and is generally less stressed (*which also means it runs cooler*). This is not an engine you need - or want - to buzz. This is an engine for sitting back and watching the world go by (*or go by you if I'm honest*). But when you think about it, that's really the only way to travel if you want to see the world.

We got the WK with barely 80 miles on the clock. And the motor was tighter than a builder's T-shirt - to the point that it made the ride a bit awkward at the start. In the course of the test we put a solid 250 miles on top of



that and by the end it was a lot looser - and considerably better. So if you get to test ride a brand new one bear that in mind. It becomes a smoother more fluid ride with every mile on the clock - even the top speed, or top cruising speed, improves.

First miles we did were a transfer from Lincolnshire to Norfolk using B and minor A roads. Long straight ones as this part of the country typically offers. Riding in the company of a Honda CRF250L - an ideal comparison - we found they're an even match on acceleration and cruising speeds... on both we settled into an easy 55-60mph on the level. And at this

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speed the WK was quite unhurried and remarkably vibration-free, revving at 5000rpm. The screen was doing its job superbly, the seat was okay and the whole ergonomic package wasn't bad at all. If I wasn't 6ft tall I'd say it was really very good, but being this height I'm often a little cramped on anything smaller than a GS.

By comparison the 250 Honda was just as smooth, but the motor was buzzing along higher in the rev range, and the lack of screen and thin saddle meant it was a little less comfortable and a little more tiring.

While the Honda and WK are comparable, given their price point and marketing position, they're far from identical. With its panniers attached, the WK actually has a lot more presence, is noticeably bigger (without panniers it's about 15kg heavier), and looks and feels sturdier all round. That said the Honda is better finished and has a thoroughly modern engine. The WK might be easy to service but the Honda needs far less frequent servicing, by comparison.

The WK's presence is unfortunately reinforced by its louder-than-average exhaust. Despite having two neatly designed mufflers, the WK does bark. It's not competition pipe offensive, but it's a fair deal further up the dB scale than the whisper-quiet Honda - to the point that I'd roll the throttle mid-overtake so







TRAVELLING  
Light



## The Chinese Way

*It's worth spelling out just who makes this bike. It's a firm called Shineray, some 17 years old now, and one of China's heavy-weight motorcycle producers. They currently produce nearly 100 models, from ATVs to scooters to 650cc motorcycles. But the biggest headlines they've written recently have been their Italian acquisitions: firstly that of the Husqvarna factory and tooling, left over after KTM bought up the Swedish/Italian brand (Shineray reportedly paid less than €25 million for an asset haul they valued at*



as not to frighten motorists.

And the WK, like the Honda, is a bit tall in the saddle. It's a fair swing of the leg to get yourself into position - though both of course settle into the suspension once you're seated. But that initial mount - especially with the panniers to avoid - can look a touch comedic. Perhaps we need to face up to the fact that if you want 250mm of ground clearance, if you want nine-or-more inches of suspension travel (*both adventure standards - and note how I mixed the units there*) then that comes with a lofty seat height. That's the unavoidable trade-off.

## Into the Rough?

Well, off the tarmac at least. Not having done the sensible thing and contacted the Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF) for some local knowledge we played it safe by riding only the byways as marked on our brand new Ordnance Survey maps. These were to be found in the lower reaches of the Thetford Forest and consisted of some fairly flat, well-graded sand tracks (*not even deep sand*).

The WK wasn't perfectly equipped for this, riding on smoothish tyres (*made by Kenda*). Despite being well equipped with rim locks we left the pressures as we'd used on the road (*yeah, whatever WK had put in them!*) and just ploughed on. The motor was spot-



€50 million). And secondly, the purchase of the SWM brand - or brand name. Cleverly the two acquisitions are brought together to make one new motorcycle, so they're now making models that are a development of the Italian Husqvarnas as we knew them (TEs and Terras) branded as SWMs. Make no mistake, Shineray are big-hitters, and are likely to become bigger still.

Having explained all that, we should mention that the 400 Trail arrives here with a 'WK' badge on the tank. In this instance - as has been the Chinese way - the bike hasn't been imported as a Shineray, or an SWM for that matter, but effectively brought in unbranded, to be named by the importer. And so here in the UK the bike is a WK 400 Trail, elsewhere it'll have a different name, such as in France where the importer has named it the Mash Adventure 400.

