



**TRAIL RIDERS  
FELLOWSHIP**



# Devon TRF Newsletter

## January 2021

IN THIS ISSUE

### Welcome to the Jan 2021 Newsletter.

It really is amazing what our group is capable of and we should be extremely proud of the people that make these things happen. Thanks folks and WELL DONE!

Don't forget that we still have vacant positions to fill, so if you feel you may be interested in them, then please contact to discuss the posts.

The primary function of the newsletter is to educate, motivate, and inform its readers. This can only be completed with your assistance

### Our Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be on:-

Meetings will be held via Zoom, Web Conferencing.

please see Forum for more details

### EVENTS

Check [Forum](#) for Latest Updates

**T2T  
now cancelled**



### Chainsaw Practice?



### Good Old Days

## January 2021 Minutes

### Minutes for DTRF meeting

#### **Welcome**

Noel welcomed all to the meeting and as there was no new attendees/members we carried on the evenings business.

#### **Apologies**

I received no apologies.

#### **Members present.**

10

#### **Treasurer Kirstie/Jackie**

The transition between Jackie and Kirstie is in progress. Kirstie will become a joint member with Kev.

#### **Group rep, Paul**

Paul talked about accessing the newsletter with his newfound technical ability, and thanked Andrew for his efforts. He thought that some communications had improved but also mentioned some long-standing problems that others had experienced.

A criticism was that the process had become over complicated.

#### **Lane clearing,**

No Lane clearing was going on at the moment, that we knew of

#### **Rights of way, Ray Tribe**

##### **1 192-207 Three Tree, Teignmouth golf course,**

Since the last meeting it appears the landowner has blocked the southern entrance again. I have spoken to ROW warden JR who was already planning to attend to check out the obstruction and the UCR route. His update is awaited. (Trevor the dog walker may have an update)

Route is usable with a hop over a root. TF

##### **2 202-081 The Compton Mud Plug**

The work is now complete and the lane open. The old mud plug area looks good, although there is still 2-3 inches deep mud on the lane surface on the Torquay side of the plug as usual. A section of the lane further towards the northern end has had the gully filled and levelled and the hedgerow cut back. It's still a good lane to ride, but we should expect to meet other user groups on it now.

**3 202-360 Fursdon** waiting to hear from Peter Guy/ Paul McFadden if any progress made with the farmer. STILL AWAITING UPDATE FROM PROW

##### **4 DMMO Claim C-030** Bradford and Cookbury up for DMMO, replies by 15 Jan 2021

Rob Drake has offered to represent DGTRF at the DMMO. I have taken him up on this offer.

## **5 181-009 Holwell Farm Bampton Stopping Up Order**

DCC have admitted the online mapping alterations are an error, and the Diversion Order hearing is still set for 21<sup>st</sup> Jan 2021.

### **GRM**

I have completed the Cornwall data, and that and Devon are being input into GRM. This is just the start, as there will be constant updating of lane conditions, photographs, Nimby interactions, TROs etc. Another Teams meeting planned for 26<sup>th</sup> Jan, I'll report back in the next meeting.

Chainsaw courses – Chris C has made some progress with the National insurance aspect, but in any case I cannot plan any training until Covid clears, and training re-starts, for the 5 members who volunteered (Me, Trevor, Stevven, Russell, BreweryKev if PPE can be arranged).

### **Marketing/PR, Sean**

Unfortunately, Sean had to leave the meeting before he got chance to report

### **Run records, John Leah**

No report

### **Newsletter**

No report

### **Website**

No report

### **Forum, Doug**

No report, but forum is still active and considered a good communication tool

### **Events**

No events happening

### **Horse events, Jacki**

No horse events happening

### **Andrew Byatt presentation on TEAMS**

The group communications director joined us to help the elected officers understand better how to use TEAMS, how it could be customised to our needs and how other groups were using it to enhance the way they stored documents etc.

Andrews presentation helped make it clearer to the gathered throng and several of us committed to using it as a tool despite the earlier reservations.

Suggestions of having Devon's archive scanned commercially and uploaded onto the TEAMS database.

## **AOB**

Andrew asked us how we felt about merging Devon and Cornwall groups, as Cornwall do not currently have a committee. Noel explained that the Cornish were fiercely independent, and in the past (i.e. the last 1000 years) had resisted any amalgamation with Devon.

