

Chairman at full chat

There is only one place to start this newsletter, and that is by paying tribute to Robin Moore, who recently passed away at the age of 94.

Robin was very much at the heart of the motor club for many, many years. During his time with the club, he held a whole host of roles, most recently becoming an Honorary Lifetime Vice President after stepping down from his position as President. Beyond the club, Robin was also active in many other circles, notably within motorsport, serving as President of the ACTC and, until a few years ago, as a steward for the MCC.

During my time with the club, Robin was a regular attendee at meetings until his health meant he was no longer able to drive as much. Many competitors on the classic trials circuit will remember having their names taken by Robin at the lunch stop when it was held at Marystow Church Hall—a role he thoroughly enjoyed, not least because it gave him the opportunity to chat with current competitors and catch up on the latest stories from the sport.

Robin was undoubtedly an instrumental figure within the club, and his many anecdotes were always warmly received. Even after he became less able to attend events, he continued to contribute to the newsletter with his reflections and musings from years gone by, ensuring that the club's history and traditions were never forgotten.

Robin will be sorely missed by everyone who knew him, and on behalf of the club, we extend our sincere condolences to his family and friends at this difficult time.

June saw two successful club events, beginning with the Spry Trial at Willtown Farm. The venue offered a nice variety of sections and attracted a tidy entry of 12 competitors. Unfortunately, I didn't get to see much of the action, as I had to leave before lunch, but Thomas once again added another overall victory to his ever-growing list of successes. Congratulations to him on another excellent performance.

The second event was the Evening Trial at Winsdon Farm, which attracted an entry of 19 competitors. Thankfully, the weather had cooled from the extreme heat of the previous few days, although it was still a warm evening for the latest round of the John 'Stan' Sandercock Memorial Shield. A good variety of vehicles assembled, making for a relaxed and sociable atmosphere.

A big thank you goes to those who weren't competing but volunteered to don the yellow jackets and marshal the event. Seven sections were run three times, with the grass surprisingly wet despite the recent dry weather, adding an extra challenge.

I also had my first drive in a trials car for a few years and, after initially driving the wrong side of a couple of markers, gradually remembered what I was supposed to be doing! There's certainly room for improvement.

At the end of the evening, Phil Thomas, at the wheel of his father's Melos, claimed the overall win, while on two wheels Rob Baker came out on top, narrowly beating his son Harry in the motorcycle classes.

I would also like to thank Andy Prosser for his long-term contribution to the club. Andy is taking a break from motor club affairs and has worked extremely hard in recent years in setting out our Sporting Trials. Further to this Andy has served in various other positions in the club and notably during my time was an extremely efficient club secretary. Andy has various other hobbies and interests that he wished to pursue and he stands down with our utmost respect and gratitude for his time and effort that he has put into the club.

Road Test 2026 KTM 390 Adventure



The editor finds himself out and about on KTM's latest offering with no particular place to go



A couple of years back I rode the original KTM 390 Adventure and found it rather underwhelming experience: a lightweight road bike in an adventure-bike's clothes. Pleasant enough, competent enough, but hardly the stuff that dreams are made on.

Since then, practically every motorcycle manufacturer that you can think of, and quite a few that you will have never heard of, has lobbed their hat into the lightweight-middleweight adventure/trail segment with either a new or an upgraded offering.

Some are trail bikes with fairings, some are road bikes with 'adventure' styling; and they originate from pretty much every nation that builds motorcycles in volume (clue, the manufacturer's badge may have little relation to where the bike is actually built).

Major contenders now include the 'all new' Royal Enfield Himalaya, the CFmoto 450MT, the BMW F450GS, and more. Some are singles, some are twins, some use classic names revived (Moto Morini Alltrhike) and some are new contenders in the marketplace (Voge).

Across the brands there's a surprising amount of mix and match componentry to be found in the sector, including engines, and most of it comes from China.

