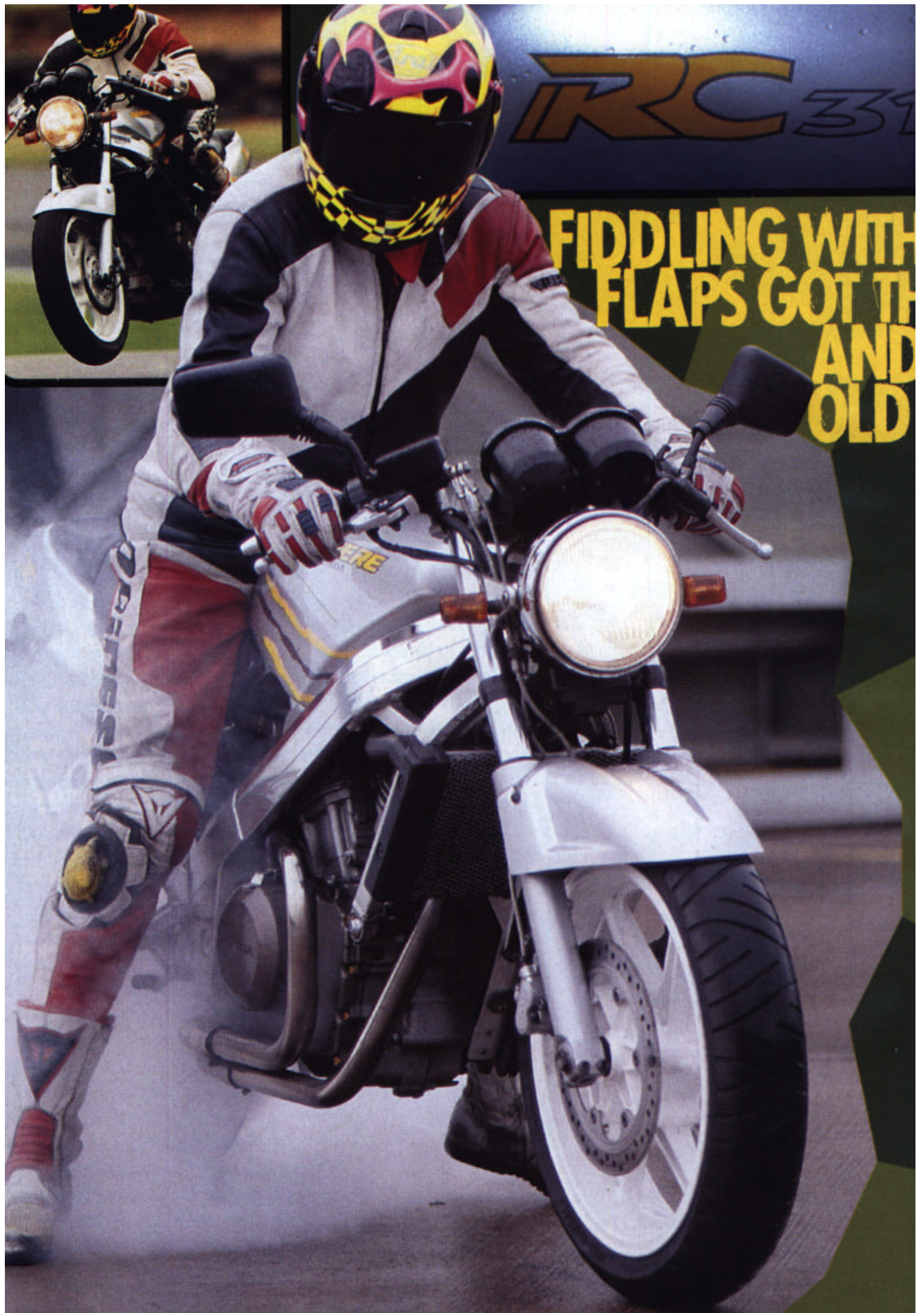


AFRICA

Words: Dave Campbell Pics: Simon Everett

Tents make shite air-raid shelters. Libya's interestingly coiffured leader, Colonel Gaddafi, found that out a few years ago when a Yankee Stinger missile came tramping through the ceiling of his Bedouin bivouac one tea-time and blew the fuck out of his sheep's-eye omelette. Talk about having egg on your face... The F-111 responsible for launching the air-to-tent attack on Mr. Terrorism's North African lean-to flew from an American airbase in Britain and was involved in one of Maggie Thatcher's last displays of 'the special relationship' supposedly enjoyed between the UK and the US, before everyone wised-up and binned her. You'll remember those days: Maggie more-or-less threw herself at Ronnie 'No Brain' Raygun, followed by George 'Boring' Bush, Britain became nothing more than a huge aircraft carrier for America to fight their squabbles from, and – as The The so eloquently put it – we were rapidly becoming 'the 51st state of the USA'. But thankfully those days are over. The Yanks have gone home, F-111 bombers have been replaced by Tornado fighters, and Gaddafi keeps his head down lest he receive another ballistically interrupted meal-time.