They no longer use the forum

40 – 50 members

Noel also said that we would be happy to open the discussion, and Chris pointed out that there was already some contact between us.

TF offered to coordinate if required.

Chris reported that thanks to Andrews intervention some progress had been made regarding the insurance to cover us while using power tools when lane clearing. Dave Carling had forwarded documents for us to peruse.

## Chainsaw practice

Still managing to keep the ole chainsaw skills up to scratch with more trees down lately on the parish paths, few storms have seen a few limbs being snapped right off, crazy!

Ash tree die back will change the country's landscape for sure plus the expected costs of Billions to the country too

Watch out on the lanes to as some of these Ash trees are just breaking off after becoming brittle. Take that all-important folding saw or hand pruning saw out with you on the trails

Attached photos of two willow trees down on bridleway 83 in the Roncombe valley

Wasn't safe to leave them there in this state so a total tree drop was on the cards. Lone sawing guide lines had me phoning in the location to Wacky HQ with time of clearance estimated along with another call at completion, all backed up with OS grid reference.

Once the job was completed I rode to the end of the BW. Visited some friends at the barn/farm, had a social distance chat outside to catch up on gossip ;)

All in all a job completed to a quality standard plus I had the pleasure or gratitude from a group of horse riders passing whilst I was in clear up mode, one young male rider looked a tad uneasy whilst mounted on his steed, he was making good progress with the stony terrain.

Great to be out there helping out!

Regards to all

Wacky



## Suzuki DRs

Eight years ago I had passed my test late in life and was 2 years into trail riding a lovely Yamaha Serow which was a lovely bike, reliable, soft power, immense tractability and as docile as a sloth toking on a hookah pipe. I craved a little more excitement in my trail riding life. A Suzuki DR 350 SE-X popped up on the internet from Blade Honda in Swindon in June 2011. Low mileage, never off-roaded, 1 owner, £1,500 it seemed a steal, plus it had obvious SE-X appeal which would make me God's gift to trail riding (obvs...). I popped over, sorted the deal then a day later, my brother-in-law drove me over one summer's afternoon from Reading, and I bought her there and then. Being vertically challenged, I tottered on it, wobbled over to the petrol station to fill her up, almost lost it on some spilt diesel, then cautiously trundled down the M4 home. The step up in power from the Serow was obvious, but not too intimidating, again it was a 'dual sport' bike, 30 hp may be, so about 50% more powerful than the Serow, but unlikely to rip my arms off. Gearing was nicely balanced for road and trail riding and it was not too portly, 130kg dry, so around 145kg with fuel and oil. No light weight, but I could just about lift her off the ground, not that I expected to fall off much... ahem... I was nervous about it being lecky start only, but preferred that to kick only for a bike with a moderately large engine. I immediately stuck on a couple of lowering links, sagged out the preload and could more comfortably dangle my legs off saddle to the floor. Within a week or so, I was off to Wales for a typically wet/dry/wet weekend riding through bogs and tank deep water. She did not skip a beat and I was smitten. For several years she was my go-to ride, traveling to Yorkshire, all over Wiltshire, Berkshire, Surrey and then Devon upon my return 'home' in 2012.



### The good old days

Eventually, however, like all relationships (except my marriage.... Obvs....), I was getting itchy feet. I'd put 10,000 miles on her in just over 5 years and was nearing the point of either pulling major bits apart and refreshing them or moving her on. Having never had a Yamaha TTR, the Devon trail bike of choice at the time, I decided to sell the Serow (which I promised I'd be buried with – I'm such a hypocrite... ) and the DR and get a TTR. It was the best of both worlds, as light as a serow, pretty much as pokey as the DR given it was a hogged out 325cc Brian Sussex special. That was in October 2017, over 3 years ago. The TTR has ticked a lot of boxes, nimble, plenty powerful enough, comfy seat, plenty of traction, and mostly reliable. I've had to replace the sprag clutch which never sounds great, a bit like bricks in a cement mixer on starting, but the kickstart back up always offers that added insurance out in flooded Devon lanes. 6000 miles and 3 years later though and that itch was there again. Lockdown did not help and for some reason in my head I needed another trail bike, or to replace one I already have. Once the clutch side case of the TTR started to weep oil, a bit like an incontinent elderly relative

– becoming more burden than fun, it was almost like it was telling me it was time to 'refresh' the Comber stable. The XR200 is obviously a keeper as it may actually be the 'investment' I suggested it would be to the missus. The CRM250 I've had years and that 2 stroke hit of power and pollution in equal doses seems so naughty in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it cannot fail to put a smile on your face, even if it is a sheepish one, given I lecture on environmental science.. ahem... .So the TTR sat in the garage looking nervous as I combed ebay and Facebook market place until my eyes went screwy. I stopped short of Autotrader as there's not much for sale for less than several grand.



