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## NEW ZEALAND'S RAGLAN CHAMPIONSHIP



## RIDING THE RAGGED EDGE

**O**n the way over in the plane I didn't really know what to expect. My only previous experience of New Zealand was a stopover on the way home from Los Angeles, and all I could remember of that was that New Zealand money was worth a lot less than ours and that, as we flew out again, there seemed to be a lot of grassy hill country just outside Auckland. That, and the funny way they spoke.

Since then my only contact with NZ had been through Murray Watt, and he wasn't someone I dared think was a normal Kiwi. Although he speaks funny, too.

At the Cessnock Four Day in 1980 I'd met both Barry Reiher and John Nicholson and had been impressed by a few things about them. The most obvious was that they were both pretty astute, which is a way of saying they weren't too impressed by the whole Four Day thing and they were both convinced that anything in NZ left it for dead. To myself, at the time, I thought: "You pair of upstarts! Any one from NZ shouldn't be that cocky." To them I was polite and commented that I thought they spoke funny, and that one day we should perhaps get together and arrange some kind of Trans Tasman Enduro Series like they do in motocross; to myself I thought: "Yeah. That'll show these country

bumpkins who can ride best and will serve to put them in their place."

Time passed. At the 1981 Four Day I was surprised to see that

there was no NZ team again. Shortly afterwards came a letter from Barry Reiher; in it he urged me to come over, and to bring as many Australian riders as I could.

*Raglan is round one of the New Zealand National Enduro Championships. It's also proof that mud is mud and hard is hard, no matter where in the world it is.*

by GEOFF ELDRIDGE

Photography: Vicki Flood, Bruce Jenkins and Mark Webb



He promised to "jack things up, see us right, put us up" and all that sort of thing.

Among all the details he sent was something which caught my eye: the two rounds of the NZ National Enduro Championships. Two rounds, eh? Ought to be able to get over for both of those and probably do all right. Couldn't be that hard in NZ, could it?

In my reply I indicated an interest in Raglan, the first of the two, and held in the north island. A few days later Barry rang me in the office: "Yeah, come on over. I can jack things up, jack up a bike, things like that, eh? (New Zealanders put "eh" on the end of every sentence). No trouble about accommodation, can jack that up, eh? Yeah, Raglan's a pretty gud ride. Slippery. Not an easy event, eh? I can jack up an entry. And if you want a car to drive around for a bit, I can jack that up too, eh?"

New Zealand, I figured during this brief phonecall, must be several metres off the ground with all this jacking up. Eh?

Agreeing was easy, hadn't ever raced in the Big NZ and I'll do anything for a different ride; at least, that's what they say here in the office whenever I tell the accountants that I 'have' to fly somewhere for a story.

But I digress, and the DC10 was just about to land.

Hours later, after answering a

**RIGHT**  
If you look hard you'll be able to see the rider down there on the road.



## New Zealand

### LEFT

ADB's happy host, Barry Reiher. Unfortunately, Barry missed the end of the first special test due to arrowing problems (he was first through) and he was penalised heavily. It was enough to cost him the win.

### CENTRE LEFT

Speaking in his slow, country drawl, Lester Yates thought Raglan was "a pretty fair ride, I 'spose..." Lester likes his rides tough because it doesn't bother him.

million questions about bringing in foreign fruit and vegetables, what farms had I been on in the last ten years, what diseases I'd ever had, did I like sheep and grass (what a question to ask a tourist!), and having everything sprayed by bug-killer three times over. I officially de-planed to be met by a grinning Barry Reiher. He was easy to recognise. He spoke far louder than everyone else at the airport, he was wearing shorts and a printed T-shirt which said in bold letters "Whiritoa isn't for sissies!" and he managed to tell me all about NZ enduros in his very first sentence.

That's Barry. Full on, and all of it about enduros. The next week at his place was a concentrated diet of NZ enduros and how to speak NZ.

I'll tell you this, though. New Zealand hospitality is something else

Gonna be a dud for you, Geoff"). They told me on the Saturday morning that it was only 150 kms around the course, and I thought "No sweat One — fifty ks isn't anything, eh?" It was catching, the way they spoke.

About 95 riders showed up for the start. Actually, compared to the cars most of them drove I was quite surprised at the number of current models they were riding. Most were Japanese, actually, all but three were Japanese. Those three were a Husqvarna, a Montesa and my own KTM. All I could see of the KTM was the backs of a large group of New Zealanders who were gathered around it saying "Hill! Thus us truck, eh! Sex to won utz a little wee bayutie, eh!"

Because of the NZ Government's need to balance the financial books manufactured goods brought into the country are subjected to enormous duty. The case with motorcycles is incredible: without even a local industry to protect it they slam imported bikes with almost 100% duty, making them in most cases twice the price they are in Australia.

For example, a PE250X costs about \$3,300 (NZ).

When you consider that New Zealanders earn less than Australians and that their dollar is worth less it isn't any surprise that they stick only with Japanese bikes.

One thing any Australian rider would have found fascinating was the sheer number of new model XR Hondas entered, all of them Pro-Links. At the time there was no such thing in Oz, and it looked as if the New Zealanders had it made. These XRs looked great, eh?

What made it worse was they were all obviously well used, because they'd had them for a while already. Something has to be done about our stupid ADRs, I thought.

In the days leading up to the start of the event Barry had outlined what he saw as a big gap between the best NZ riders and everyone else. He thought that even before the ride was over he'd be able to pick out the people who would do well, so he did.

