

THE MOLE

NEW BIKE RUMOURS BY OUR MAN IN THE KNOW

BMW airbags

I RECKON BMW is almost certain to be the first manufacturer to follow Honda's lead and start fitting airbags to bikes. But as far as I understand, the German company is also looking at several other innovative safety ideas. These include traction control systems and a new generation of ABS brakes that work even when a bike is tipped over in a corner. The technology is almost ready, but I've heard that the firm doesn't want to throw it all straight on to its next generation of bikes, as it fears future riders could rely too heavily on the electronics rather than using their own common sense.

Chinese seizure

APPARENTLY a Chinese company came to grief earlier this month when it got too brazen with its cheap copies of other companies' bikes. The firm had 11 of its bikes seized at the recent Milan show after a fellow exhibitor

pointed out that they were exact copies of its own machines. Police swept in and took the bikes as evidence, arresting several people for patent violations. No names have been released, but my guess is the bikes were copies of Blata minimoto, as the Czech firm has been getting very touchy about Chinese fakes in recent months.

Yamaha clutches

THEY'VE already brought us fly-by-wire throttles and semi-automatic, clutchless bikes this year - and for their next trick I've heard Yamaha will combine the two technologies to create a fly-by-wire clutch. With sports bike riders unlikely to give up their clutches altogether, but clutch actions getting increasingly heavier as engine power increases, the firm is looking at electronic actuation controlled by a conventional lever - which they claim will be easy to control, regardless of how strong the clutch springs are.



New Speed Triple/Tiger coming?

MY spies near Hinckley tell me they've seen some strange machines lurking around the Triumph factory. One appears to be a hybrid of Tiger-style stance but with Speed Triple running gear, including hefty upside-down forks, road tyres and a stumpy seat unit. Now that sounds like a superbmoto-style competitor for Ducati's Multistrada to me. If it gets the 1050 Speed Triple engine, it should be lots of fun!

MCN INVESTIGATION

Defiance over speeding claim

Police expert plans to challenge evidence in court

BY STEVE FARRELL

A POLICE video expert's testimony is set to help thousands of motorcyclists avoid speeding fines after he claimed that mobile speed cameras are "totally inaccurate".

Lee Tracey, an expert consultant on video evidence for West Midlands Police, says lasers used in speed camera vans are likely to be less accurate on bikes than cars - and that the laser systems themselves don't even work properly on cars.

Tracey, who was snapped by a police camera van, told MCN that he plans to prove his findings by obtaining the film of him allegedly speeding and using his expertise to show how fast he really was going.

"The film will show the time," said 79-year-old Tracey, who is also a town councillor in his home of Oswestry. By noting the time

elapsed between his passing between two reference points in the road Tracey says he can prove his real speed. "All I have to do is measure the distance between two points on the actual stretch of road," he said.

MCN first reported concerns over the accuracy of the LTI 20.20 lasers in July, after the Home Office admitted they'd never been tested for accuracy on bikes. In speed camera vans the devices are attached to video cameras. This link between the laser and the video camera may allow Tracey to bring his expertise for defence into court.

Tracey provides the police with expert forensic advice on CCTV and digital TV images and says speed camera evidence falls within his "engineering area of expertise."

He claims to have obtained an LTI 20.20 and tested it for himself.

"They are positively not accurate," he said. "I pointed one at a wall and



WHO said the camera never lies?

it told me the wall was doing 40mph. The problem is that the technology was never designed to measure speed. It was designed for surveyors to measure distance."

Tracey says he was "just meandering" through a 30mph zone in Wrexham in October when a speed camera van snapped him doing an alleged 39mph. He responded to the Fixed Penalty Notice that landed on his doorstep with a letter asking to see the film,

and received a reply from the North Wales Speed Camera Partnership informing him that they were "not obliged to supply it at this stage."

Tracey is now awaiting a summons, and the North Wales partnership won't be able to withhold the film in court.

Andrew Dalton, a partner at bike-friendly solicitors White Dalton, in Dunstable, said: "They don't have to provide it prior to the hearing but magistrates don't like it when the prosecutors don't reveal their hand if it's deemed reasonable for them to do so."

Tracey added: "I've heard of three cases of other experts asking to see film to work out their speed for themselves. In each case the partnerships said they would not. Then, when magistrates ordered them to provide the film, the cases were dropped. I intend to fight this all the way."