### DR350 in an iconic Devon pose

If anyone has been looking, then you'll know Covid has not been kind to the used bike market, movement restrictions, a lack of new bike purchases etc meant there are few bikes on the market and those that do crop up seem over priced, or may be I do not understand inflation, but it seems hard to find anything beyond a 'project' for less than £2+K. So in the last couple of months I've seen a few bikes come and go, bid on a couple that went for far higher than I wanted to spend, fancied a KDX, thought about a RMX250, still riffing that 2 smoke vibe. Then decided I needed a new 'workhorse' a bike I can ride on longer runs, doing 100+miles without thinking and one that could cope with road and trail miles – a direct replacement for the TTR basically. That's where the DR came back on the radar. What about a DRZ400? An updated DR350, bulletproof engine, always praised for its reliability and creamy power throughout the rev range, with a solid gearbox with no faffing with finding neutral like I find with the TTR. A mate flagged up a brilliant YouTube 'film' of folk riding off road up to Cape York in Australia ([Motorcycle Adventure Cape York - YouTube](#)). They rode DRZ's which were mercilessly ragged and drowned in countless river crossings – they got the time down to drying out and relighting the engine to around 12 minutes. Boy – those bikes could soak up the punishment. I redoubled my furtive activity on ebay. The dual sport 'S' weighs 144kg wet with a healthy purported 40 bhp output, more than enough for trail riding, with indicators nice diggy 'dash' seemed like an ideal option, even if it was heavier than the 'E' – endure- version and down a few ponies owing to various emission clutter. A local one came up with 6K mile on the clock, anodised rims and looked immaculate. It failed to register a bid on ebay twice at £2,500 which was more than I wanted to spend and was on the DTRF forum for £2,700. By the time I decided I'd investigate further Mark had sold it – bum!. A similar one was going for £2,750 down in Paignton which had also gone by the time I contacted them. I realised 2 things – (a) folk put bikes up for sale at optimistic prices, (b) they are negotiable and (c) if I wanted another bike I was going to have to cough up over 2 grand.



### Oooo shiny!

DRZ's seem hard to value, look on ebay – they are rarely less than £2K, but some super motos are going for almost 4 grand - weird. Just as my wife was about to strangle me if one more ebay alert came up on our home email, a couple popped up locally. A DRZ400E in Tivvy, which looked OK, but when the seller provided a rationale of having lost his license as a selling point, combined with some pretty poor grammar, call me a snob, but I decided to pass on it. Then another 'E' came up in Swimbridge, ridiculously low miles (<2000 miles) but with every MOT certificate, manual, 2 keys and a few new things like battery, starter, sprockets, chain and tyres – basically ready to ride. My interest was piqued. I contacted Nick and he seemed like a genuinely nice bloke and provided plenty of background to the bike, including it's crazy power output, far too much for the strapping young buck to handle apparently – gulp! Either way, given he was happy to come down significantly from the £2,900 asking price, I agreed to go and see it, with a commitment to buy if I was happy.

So I trundled up in the van, with my accountant (wifey) in toe with phone to do the bank transfer, battling through slush on the Link road, enjoying the views of a snowy Exmoor we dipped down the pot holed lanes into the back of Swimbridge. The DRZ sat looking menacing in Nick's garage, he'd bought a KTM150 2 stroke which he considered more manageable so needed to shift the DRZ as it was ripping his arms from their sockets apparently! It looked genuine, pretty standard, road legal stuff, no winkers, but a lesser 138kg wet and more power than the 'S' owing to less gubbins clogging up the exhaust I guess. The starter seems to have been replaced and it started on the button with no smoke and sounded quiet, certainly lesser clatter than Pauls WR400/450. The seat was slightly sculpted to aid short arses, so that also suited me. A few taps of the phone and money magically disappeared out of one account into another (so much less emotionally painful than handing over wads of cash) – you feel just like Dishy Rishi shaking his magic money tree.... Into the van she went.