Lester Yates was one of them. Lester had come to Cessnock with the NZ Vase Team in 1980, helping them to victory. He is renowned as a rider who might not be blindingly fast on the trail but who never, ever stops or DNFs. His outlook on enduros is simple: the harder they are, the better he likes them. Of Raglan, he said: "Oh, ut was a pleasant ride, eh?" He won the Open class.

Mark McDonald comes from Waimauku, just down the road from Barry and John Nicholson. He was reckoned to be in the running for best new NZ rider, proving it during the Raglan event by taking out overall first place, plus the 200cc class. And this despite breaking his foot in the final motocross test! Mark rides a PE175, which Barry had super-tuned on the Thursday night

For instance, cars in NZ cost the earth, and their dollar is worth about 90c Australian, so transport of any kind is not taken for granted. Yet Barry offered the full use of his pride and joy, a 1957 Hillman Minx. Little ripper it was, too. Not only that, but he took three days off work and spent them on trips to and from Auckland airport helping get the KTM from customs; as well as speaking funny, New Zealanders are funny about allowing motorcycles into their country — at one stage it looked as if we'd have to kiss goodbye to the bike, it was that grim.

But Barry's nothing if not stubborn, and eventually we loaded the bike into the trailer and headed off.

"No 125 class here in NZ, you know, eh?" he laughed. "You'll have to ride with the 200s! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

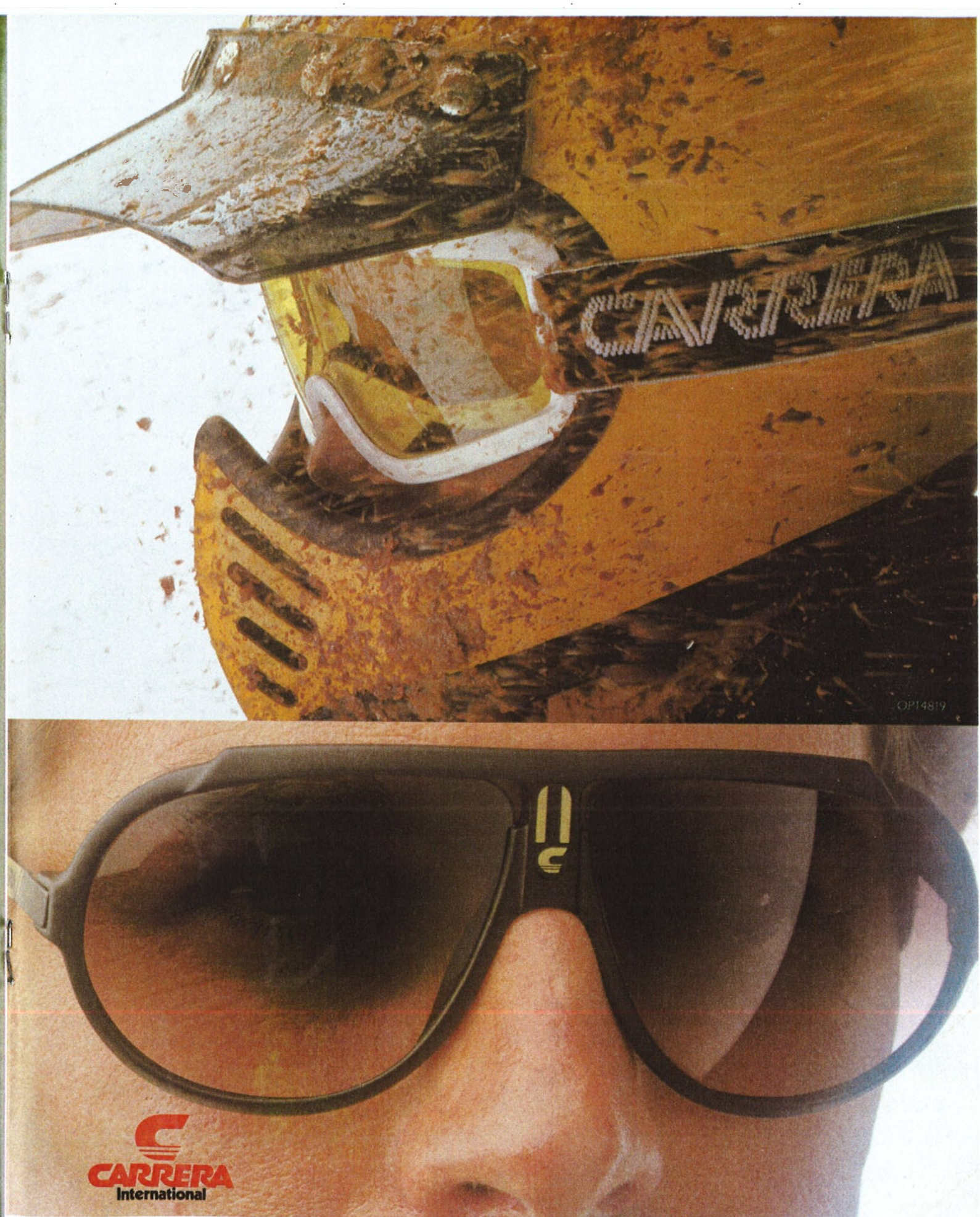
Raglan is a small seaside town on the west coast of the north island, about 180 kms below Auckland. The area in which the enduro was to be run is hilly. Very hilly (NZers say "Very hully"). Grassy, hilly, steep, slippery soil, always moist (although Barry said "There's been no rain for ages, eh?"