All the same, the bike fits into WK's ever-expanding range of scooters, trail bikes, even tourers. WK is a British firm with a solid 14 years in the business (they started as a quad importer, and still are - in fact they're arguably the biggest quad importer in the UK, and so boast a pretty comprehensive dealer network. They're possibly the biggest small brand you've never heard of. Although given that WK put a bike into the Lightweight/Supertwins class at the TT this year and qualified second fastest it's more likely you will hear a lot more about them in future...





on for this kind of stuff however, we'd set a speed of anywhere between 15-25mph and the air-cooled SOHC did that old thing of amiably plodding along, whether in second or third gear.

The suspension wasn't quite so accommodating. The forks clonked audibly - more so when topping out as the front came light over bumps and roots - while the shock squeaked and squonked as if desperate for a bit of lube. The actual action of both wasn't so bad and will most certainly deal with everything an adventurous travel rider will throw at it (*say, a jog across the Anatolian Steppe*) but without a doubt you'd want to fettle the set-up before you set off.

Riding on traditional 21/18in wheels helps and this combined with the easy lolloping power of the unit, meant that even when we encountered sloppy muddy sections the WK was quite competent applying good old fashioned 'plonk' to overcome the lack of grip.

The brakes were a disappointment however. Both front and rear lacked power (*especially for the road*), which was odd as the calipers (*twin-piston on the front*) and the master cylinders all look to be good kit. When we returned the bike the guys at WK explained it was most likely the stock brake pads. Replace them with a decent set of aftermarket pads - they inform us - and the performance improves appreciably. They're most probably right, and that's an easy fix,



it's just a shame the Chinese couldn't have sorted that right from the start.

## Going the Distance

The 18-litre fuel tank is a wonderful thing. Without radiators or associated plumbing to take up much needed volume, the WK can have a big tank yet be neatly narrowed for comfortable riding. With the accuracy of fuel injection we were recording impressive fuel economy too, 67 and 68mpg on the two refills we made. Of course we didn't need to refill, these were occasioned by the Honda, which despite offering 80mpg has such a small tank that the rider gets nervous from about the 110-mile mark. So even if you fitted one of those 12-litre tank options to the Honda, the WK would still outlast it by a good 60 miles. Yeah, by our calculations the WK is good for 270 miles at a go. That's a gold medal effort in travel bike terms.

As dusk fell we discovered the WK's one proper weakness. The twin bulb headlight was too dim whether on dip or main, in fact more light was reflected backward by the screen than actually lit the way. The Honda's, by comparison, is light years ahead (*groan*).

## Big Love

High hopes, low expectations (*a strap line to English test match cricket up until the last Ashes series*) that's how we came into this







test. And actually the WK 400 Trail not only exceeded our low expectations, but it gets very close to fulfilling our high hopes.

The build quality is a step-up again on what we've seen on previous Chinese bikes. Still not quite up to Japanese standards, but closer again, much closer. And the performance is there; this engine - as it ran-in - was getting better and better. Perfect for a plod along the lanes, smooth and easy at 60mph on the tarmac. In fact it was faster than most of the traffic we encountered and so we did a fair bit of overtaking - which needs a bit of planning as there's not much more than about 75mph at the top end and only modest acceleration from 60mph onwards. But on the other side of the coin there's enough comfort and more than enough in the way of what the Yanks call 'farkles' to keep the fiddler-come-kit-fetishist happy.

What's most important though is this bike has spirit. It's the one aspect of a motorcycle that's the hardest to engineer-in, and so many bikes fail because of this. But the WK 400 Trail is a happy, willing workhorse of a bike and even with the shortcomings we've listed it's still a bike we'd look forward to riding. That motor is a good one. That chassis and the ergonomics are decent as well. It's inviting and when you ride it, it's satisfying. Given a fettle it'll be very good indeed.

Big question... will it last? It's difficult to say for sure but quite probably it will. Our mate (*overland adventurer and author*) Chris Scott