So I was interested to experience KTM's response in the form of the latest 390 Adventure. Anyone who remembers my write-up on the original 390 from two years' back might recall that I posed the question as to whether this engine in a proper off-road chassis with a 21/18in wheel combination might fill the space vacated by the Suzuki DR-Z400. Well, there's now an 'Enduro' trail-bike version of the 390 for sale alongside the Adventure, and Suzuki has

actually relaunched the DR-Z400 with a fuel-injected engine as the DR-Z4S at a thumping (no pun intended) £7999, so perhaps someone was paying attention.

Like its predecessor, the new 390 Adventure is built in India, not Austria, by a company called Bajaj, which now actually owns the entire KTM organisation following some financial sharp practice by the previous owner which we need not discuss here. Bajaj isn't exactly a household name here but claims to be the third largest motorcycle manufacturer globally (and India's second-largest), having started building Vespa scooters and three-wheelers in 1959. Looking at the latest 390 Adventure R it's clear that the bike has been far more than freshened up. It's been realigned in this now hotly-contested market and has proper dirt-bike spoked wheels in 18in/21in sizes. The riding position is now fully dirt oriented, and you can stand up without feeling the thing is going to shoot out from under you. This refinement comes at a price and the price is £6199 if you are interested. The base model with 17in/19in cast wheels continues and starts at £5399, while the naked Enduro-badged version is £5699. So, what's the full-fat 390 Adventure really like to ride?

Surprisingly good, actually. It weighs 176 kgs with a full 14 litres of fuel on-board, and you do feel it when wheeling the bike around. But like most KTM Adventures, it carries the weight low, so you don't really notice it on the move.

The engine, which is said to be more powerful and smoother than its predecessor, lives up to those claims. This no longer feels like a crude bike. There's a quickshifter allowing clutchless power-on up and down shifts giving almost seamless acceleration, and the gearbox itself is so good that your left foot could mistake this KTM for a Suzuki.

You do feel a bit of vibration through the left footpeg, but just enough to remind you that you are riding a single. Performance is what you'd expect from a 400 cc road bike (ie a bit tame compared to a 400 cc enduro, with less raw bottom-end) but outright performance is not what this is about.

It will pull top gear from about 45 mph and hits 6000 rpm at 65 mph, so it's perfectly capable of handling fast main roads. The fairing is reasonably effective at sheltering the rider, and features what looks like a NACA duct in the windscreen which produces a jet of high-energy air to throw turbulence over your head as you bash along the motorway.

But motorways aren't really what this bike is about. It's brilliant for exploring back lanes on, whether they be in Cornwall, Croatia or anywhere in between. The upgraded WP suspension does a great job of handling the UK's third-world style potholes, and the unbranded disc brakes (single disc front and rear) are powerful enough for the bike's performance and entirely predictable.

In my meanderings through the Cornish countryside it was inevitable that I should come across an inviting lane complete with an 'Unsuitable for Motors' sign, and equally inevitable that I should yield to temptation and ride it. I didn't get far, to be honest. The well-made lane was obviously used as access to a field, and beyond the field was too overgrown for me to risk continuing on by forcing my way between two hedges on a brand-new and borrowed bike.

So I turned around and rode back up to the tarmac lane.

Compared to the predecessor, it's much better on rough ground: better suspension, better wheels, better riding position. The tyres have been changed from the lots of road, a little dirt Conti TCK70s on the previous model to 60 per cent road, 40 per cent off-road Mitas EO7+ Enduro Trails, which feature a robust chevron tread pattern. They felt like they would benefit from a slightly reduced pressure for rough ground, but this wasn't my bike and I wasn't going to start messing with them. I can report that they do work well on the road though, at least in the dry, with a rounded profile that rolls you nicely through corners.

The bike's main limitation off-road is the exhaust. In some respects, it's a great design. It's contained entirely under the engine, with an unobtrusive exit pipe beneath the right-hand pillion peg. This leaves the rear of the bike entirely clear to install your own luggage solution, and removes the risk of getting a burn if you have to manhandle the thing. Riding on one of the hottest days of the year so far, I welcomed the way it minimised the heat ejected onto the rider.