### CENTRE RIGHT

Tim Aston has found that there is more sponsorship in enduros, so he's getting involved in them instead of trials. He also finds less and less challenge riding trials, because no-one can seem to beat him.

### ABOVE

Lining up for the start are a few of the remnants of the huge 200cc class. Dashing Darryl August is on the left, wondering if his rear wheel will be able to take the last strain of the event. It did.



Goggles: Model 5017, Sunglasses: Model 5512.





#### ABOVE

Would you believe a cow hurtled out of the bushes and jumped on the KTM only three kilometres into the second section of the first day? And things grew worse from there. Team ADB may get around, but it's not all beer and skittles.

#### ABOVE RIGHT

A Pro-Link negotiates a corner with a backdrop of some typical Raglan scenery.

#### RIGHT

Barry Reiher

#### BELOW RIGHT

John Nicholson

#### BELOW

Graeme Harris (XR200RB) is another trials rider having a fling at enduros. He finished 5th in the 200 class.

before the event, proving that it doesn't pay to help out your main rivals.

Dashing Darryl August I already knew from Cessnock. I remember watching his special tests and thinking how aggressive he was. He was the same at Raglan, although he seemed to get along better with his PE than he did in Australia with the RM converted to an enduro bike. Darryl is the classic of the NZ devil-may-care riding style. On Saturday, only about halfway around the course, a stick smashed 12 of the spokes in his rear wheel.

What did Dashing Darryl do? Press on, of course. Then when he finished the day with some time up his sleeve, why, he pulled the rear wheel out of his PE and began replacing the spokes. Since the rules specifically forbid using any parts not carried during the event he couldn't add any new spokes. What he did was simply redistribute what few spokes were left. Next morning he finished the job, reinstalled the tyres and made the cold start test with no loss of time!

And to add to his reputation he didn't just ride down the track and across the narrow creek at the start, he leapt straight off a metre-high bank and took off like a man possessed.

Furthermore, he finished Day 2 as well.

Next on Barry's list was a new guy to enduros, Tim Aston. Tim is one of NZ's best trials riders, and has competed overseas with some success. But trials in NZ are much the same as in Australia, in a period of stagnation, and Tim had turned to enduros for fun as much as anything — that, plus the fact that there is quite a bit more sponsorship for enduros in NZ than for trials, and he picked up an IT250H. With only a few events under his belt he is already a threat to the longer established winners like John Nicholson.

Greg power is another trials rider turned enduros, although trials is still high on his list. Greg is on the trials committee and guides that sport, but he gets a surge out of enduros. Sponsored by Honda, he rides an XR250RB, and he seems to like enduros the way most of the other good riders do — very hard, so that most people can't finish the course without dropping a lot of time. Greg, like Tim, excels in tight, trialsey going.

From the south island were the Oliver brothers, Stephen and Grant. Both are on XR500RB Hondas, which they love although they both wish the bikes weighed less than their 300lbs. Although Barry rated their chances highly, both had problems during the event and dropped too much time to beat Lester.

This was the Top Ten, or the Short List, if you like. Just as he predicted, they all did well and cleaned up the major positions easily. Most didn't even drop any trail time, which was amazing considering the arrowing.

But then they come from NZ and those conditions are normal.

Continued on page 49

## Why Vendramini?



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## INTERVIEW

# BARRY REIHER & JOHN NICHOLSON

## Why New Zealand is the way it is

Although New Zealand doesn't claim to be the world leader of enduro philosophy, they have given the subject a lot of serious thought and have evolved their own rules to suit their own conditions. Barry Reiher and John Nicholson have, for the last three years, guided NZ enduro thinking and have helped it to where it is today. Both are past and present NZ Enduro Champions, so their events are riders' events. Here is what they had to say.

by Geoff Eldridge

**ADB:** I wanted to talk about your two levels of enduros here. You have had events like Raglan on one hand. That came about because of certain problems. At the other end of the scale you are also putting on something for the Clubman.

**John Nicholson:** Yes, it's something we've been trying to get going, an idea, a concept.

**ADB:** When did you begin to get it going?

**Barry Reiher:** The beginning of last year. We had a two tiered system — because it's so hard to cater for two levels of experience in the one event. We had a lot of organisers who didn't like running A and B grades. It was very, very hard to run an event that's hard enough for the A grade and easy enough for the B Grade. So the idea then came up that we will run one event championshipwise and

then, the same area same forest, make two events of half that course distance. Very easy, very social, very low key. Only about three hours long, which means the marking is very easy...

**JN:** Broken up into a lot of sections which means a lot of controls. Work it out so they are 10 minutes early everywhere, and with five sections you have 50 minutes just sitting around.

**BR:** So what it ends up with is that you get now, with three sponsorships, lots of organisers to run local events but no-one to run championship events!

We have just set up another series this year, the southern series of the Northern Island. That's one in the north, four events, and one in the southern half of the north island, another four events. In the south island on the west coast there is a three event series called the West Coast Series.

**ADB:** You New Zealanders aren't very original when it comes to naming your events, are you? Very earthy.

**JN:** Very directional!

**BR:** At the moment we are trying desperately to get another one going which is the southern half of the south island...

**ADB:** What's that one called?

**BR:** (Ignoring this remark.) We have to get the sponsors first and then the guys are very keen to run them, because as I say I provide

them with Master Sheets and Check Sheets and Riders' Cards. They get their posters done...