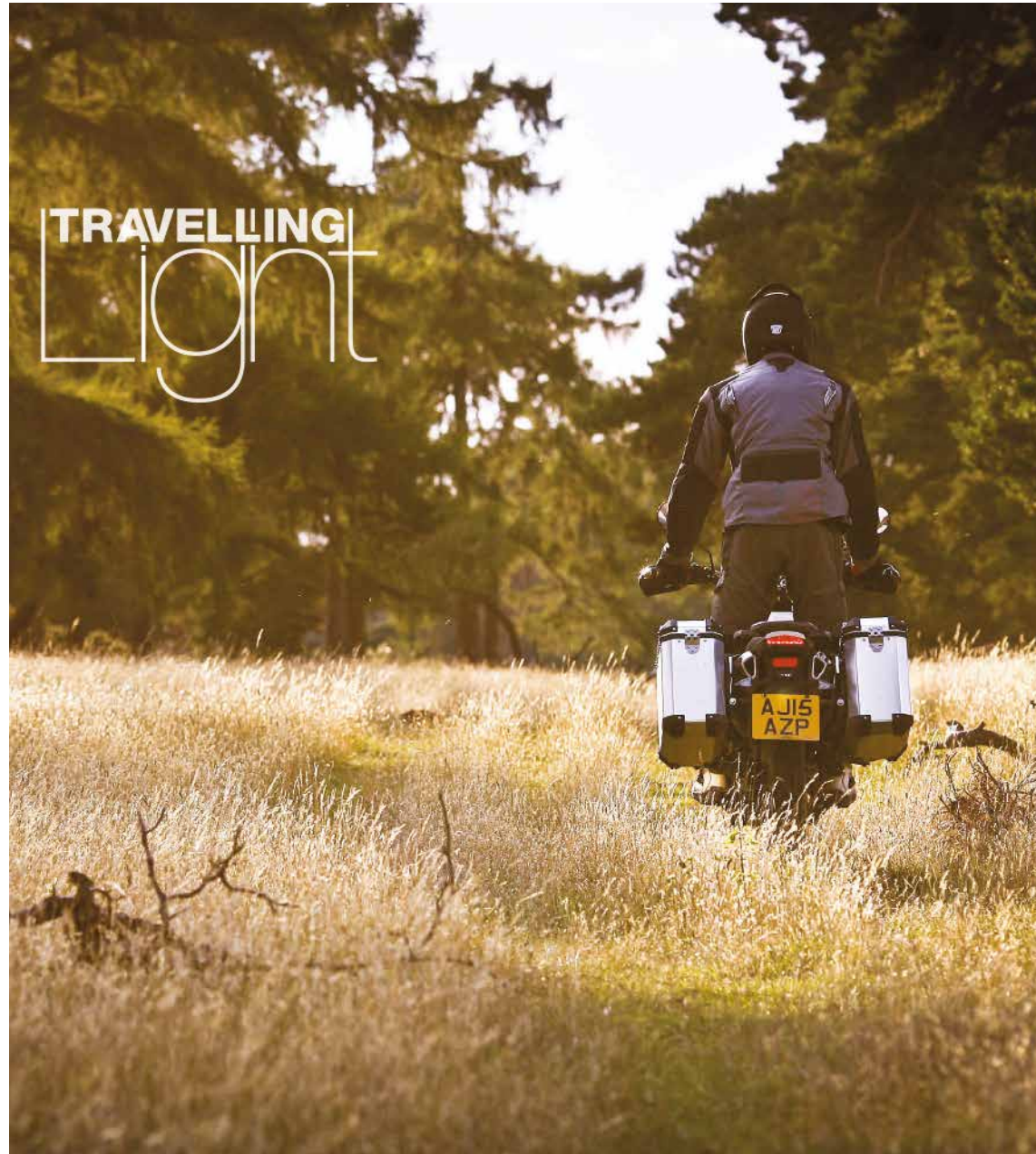
found a couple of guys from Germany/Italy who in 2014 made a 20,000km trek from China to home in the Alps - and yes one of them was riding a 400 Trail (*badged a Shineray X5 as it was a home market example*). It crushed some wheel bearings along the way, but was still in fine health after 127 days of non-stop adventuring. That sounds well-tested to us.

Of course this was a 'first ride' type test. But we rode the kind of roads that suit this kind of bike and the right kind of trails too. No, it won't do enduro the way an XR or DRZ can, but then it was never designed to.

As a travel bike, though, it's quite possibly the best attempt we've seen from any manufacturer to date. A clever bit of kit. Not flawless obviously but at under £4000 brand new with 24 months warranty, pretty impressive. This Shineray team - they clearly know a thing or two...

## THANKS

*Big thanks to Henry Mablethorpe and the guys at WK Bikes for getting us the test bike just as soon as they'd broken it out of the container. And thanks too, to our mate Andy Dukes for coming along on his own Honda CRF250L to afford us a great comparison and good company. And thanks to the Great British countryside - it's an awesome place...*