A tidy looking DRZ

By the time I got home, I was already having second thoughts and buyers remorse, how many bikes do I really need? ( $Y_{(\text{no of bikes needed})} = n_{(\text{current number of bikes})} + 1 \text{ obv...}$ ).... I should have bought the DRZ400S up the road when it was available, it looked cleaner, had more dual sport attributes etc, can it replace the trusty TTR? How will I cope with so much power? That was the lame little Seany sprite on my right shoulder. The naughty Seany sprite on my left shoulder said they don't put pockets in shrouds, you deserve it, the power to lift the front wheel at leisure will aid trail riding and put a smile on your face, enjoy a 'big' trail bike before you grow old and start looking at Serows on ebay again, etc etc. I started her up, the fruity exhaust immediately letting me know its presence, though not too bad. I threw my leg over and engaged 1<sup>st</sup>, letting the light clutch out I stalled her immediately, the bite point being different to the other bikes. Starting again I wobbled round the garden and immediately noticed a few key points. The clutch was delightfully light, the carburation was as smooth and as silk, it trickled along at tick over and picked up clean. It felt like a trail bike. Obviously in the garden I could not open her up to flush out those gee gees champing at the bit to lift the front wheel towards the heavens and force my eyeballs deep into their sockets, but that would have to be for another day. The next day actually.



### The DRZ already out enjoying the Devon hills

Taxed and insured I set up a ride from Cully to Seaton taking in East Hill and some lanes I've not ridden for a while at the back of Sidbury as well as the lovely Branscombe and Beer lanes. Paul (WR450) John (CRF250X) and Paul B (KTM 250 2 stroke) pitched up. Chris bailed owing to feeling dodgy and Trevor also could not join us as he'd bollocks'd his kids Playstation wifi connection. So a short prod of the starter and the DRZ burst into life, we rolled out of Cully with the sun shining in the crisp winter sky. I immediately missed the TTR's heated grips – wuss. I also missed a rear view mirror as I craned my neck to check folk were soon behind me. But still I was riding a fire breathing, ball's out enduro bike, not a froo froo trail bike. The gearing being suitably low in order to tackle things like the ISDE, and only 5 gears she was buzzing along with barely 45 mph registering on the quaintly analogue gauge. Still the other's behind me were in the same situation with similar spec bikes. Wilderness Lane out of Colliton Cross was first up and I hauled myself up onto the amply grippy pegs and splashed along through the puddles, the new Michelin Trackers front and rear keeping her nice and steady. A benefit of more 'modern', slightly more competition biased bikes have great suspension. They soak up stones and holes with aplomb. I soon began to realise that what they write about the DRZ engine is right – it is a mill that keeps on giving. She plonked along the rocky lane, popped over the tree roots, threaded her way through the more nadgery bits pretty much at tickover. May be Nick being a thrusting young turk only had two throttle settings – full on or full off. Thankfully the sculpted seat allowed me to tippy toe the ground so provided sufficient confidence I'd not topple over and we trundled past Beer Farm and down over Hembury Hill, the lane was repaired in 2011 before I arrived back in Devon in

2012. It had a fearsome reputation apparently as it was badly washed out. This winter however, has not been kind to it, the repairs have quickly been eroded, the drainage pipes that had been put in are now exposed and a rainwater channel is now appearing in many places. The power of water is quite shocking sometimes. I've noticed a number of lanes recently, Gatcombe over by Beer and the climb up from Westbrook near Holcombe have also become significantly washed out. A combination of steepness, soil type, rain intensity and use combining to maximise the risk of erosion. We bumped down over, enjoying the views down into the Otter valley whilst watching where our front wheels were going. The DZR's low gearing allowing plenty of engine braking made the descent easy enough with no annoying backfires I used to get out the back of the DR350's aftermarket pipe, though that was mainly owing to my inability to seal it properly... The lane to Lower Cheriton was muddy as it climbed out of the valley floor but the Trackers bit into the slop without drama and the front end felt well planted. By the time we'd scampered up over East Hill from Alvington the speedo was no longer functioning, which may explain the low mileage... We paused in the cold, clear winter air on one of the stony climbs off the east side of the Strips; Paul B's hands frozen, although mine were fine in my new gloves Santa brought me, nicely insulated, waterproof, but not too thick so ideal for the conditions. Dropping down into Tipton St John provided an opportunity to enjoy romping up Seaway lane, the plush suspenders of the DRZ soaking up punishment with ease and the abundance of power allowing the front wheel to be lifted clear of any obstructions.