**ADB:** Where does the money come from for that — that's your levy is it?

**BR:** That's the levy and also we get any sponsors we can and make sure that they front up with the paper work. It's the first thing they front up with in any sponsorship deal for NZ Enduros.

You can't say to them we want \$1,000. But you can say to them we want your name on top. We want posters and we will put your name on top. We want confirmation sheets and we will put your name on them. They'll do all that and it comes to \$1,000 anyhow.

So that's how the sponsorship comes into it.

The organiser then, all he ends up having to do is actually mark two hours of track, which isn't very hard to do for a club grade event-type thing because it's not very far as the speed averages are slow.

Any championship rider can come along. Anyone can enter these events — but anybody that has come better than 3rd place in any championship event previously held doesn't get scored in the event. So what it ends up as is, all the top riders don't even appear on the check sheets.

A guy that normally comes about 10th looks up and says "Cor! I came 3rd!" It doesn't even click because the experts are not even on the master sheet. You can even tell them at prizegiving that there were a few experts in the event and their scores are over here — the guys are not interested. Their whole thing is, I won, I came 3rd!

The enthusiasm is phenomenal. The guys turn up on the morning, you sign them in and you plonk their bikes in line before you head them out.

**ADB:** Have you ever had any problem with that sort of thing —

signing up on the day? Because back home it's a big psychological thing — an organiser won't run an enter-on-the-day event because he reckons he'll get no one.

**BR:** No, we don't have any problems like that.

**ADB:** What is an average field size?

**BR:** A hundred. In these events last year we ran only one that had under 100 and that was an extremely wet Friday and an extremely wet Saturday. It was at Hikuatia which is an event which is renowned to be extremely tough because of the conditions. What happened was we got a field of 60 which was the poorest field that had ever turned out to one of these clubman events.

**ADB:** Prior to having the two tier system did you notice there was a decline in riders because events were just getting too hard for that type of person?

**BR:** There was a total change in NZ enduros two years ago. There was a noticeable drop in entries, and a noticeable drop in enthusiasm. It seemed that it was only stable riders carrying on. The system was then mooted around to go more to the Six Days idea and so forth. It all came to a head that the events were a bit hard and jokers were blaming the event. They couldn't ride but they were blaming the event because they stopped all they could see in front of them was an impossible river or an impossible hill. To them impossible.

So the concept was, and it was mainly a publicity stunt because there were so few events, that the events were going to be easy from now on.

**JN:** Rather than just say that we adopted new rules.

**BR:** I wrote a whole new rule book.

**JN:** It became self evident that we were going the wrong way. The thing is that we were running the eastern American system. The

**NEW ZEALAND**  
"We have it better right here at home!"



## INTERVIEW: NZ's BARRY REIHER & JOHN NICHOLSON

eastern American system works in the eastern US where they have a legacy of enduro following and guy's fathers rode enduros back in the 40s on Triumphs and things.

The fact that the events are incredibly hard doesn't worry anybody, they expect that over there.

**ADB:** Yes, it seems to me that over there finishing isn't a big deal — just completing one section is.

**BR:** It all boils down to who is going to do the organising of a series and so forth. There were few guys at that stage that would take the job on. I got my arm twisted severely and ended up doing it.

**ADB:** Your official title is New Zealand National Co-ordinator for Enduros, and John is the Publicity Officer, right?

**BR:** This is the third consecutive year that that has been the case. The thing is, now it has grown to be something very big, and very organised. To the extent that it has become more than a rider's, enthusiast's type job to co-ordinate and organise a series.

**JN:** In Australia, you have professional promotion, it seems. I often wonder why in Australia none of the top riders seem to be involved. And yet they do a fair bit of bitching about the way events are run.

**ADB:** They have nothing whatsoever to do with running our events, you're right. The clubs do it, but there is no professionalism at all.

**JN:** We had about two or three guys like that in NZ and one of them left and went to Australia.

**BR:** The thing is, our organisers here are top riders and the top organisers are top riders. They know what to do on the track side and they have been around enough to know what cuts up and so forth.

**ADB:** You have also got the rule that if you don't work in one event of your series you don't count in the results. Is that right?

**BR:** No, not quite right. The rule states that to gain points in NZ Championships, of which there are 3, the North Island and the South Island championship and a National championship (totally separate series) to get allocated any points towards those you must work in one enduro in NZ. It doesn't have to be one in each series. You could work on one in the Suzuki series, or one in the Southern series or even the west coast. But remember also, of course, you also drop one round. Say, in the North Island series, one round you can't compete in.

**JN:** So whilst you can't compete in one you have to help in something, so therefore it follows that most people help in the championship rounds.

**ADB:** You guys have both been over to Australia and probably picked up a few ideas about what was going on. I don't know what

your reaction to that was, but it seems to me that events here have got a lot to teach our events.

**BR:** I think the big difference is we are trying to cater grossly for what the masses want here.

The masses here want trail riding that they can finish. They always like to finish. To any enduro rider the worst thing is not to finish. So what happens is we are trying to cater for A and B grade riders in the same event and still cater for sorting them out in cross country conditions. I think Australia is trying to do the same thing but is sorting them out more in motocross type tests than in cross country conditions.

**JN:** You might have noticed our terrain tests: we pick a piece of consistent off-road riding that's fairly demanding and has varied cross-country riding without being in bottleneck type of stuff, single lane, and that's not dangerous.