# 2015 WK 400 TRAIL

**Engine:** Air-cooled SOHC single-cylinder four-stroke  
**Capacity:** 397cc  
**Bore & stroke:** 85x70mm  
**Compression ratio:** 8.8:1  
**Fueling:** Siemens fuel Injection  
**Ignition:** CDI/ECU  
**Starting:** Electric only  
**Gearbox:** Five speed  
**Clutch:** Wet multiplate, cable actuation  
**Final drive:** Chain  
**Frame:** Steel tube, linkage rear suspension  
**Front suspension:** 43mm 'Fast Ace' forks, travel 210mm  
**Rear suspension:** Monoshock 'Fast Ace', linkage, travel 200mm  
**Front brake:** 280mm disc, twin-piston caliper  
**Rear brake:** 220mm disc  
**Tyres:** 90/90-21 130/80-18  
**Claimed dry weight:** 151kg  
**Seat height:** 890mm  
**Wheelbase:** 1460mm  
**Claimed power:** 29hp at 7000rpm  
**Claimed torque:** 23.9lb.ft at 5000rpm  
**Top speed:** 75mph indicated  
**Price:** £3899  
**Warranty:** 2 years  
**Contact:** <http://www.wkbikes.com>  
**01507 522900**



# Not so Wild Camping

*We had a bit of fun on this test. A nice backroads ride down from Lincolnshire to Thetford Forest. A bit of fun riding the green lanes for an evening and the following morning. And - just quietly - we wild camped.*

*Proper British style, where we ate handsomely at the pub, then mooched off under the cover of darkness to camp alongside the remotest byway we could find. Then nice and early the following morning an hour's green lane riding before finding a sweet little cafe for a full English breakfast.*

*It was all good clean fun. On low-powered bikes we couldn't help but stay within the highway speed limits (although we still got stopped by a copper - making sure we weren't on stolen bikes).*

*When we wild camped we made the minimum of noise, didn't get boozed-up, and made sure we left our camp site as clean as we found it (we just ran a tarp between the bikes and a tree). We didn't light a fire, we certainly didn't crap in the woods. And we rode the byways quietly, respectfully, greeting other users pleasantly.*



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*In return we saw no end of wildlife: hare, deer, plus birds of prey. We slept under a blue moon and woke to a brilliant sunrise, watching the first warming rays tickle the branches of the pines. Glorious stuff.*

*Yeah, I'm going to be pious here - if your green lane experience is all about racing your mates on your EXCs and such like, stop kidding yourself and go enter an enduro. We love enduro here and we heartily recommend it. If you're riding on green lanes then ride appropriately. It's about nature, not ego!*







## BT COMES HOME?

WORDS AND PHOTO BY GARY FREEMAN

*What was the most outstanding ride at this year's Motocross of Nations? We reckon Ben Townley's incredible return nearly a decade after he left MXGP. Gary Freeman remembers his wicked sense of humour...*

IT'S AUGUST 24, 2004: serious photoshoot time with Ben Townley for a motocross magazine. We're just getting everything set-up... and for practical joker Ben it's the perfect time to don a set of comedy breasts.

Back in 2004, Ben Townley and Josh Coppins were living in the same house in Belgium. Two young guys striving to reach the very top of their sport in the mad world of MXGP. At first they weren't racing in the same class, but that all changed when Ben became 2004 MX2 World Champion and moved to the MX1 class for the following season. This saw the house-mates banging bars at the weekends and then relaxing in-between GPs by BBQing together - complete with 'BBQ accessories' like the comedy apron Ben's sporting. For the record, Josh had a matching apron too!

Fast-forward 11 years and the semi-retired Ben Townley rocks up at the 2015 Motocross of Nations in Ernée (France) and posts second in the MXGP qualifying race, sixth in race one (MXGP & MX2) and an astonishing second in race three (MXGP & MX Open). Just 3.179 seconds behind 2015 MXGP World Champion Romain Febvre, and ahead of the blisteringly fast



Americans Justin Barcia and Cooper Webb.

Believe it or not, Ben's performance is not unparalleled in motorcycle sport. Mike 'the Bike' Hailwood's victory in the 1978 TT after an 11 year break was a similar sort of achievement. It demonstrates the astounding natural ability of both these amazing riders.

Here at RUST we love to see an old boy do well. Especially as the Ernée track was also the scene of Ben's amazing 2005 MXoN performance: winning his first race by over nine seconds and pushing Ricky 'the GOAT' Carmichael all the way to the flag in the final race of the day.

Ben's amazing return at MXoN made us smile. In a sense it's one of his finest practical jokes ever. Effectively pulling the trousers down on the entire MXGP/AMA paddock. Now, as then... Ben brings a little fun to the sport. He's a great antidote to the stultifying professionalism that pervades MXGP these days, and it begs the question... Should BT come back? After Ernée, you can bet a few teams are pondering that right now.

Ben Townley deserves a cup for that result. A C-cup we reckon...





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