It also probably helps the general rideability of the bike. Many riders complain that the latest Euro 5 engines are snatchy off idle and make modern bikes awkward in traffic. Keeping the exhaust, and its catalysers, so close to the engine means it gets up to temperature quicker, and might allow for more forgiving engine mapping on the KTM than most bikes have.

But there is a downside: ground clearance. There is a metal bashplate hanging on a flimsy-looking bracket protecting the exhaust, but I'm not sure how long it would last in really rugged conditions. Room for an aftermarket solution here if this a priority. Also, as it stands, there's a risk that the bike might get stranded if you tried to switch it from one rut to another. This isn't going to apply to all user cases, and the bike as is will suit 90 per cent of those who buy it...and there's plenty of choice on the market for the remaining 10 per cent.

Back on the tarmac, I found the bike ideal for just wandering around the lanes on. It's a vast improvement over its predecessor whether on or off road, and no longer the ugly stepchild of the KTM Adventure family.

There are some annoyances: in the modern way, the bike decides which lights you have on and when, and you can waste hours switching from mode to mode while gawping at the TFT screen if that's what floats your boat. Me, I'd rather be riding this fine machine than prodding buttons on what looks like a horribly-expensive to replace handlebar switch.

There's now more choice than ever in the little KTM's market sector. There are Enduro (trail, in reality) and Supermoto versions based on this same KTM platform plus a 'Duke' roadster before you even look at the tide of novel entrants from China and the more familiar ones from Honda and Suzuki. Lots of choice, but in this company the KTM Adventure would certainly be a good one.

Thanks to the lovely people at JD Racing, Saltash, for letting me out on the 390 Adventure while my GasGas ES700 was being serviced. If you want a KTM or Suzuki, road or dirt, it's the place to go.

Tales from the Ed's bike shed

Firstly, sorry this newsletter is a bit late, but sometimes life and work get in the way.



One of the things I have been dealing with is servicing my big old KTM 950 Adventure, which has been doing a bit of duty travelling between here and the West Midlands. Bleeding brakes on older bikes is always a bit heart-in-mouth: will the nipple move or shear off? I've found a combination of products that seems to reduce the risk considerably. One is Sealey Freeze Shock & Release Spray Lubricant, and the other is Silkolene Silkopen Graphite Rich Penetrating Spray.

The first of these is based on an idea developed in WWII for removing the fuses from unexploded bombs. You didn't want to be heating the fuse on one of the Luftwaffe's finest 500 kg bombs with a blow-torch, so the next best thing was to freeze it using 'dry ice' to make it contract, and release the seal with the casing.

Here's what worked for me. A couple of squirts of the Sealey product (which contains liquid CO₂ aka dry ice, and a penetrating oil), then carefully apply a slight tightening force on the

nipple using a six-sided socket. Then repeat, but apply a slight un-tightening force. Then a good squirt of Silkopen, leave to allow to penetrate into the gaps created by the contraction created by the Freeze Shock spray, and three out of the three came undone without drama. I've never used Silopen before, but I've since been using it to lubricate cables (both on vehicles and up & over garage doors), window hinges, locks and more. It's a light oil carrying small particles of graphite, which should provide a long-lasting slippery coating to whatever you apply it to. Just don't get it on your brake discs.

Now onto my long-distance trials bike saga. The Beta X-Trainer has got a fully-reconditioned engine installed (new bore, piston, crank and mains) and is up for sale!

<https://www.carandclassic.com/l/C2093913>

Go on, you know you want to!

As for the replacement. Last time, I hinted that this might be a new Fantic 250...but something else came up before I could even go and see the Fantic.

I was persuaded to take another route by my brother using 'man logic' pointing out that the depreciation on a new trail bike can be horrendous, and if I didn't get on with the Fantic I would lose a fortune disposing of it.

So, there's a rather more capable used alternative that I found used for about the same money as a new Fantic sitting in the garage. It's a four-stroke, but otherwise looks a bit familiar.



More on it next time.

And speaking of next time: your content and contributions welcome. Reports, memories, stories, hints and tips, with car-related stuff especially needed.

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