It can be up to 15 minutes of riding. The minimum is five. That's one of the rules.

**BR:** One must be a minimum of 10 minutes and one must be a minimum of 5 minutes each day.

**JN:** There have to be two per day, you can't cover the same ground twice and there is no practice on it.

**ADB:** You mean, if it's a two-day the second day can't have the same terrain tests?

**JN:** No. In all these tests you are timed to the second.

Also, we have provisions for motocross tests as well but you are only allowed one motocross test in an enduro.

**ADB:** I can see the value of that because I've just come from the Four Day and after four days of riding we had about 20 riders who were separated by only about 10 seconds.

**JN:** Well, our philosophy is that we are riding cross-country and it's cross-country competition and therefore we are testing someone's ability to ride cross-country.

**ADB:** We brought it back to being motocross special tests for two reasons.

One, it was argued pretty heavily about safety. Everyone felt that by having a motocross test you could walk the track. It was only short and you knew what was there so you didn't get hurt. There would be people around who could help you.

The other reason for it was that everyone who seemed to have a lot to say went to the Six Day and came back and tried to start making our enduros into Six Day Qualifiers. What our aim is now is not to train riders for the Six Days in these events, but to have bulk happy trail riders.

**JN:** There is a conflict there, to say that. You say you are trying to set up events for the bulk of riders, right? But at the same time there is a feeling amongst the top guys here in NZ that we don't want to degrade the standard of events to the point where they are virtually road trials.

We felt that Cessnock was a road trial with special tests around a motocross track (of sorts) and it wasn't really relevant

to cross-country competition and reliability as such.

**BR:** The big thing is that you are talking to a couple of guys that come through the NEI system — the US New England rules system, and we all are old and experienced organisers and guys are really into enduros and cross-country riding.

Although our rules set out how to run special tests, the way I wrote them was that you have got to have those tests but you can have other tests as well. Now, if an organiser wanted to we could make motocross terrain tests count more than cross-country. The reason they don't is not because I write in the organiser's guide "don't do this", it's because organisers don't want to.

**JN:** Even within these rules there's quite a bit of room for scope. For instance, Russell Hurring sways, gets on a different plane sometimes, on different ideas.

A while ago he was into the idea that we should be more like the Six Days, and special tests should be a grasstrack thing, so what he did down at his event was that he organised a grasstrack which was taped all the way. It was 3 kms long: it was a mammoth task! Basically it was a series of points of land that went out into a lake — grassy, just rounded ridges that went out into the lake and he ran this grasstrack, backwards and forwards on these different bits, and it had all these off-cambers, it went down little sheep tracks in places, but basically it was wide, about 20 yard wide, with lots of corners ... all the time on grass.

Our grass, now you have seen it, is long and thick and quite slippery, not dirt with bits of grass placed out like Cessnock.

**ADB:** Nasty, nasty!

**JN:** It was run in two directions and that was a very, very good terrain test. The point is, in our system you have still got the scope to do that but you can't just go around and around in one little spot.

**ADB:** I think a lot of ours now is tending to be a bit of a fad. I don't know where its going to head. But what are you thoughts on that? What do you think it's doing to our riders?

**BR:** Let me answer one thing: your safety aspect was a big argument for your terrain test system. My immediate answer to the safety thing is, going to a motocross personally, and watching, there's more heavy-duty accidents because guys know where they are going and have to ride to the absolute limit of their motorcycle to win.

Whereas in our terrain tests, you've never seen them before. It's cross-country, no danger marks. The fast guys ride as fast as they can handle. The guys that can't handle it are scared and they but-ton off and they go as fast as they can handle.

**JN:** Don't you feel that is just a fluke too? I can see some point in that safety argument, especially

when you're talking about a lot of dust, which seems to be common in Australia.

**BR:** Let me put it this way. The only terrain test I saw in Australia that was valid on your argument was in a quarry in Cessnock.

The other terrain test, as far as I was concerned, you knew that there was a rocky downhill and there was a line you could pick on it. If you held your bike straight, you nailed it and you went! Now, if you made one error on those rocks it was curtains. If you hit the top of that hill and had never seen it before, every rider would have gone 20 miles an hour slower. To me, going down through those rocks having seen them as dangerous. Going down not having seen them wouldn't have been dangerous.

**ADB:** We went through a period there last year and the year before where enduro medical claims on our insurance system were higher than any other branch of the sport. They were just about trying to stop enduros on that basis.

After every enduro you just had so many people off work and claims here and there and everywhere.

**JN:** That's the thing: your conditions might be different and falling off might be more severe.

**BR:** I feel that over there it's awful hard, the ground.

**JN:** We could do it like its done in Australia. We could just ride around for two days in the bush and then have a motocross at the end. But to me all that riding around in the bush just seems pointless.

**ADB:** A lot of guys have said in Australia that you can just sit there and say "he's gonna win and he's gonna win." You don't need to ride at all.

**BR:** No. You may as well sit down and say "Joe Blogs, you ride around for me and I'll sit around until the special tests."

When you see the top riders with bikes and machinery as reliable as they are now, they just have to nurse them along.

**JN:** I get the feeling — I have never been to the Six Day although I know you guys have — but it seems to me a lot of the way the Six Day is, is only that way because it's the result of pressure from the big factories. It seems to me that if you have an event that is basically quite easy and is decided on special tests, the factories could cover their bets far better with an event with motocross tests.