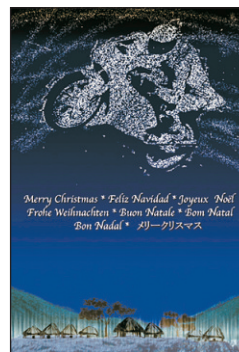
Gear to cheer their Xmas

RIDERS for Health are now selling charity Christmas cards with a biking theme. The cards are generously donated each year by Dorna - the exclusive holder of the commercial and TV rights to MotoGP - meaning that all the money raised will go directly to supporting the life-saving charity's work in Africa.

For the cost of just one pack of cards, RfH can help

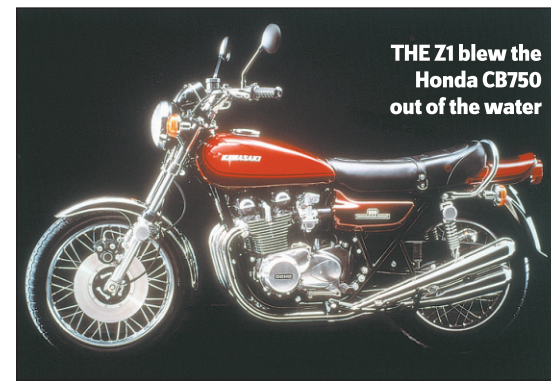
support a health worker to cover 30 miles of hostile terrain to deliver vital health care to remote communities.

The cards are available in packs of five and start at just £3.75 per pack (including postage and packaging). For full details and to order please visit www.riders.org or phone 01327-300047. Riders for Health T-shirts, caps, wristbands and coffee-table books are also available.



THE perfect rider's card

50 MCN STORIES FROM



THE Z1 blew the Honda CB750 out of the water

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MCN SAYS

From small acorns, some mighty stories can grow...

'What has changed in the 50 years since the first MCN is how readers can influence the world of biking'

AS you will have noticed by now, there's a whiff of birthday candles about MCN this week: it's our 50th anniversary, and forgive us while we pat ourselves - and you - on the back.

This week, our front page story tells the tale of a motorcyclist preparing to stand up against the authorities to do the right thing. This time, it's a man in a court of law who reckons the techniques used by the police to convict bikers of riding offences are about as reliable on motorcycles as wax brake pads. Read about Lee Tracey's claim, left.

It wasn't so different 50 years ago, when our first ever front page told of racing superstar Geoff Duke - truly biking's first Beckham - being suspended for six months for daring to stand up and be counted in a riders' strike against greedy race organisers.

The fall-out from the Duke suspension ultimately led to the withdrawal from GP racing of Gilera, Mondial and Moto Guzzi; firms which, back in 1955, had as high a profile as Honda, Yamaha and Ducati do now. Their refusal to race handed success firstly to MV, then Japan Inc. So, a little like the growth of MCN itself, from small acorns a mighty story can grow. Time will tell if Tracey's court claim has as much impact.

What has changed in 50 years is the way the views of the public - that'll be you, the reader - can influence the world of biking. It's a fast-reacting industry when it needs to be, and our role is to represent you at every turn.

What you think really matters, which is why the industry cares what we think - as, ultimately, it's a reflection of what you think. So here's to us, and you.

**'I intend to fight
this all the way'**

POLICE CAMERA EXPERT LEE TRACEY

LEE TRACEY aims to scientifically disprove the speeding claim

THE ARCHIVE

Kawasaki releases the Z1, September 21, 1972

KAWASAKI'S brutal 900c Z1 couldn't fail to grab our attention when it was first launched, and we brought you the first details before the paint had dried on the show bike's tank.

With its air-cooled, dohc, in-line four cylinder engine, the Z1 instantly became one of the world's most desirable bikes.

The big Kwak was the first in a line of big-bore Kawasakis whose family line

can be traced right up to this year's new ZX-10R and ZZ-R1400. It made a claimed 82bhp at a time when Honda's CB750 made only 67bhp.

The design wasn't revolutionary - the technology was fairly mainstream, but Kawasaki just did it a bit better than everyone else.

The Z1 also had an utterly distinctive style, with the unique quad-pipe arrangement and the stylish 'duck-tail'

The big Kwak's claimed 82bhp didn't fail to impress

rear mudguard which inspired the exceedingly distinctive 2003 streetfighter-style ZX-9R-engined Z1000.

Those very first pictures of the

landmark Z1 made it on to the front cover of MCN in the September 21 issue in 1972, almost immediately after its launch at the annual Cologne bike show.

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