### **DRZ in its natural habitat**

Bulldozer lanes around the north side of Bulverton hill seems to change its character regularly, there is significant forestry working going on and so some big machinery have chewed things a bit at the top end followed by the need to thread our way along the rutted lanes towards Wheat Hill. I cannot imagine many folk enjoy riding ruts, though practice makes perfect and they are a necessary evil for any trail rider to master. Rather than completing the loop, as I was aiming for Seaton we cut back up the valley to Stowford and road the easy but pleasant lane around Buckton which I've not ridden in ages. After skirting a horse, one of many that day, we then crossed the A3052 and did the Edge Barton lane where the field crossing has now been fenced in. It leads down to Branscombe, providing teasing glimpses of the sea, but we did not run all the way out to the beach, but turned back inland to ride the knot of lanes including Gay's Farm with its lovely switchbacks and loose stone. I fired the DRZ up the incline like Steve Holcombe and felt like I was really gelling with the bike. As noted just now, the lane down from Beer to Gatcombe is quite technical now, so stay on the right above the washout if you are riding up it. What I did also note though was the slightly strange feel to the steering occasionally, which on return home I've diagnosed as notchy steering head bearings, so they'll need doing soon, one of my least favourite jobs... We grabbed fuel to fill Paul B's thirsty 2 stroke and I noted took

the same amount of fuel as Paul S's similar capacity WR so should have a good 80 mile range I would think. We rode down the hill to Seaton to catch some sea air and a coffee on the front, but although there were plenty of people out enjoying the recently rare sunshine, there was no coffee to be had anywhere along the front which was disappointing. We there doubled back to the garage for a half decent Costa inhouse machine coffee, a sausage roll and yorkie bar. The others ate more healthily....



### Already posing in the sunshine

I was planning on running up over Axmouth and up through Musbury/Membury way but the sky was rapidly clouding over and rain was forecast for mid-afternoon; we'd obviously had the best of the day so decided to run back up through Colyton, the Haynes and the Cleave back into Honiton. All lovely flowing lanes with plenty of climbs over stony, loose surfaces. In Honiton, Paul S drew alongside me and noted he'd got a slow puncture on the front of his WR. He therefore cut and run for home. The remaining three of us took the usual route back via the nice lane at Weston, where the river across the ford was running strong and the rocks very slippery as the back end of the Suzy slewed from side to side before tracking true out of the river Wolf's cold embrace. I gingerly picked my way up over Hembury hill, trying to avoid the aforementioned washouts as best I can. For the first time in almost 9 years I met not one but 2 sets of walkers, reflecting the increased use of lanes in this Covid blighted era. At the top I sat grinning like a Cheshire cat, I love that lane, any trail rider scampering up it and not reaching the end smiling has no soul... I waited and waited. Paul B eventually arrived, the KTM sounding rougher and more smoky than usual. Then I noticed his end can sticking out of his jacket. This is not a euphemism, his exhaust had fallen off! The vibrations of the stink wheel had resulted in the mounting bracket wearing away. Apparently he's repaired it once already, but the good old KTM was hell bent on losing weight. He smoked off down the road to leave just me and John to ride the final lanes back to Cully, just ahead of the rain, which unfortunately John would have to endure back down to Rockbeare.

Once home, I checked my arms were still the same length as when I started – check; the beast of an enduro bike had not resulted in any brown-trouser moments – check; and after 4 hours run time it did not seem to have to have a full service unlike say a KTM... check! I think I will grow to love this bike. The TTR sits quivering in the garage.....

Sean

**Election of officers 2021**

Chairperson, still vacant
Vice chair, Noel Squibb
Treasurer, Kirsty Parnell has volunteered
Secretary, Trevor Foxon
ROW officer, Ray Tribe
Map marker, Liz Millet
Run recorder, John Leah
Newsletter editor, Phill Lowe
Forum coordinator, Doug
Club welcomer, John Heal
Event coordinator, Chris Cole and John Heal
Media coordinator, Sean Coomber
Horse trial coordinator, Jacki Cole
National rep, Paul Studley
Web Site manager, Phill Lowe
Lane clearing coordinator, Vacant



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