They can say nothing is going to go wrong on the cross-country side of it and the outcome is that by buying up the best special test riders you have got a far better chance of winning.

**ADB:** Europe is different to here and I used to go along with a Six Day philosophy of running our own enduros. But in the last year I have changed my mind and I go along with your ideas a bit more.

One of the reasons it's like it is in Europe is because the biggest

selling motor in Europe is the 50, and the 75.

Anywhere in Europe there are billions of them. Everyone rides them. No-one here would be seen dead on them and our fields are different.

Over there, if you want to go to work, you get a moped. Whole families have been brought up that way, to think 50cc engines are perfect, so that the big emphasis over there is on the small stuff.

Even though they have lot of guys who are on the big capacities, they have to cater for small capacities, so they have a 50, 75, 100 and 125 class.

Now, the rules specifically state that the course has to be navigable by everybody who can enter. So in other words the course has to suit a 50, so you can't put in a big hill or a bottomless bog simply because the 50's can't get through. That defines your course. Then they have big crowds, which is the other thing, so they put the special tests on the way they do.

It's also more historical than it is here because that's where it started. In the old days it was a true road trial, which is where your reliability came from, because the bikes those days would never last 50 miles in a pink fit on bad dirt road.

**Our philosophy is that we are riding cross-country and it's cross-country competition and therefore we are testing someone's ability to ride cross-country.**

— John Nicholson

**BR:** You might have noticed here that the motocross test at Raglan wasn't used as a motocross test, it was used as publicity, entertainment stuff. Which is great and that's what its all about. All the guys who could ride in that test rode balls out for a giggle.

**ADB:** Yeah, that's another thing. You guys stipulated that if you didn't finish that final test, you might as well have stayed home the whole weekend. Yet everybody went out and rode like a maniac, except me, and endangered their chances. I couldn't see the point in that attitude.

**BR:** You have to realise that no one thought about that — we're not sensible enough to figure it out. We're just into riding. Everybody went flat-out — they could have broken a chain or seized the bike. Silly things.

**JN:** I tell you who did ride very circumspectly — the man on the blue bike! And he spent about 3 races looking at the track. The trials guy: a very calculating lad, is our Mr Tim Aston.

**ADB:** Good on him.

**BR:** You see, that's the difference. I'm a hoon and he's not. And that's where NZ Enduros have been in the past, in the hands of guys who love riding, not in the hands of guys who love winning.

**ADB:** Back home, if you reached the end and you were down 5,000 points and they had a special test you would virtually just motor around. You wouldn't jeopardise anything. You have gone that far, what are you going to prove?

**JN:** Well, I did that at Cessnock. Rode very safely in the final test.

**BR:** Sucker! I thrashed my gem of a motorcycle till it died!

**JN:** You mean you pushed it up all the hills! (Laughter.)

**ADB:** But you see what I'm getting at. You guys have a completely different attitude. I don't think that's necessarily wrong, as what you are doing is really suiting your own conditions — That's what we have got to start thinking about in Australia. Not just blindly following everybody from overseas.

**BR:** Right. We have got a big attitude change now, here in NZ. Because we put a lot of effort into getting local events, the clubman events, there are more of them than championship events now. This could be why Raglan was a bit harder. Because we have got local events and if guys can go to a local event and ride, fair enough. And if they go to a championship event and can't hack it — that's fair enough too, because they can always say, OK I will go to some more local events.

**ADB:** Championship being North, South Island Championship or North, South and National?

**BR:** Our enduro calendar at the moment has 25 events in NZ. So the other 17 are clubman events. If you go to a championship trial in NZ and you can't ride or you are a B grade rider you won't get through one section. They're hard.

I think that we can do that now, and push the publicity to say, OK not finishing a championship event is still good. Whereas in the past not finishing was bad. The next step is to get them to say OK, not finishing a championship was good as long as you get to section 2. So it becomes more like you see in the Eastern Enduros in the States. Guys say, "I got to section 2, I'm gonna go back next year and see if I can get to section 3!" Whereas the top riders were aiming for cleans: you don't mention that this way we can get back to the stage where top riders are tested.

You might have noticed that there were about 8 riders at Raglan who cleaned both days and did it no sweat, and we only had 23 finishers.

To get those guys to keep their standard up we have got to have events like that.

**JN:** Notwithstanding that, we still didn't have enough people finish at Raglan. I think that 23 is a bit light out of 100. I reckon 30 to 35 is more like it out of 100 in a hard event — a national event.

**ADB:** An event can be hard, yet you could probably still finish 70 people. Is that possible, do you think?

**JN:** No. Because the standard of riders is just so bad. Most of the those who didn't finish, didn't complete the first section.

**BR:** What's annoying is everyone else is saying enduros are hard, but for two years now I've never had to work really hard to get over any obstacle. That's why I would like to see championship enduros toughen up: to make the top guys really work as much as other guys are working in a club event.

Otherwise you are catering totally for them.

As far as I'm concerned personally I put in a lot of work why shouldn't I ride what I want?

**JN:** Like, our national champion gave up because there was no challenge left in it for him. It was too easy, he said, he didn't just want to race around. What percentage would they represent? Oh, very small but it is a viewpoint.

**ADB:** Well, we have viewpoints like that too.

**BR:** That's why my desperate aim at the moment is to go to eastern enduros in the States because they are publicised as being tough ... and nothing here gives that challenge anymore. That's not the national viewpoint, it's something very personal.

**BR:** Mind you I think we've come somewhere in New Zealand because no-one was moaning that the event was too hard at Raglan, which is a big change. They all said we'll have to work on speed

**If you go to a championship trial in NZ and you can't ride or you are a B grade rider, you won't get through one section. They're hard.**

— Barry Reiher

and that sort of thing and that's a definite change in attitude. I think we may now be able to come around slowly and be able to set them a bit like that.

**ADB:** One thing I did notice was your course-marking. It wasn't very good, was it?

**JN:** Raglan was harder than it should have been. That was because the last one was too easy. Well, partly because of that. They got feedback from the riders that it was a bit easy. It was a bit short really, more than easy, last time. Other factors affected Raglan — for instance, the guy that has been doing Raglan for umpteen zillion years had a crook back, Gary Wendt.

Gary never really saw the whole course so it was done by all new guys. Enduros go in cycles. Guys drop out and you get a fusion of new blood and with the guys who marked the course what they come up with was just not quite fine-tune.

**BR:** Gary told them where to go. What they did was, they thought, "oh this is pretty easy". It takes a very experienced guy to know what 100 bikes can do. So they packed the course with too much hard stuff.

**JN:** Also, they got sucked into the

fact they wanted more distance and they got into the old thing — well, there's a real good track down there but to loop it up, well, we have just to go up this range right here. It won't be too bad, no they'll get up there ...

**BR:** A problem with those guys was they didn't realise that to get such a long course, which they wanted, meant extra marking.

**ADB:** How long was it?

**BR:** It was what we consider a very long course, 150 kilometres a day.

**ADB:** By your standards, that is a long event?

**BR:** Yes, because by our standards Raglan's speed averages were very fast: they were 30 kilometres an hour in that going, which is fast. And they had to have that tight average because they were going so far and because they were going so far they couldn't do the marking up to standard and one thing led to another. It all boils down to the fact of lack of organisational talent and top riders who could have told them.

**ADB:** This business with the marking, I thought Raglan was very sparse ... the arrows were very small and not easy to see. Your entry fee is \$12.00, which by Australian standards is less than half price. Obviously, you don't have a lot of money to splash around for things like arrows, so that's why you go for your method of marking?

**JN:** No, we don't go for the Raglan sort of marking at all!

**BR:** The markers actually in the rules are a given size.

**ADB:** What is the size based on?

**BR:** The size is based on people like us deciding what we can see! I have actually decided that the size in the rules isn't any good. We received our own arrows the other day for our event, made to the rules, and they are too small.

**ADB:** When you decided that arbitrary size, what was it?

**BR:** 300 by 100 millimetres. The thing was, in farmland it is too small. It comes down to organisational talent in NZ — like, we could have picked out immediately those Raglan markers were too small. We could have also told those guys not to place markers on ridge tops, and farmland, because looking into the daylight, you can't see them.

**JN:** Another problem was that they wanted to make the markers on plastic and they couldn't find dazzle paint to spray on plastic so they sprayed it with a Dulon lacquer which was not fluorescent to the extent that we needed.

I noticed that in Australia you guys didn't use fluorescent markers.

**ADB:** But you know what makes our arrows so easy to see? They are printed on a white background, and they are much bigger.

**JN:** This is something I mentioned to Barry a while ago but we didn't come to any agreement on it. I reckon that it would be a lot more visible to have them on a white background.







## RAGLAN, NZ

In the first place there is no such thing as giving a rider maximum points for failure to finish this final race against the clock: DNF it and you might as well have stayed at home the whole weekend.

Does that worry the New Zealanders? Not in the slightest: they all rode this test as if their lives depended on it. No matter how far back in the points they were they ALL tried to win and they ALL rode ten-tenths. The best they could each hope to gain was 10 or 15 points, which in all cases wasn't enough to make any differences.

Australian riders are cool and calculating in this respect — they won't jeopardise their finish to gain a few points when they are out of contention anyway.

New Zealanders are in there for the race.

On the way home in the Air New Zealand DC10 I reached the conclusion that I was enjoying plane flights a lot more than enduros these days. Gore, the south island's second round of the National Championships, didn't really appeal to me at that time, looking out the window at the cumulus clouds and the Tasman far below.

New Zealand had been interesting, no doubt about that. But these long trips to go places only to wallow around in bogholes or crash all over a series of exposed, slippery tree roots weren't my cup of tea.

On the other hand, the good NZ riders loved it, and listening in fascination to their strange accents as they described the Hikuatia Experts run or the ridgelines of some other enduro, I wondered if they weren't all crazy, these people across the Tasman.

Maybe I'd have to go back to Gore to find out, eh?

## RESULTS UP TO 200cc

- 1 Mark McDonald ..... 2,978 Gold
- 2 Barry Reiher ..... 3,134 Gold
- 3 Darryl August ..... 3,187 Gold
- 4 Barry Watkins ..... 3,377 Gold
- 5 Graeme Harris ..... 3,466 Silver

## 200cc-260cc

- 1 Tim Aston ..... 3,077 Gold
- 2 John Nicholson ..... 3,428 Gold
- 3 Greg Power ..... 3,689 Silver
- 4 Russel Mills ..... 3,868 Silver

## OPEN

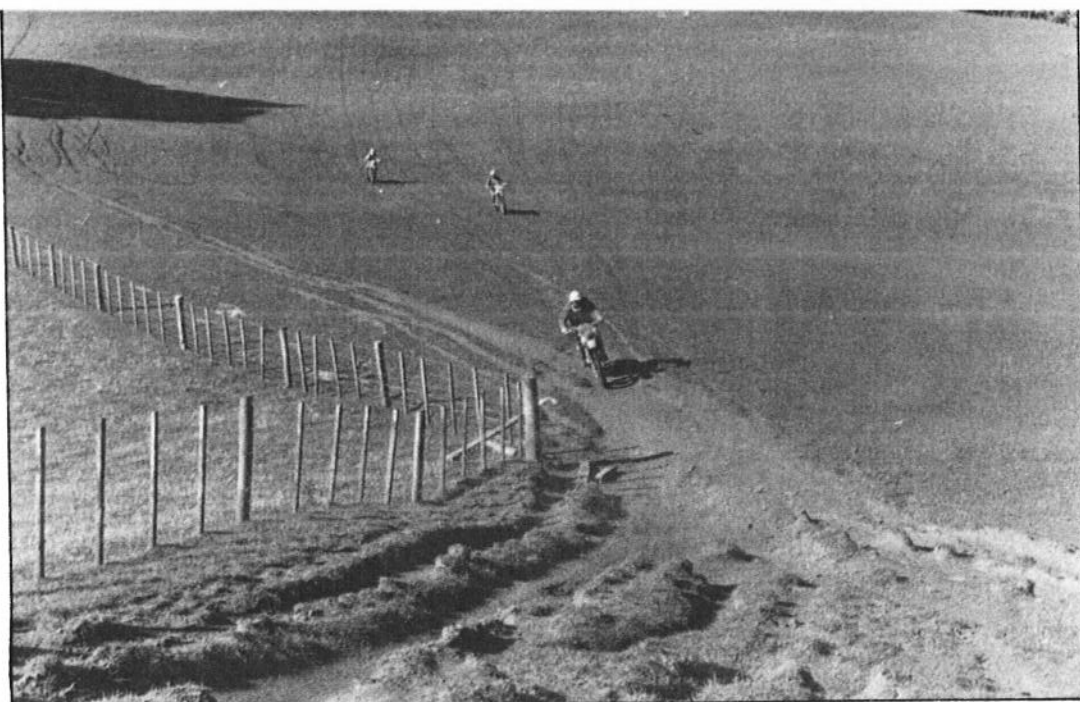
- 1 Lester Yates ..... 3,866 Gold
- 2 Stephen Oliver ..... 4,937 Silver
- 3 Grant Oliver ..... 8,771 Bronze
- 4 Murray Thorn ..... 8,991 Bronze

## CENTRE RIGHT

The first of the 200cc class at a control, halfway through the first day.

## RIGHT

Mark McDonald in action.



I can remember thinking: "Now that's got to be pretty well par for the course" right before I was about to leave for the last enduro I went to. Suddenly, right there, the stupidity of the whole deal made me feel like a bit of a fool.

Hell, who in their right mind is going to invest a whole pile of money in a motorbike, fit himself out in the **trickest** looking riding gear, get himself a really **spoofy** van, pay **heaps** in entry fees, lay out bulk dollars for fuel for the bike. THEN ... get this ... THEN have their bike's whole gearbox spread around the floor of the garage, half an hour before you're due to drive for five hours to get to an event you've been looking forward to for three months?

That would have to take the cake for stupidity ... well, maybe not stupidity, but something pretty close to it, now wouldn't it?

Problem is, that's what I do for every event. I'll say that again: EVERY event. And it's damn near driving me crazy! There have been times, I can tell you, when I've made the firm resolution to mend my ways, and get ready well and truly before I'm due to ride, but the incessant urgency of the late night spanner turner must provide some sort of essential drug that makes it just about impossible to change once you've developed this tardiness.

All I know is there's no way that I can ever have my bike ready to ride until it's the day before the event, or even better, on the actual day itself. The most incredible thing, though, is that most of the people I know who are into enduros like me (with a few notable exceptions, of whom nothing more will be heard in this little piece for obvious reasons) are exactly the same.

Let me illustrate the situation with a few examples and you'll understand what I mean.

There was a time when I was going to an event in sunny Queensland with my brother and the scenario is as follows: Amazingly, I'd finished working on my bike about two that afternoon (that is, Friday: it was a two day enduro we were going to) and I was at work till six after that. When I came home from work there was brother with his damn KTM spread all over the place, trying to figure out why his lights

# A STITCH IN TIME...



## Houring out before you even get to the race

*If you're one of those people who always has his bike ready two weeks before it is due to be ridden, have your gear washed, ironed and packed ready to go, have always got a car with a full gas tank and a trailer whose lights always work, then this story isn't for you.*

by Philip Eldridge

didn't work, not to mention the fact that he'd only just put the head and barrel back on two minutes before I walked in after having it rebored.

Phew! That was OK, I guess, but none of the lights on the trailer worked either, and there was a problem with the car (this, we were going in his van this time): the fuel gauge

didn't work, showing a perpetual state of emptiness. He couldn't remember how long it had been since he'd put petrol in it, and there was a petrol strike on in Sydney at the time.

Needless to say, when we did finally manage to get every thing fixed and on our way, it meant an all night drive to the site of the event, getting there

at seven the next morning. His start time was seven fifteen, mine was seven thirty three. Also, needless to say, neither of us set the world on fire that day: he lost something like twenty three minutes and I lost something like fifty eight minutes. I finished that event

► over