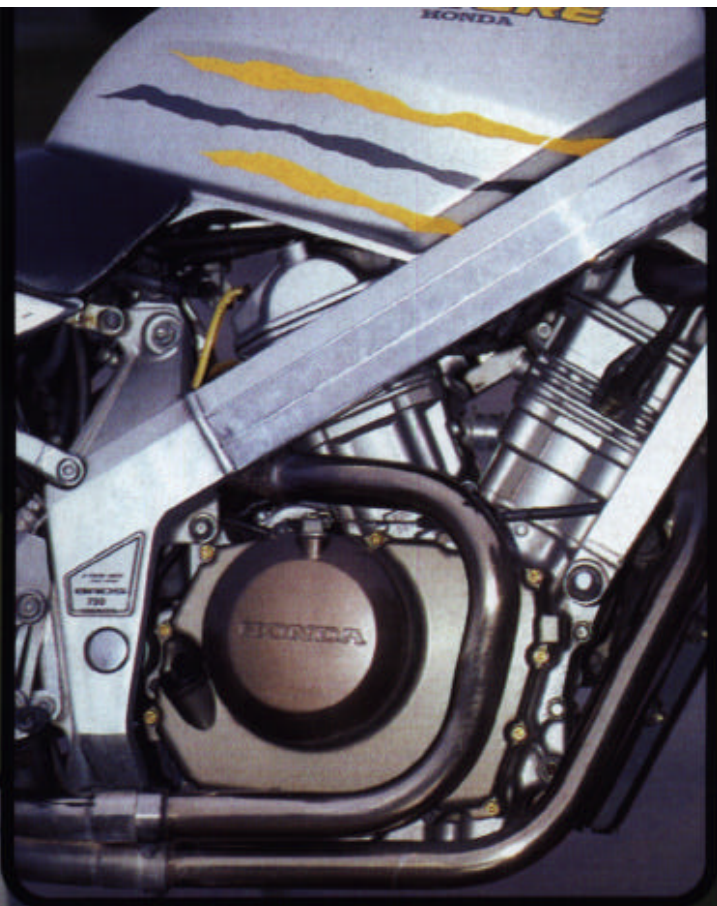


RC39

**FIDDLING WITH
FLAPS GOT THE
AND
OLD**

So what's the connection between entries in Jane's Fighting Aircraft, tents, and things with 'Africa' in the title? Well, at first glance Totty Tothill's Honda Revere might seem as standardised as a Libyan's moustache, but look again and strange anomalies start to appear: chain drive, twin discs, 'Severe' paintwork... and an engine from an Africa Twin. All is very definitely not what it seems. When he's not fettling the RC31, or hooning round deserted Scottish backroads and race circuits on track-days, Totty works as an avionics technician in the RAF. He's currently on a twenty week tour of duty in The Falklands, dodging penguins and preventing the Argies from converting a corner of a foreign field which is forever England into a bloody cattle ranch and sheep station called the Malvinas.

MAGGIE THATCHER'S PROBLEM SORTED. GIVE HIM A RIGHT ROUSER-TENT



He bought the grey imported bike (for £2200) from B&M in Preston three years ago. While we got the lumbering shaft-driven 650 Revere, Honda in their wisdom supplied the Yanks — the vast majority of whom ought to stick to fat-arsed cruiser crap — with an alloy-framed, chain-driven, sharp-handling sportsbike called the Bros. Actually I've just realised why the Brits didn't get the Bros — at about the time it was launched our pop charts were being assailed by three bleached-haired, leather-jacketed poofs of the same name, whose brief flirtation with stardom lasted about as long as one of their records or until their tans started to fade, so no manufacturer in their right mind would want to be associated with 'em. That explains it. Anyway, Totty bought the Bros, whacked an American race-pipe on it and went thrashing.

Apparently the alloy Bros frame (also coded RC31) is very similar to an NSR250 chassis, which means it turns faster than a Cruise missile spotting its target and can carry enough corner speed to frighten Luca Cadalora. These traits were ace for race-track fun, but the whole plot was rather let down by the weak single front disc and an unadjustable rear shock which was soggy than papier maché. The arse end was sorted by fitting a rebuilt, re-valved, re-sprung FireBlade unit, while the front was taken care of by fitting a complete CBR600FM front end. This bolted straight in — no machining, no one-off parts, no nothing. Just a ring spanner and a torque wrench and hey presto! Instant brakes,

wider tyres and better-damped forks. Top mod. Also, since the Severe ended up weighing just 160kgs the twin discs gave instant-right-now-brick-wall-stick-through-the-spokes stopping power. With the handling now even more sorted Totty started racking-up some decent mileage, taking the bike from 6000kms to 53000kms whenever he had time off from fiddling with fighter flaps. Oooerr.

The problem with dead sorted handling, of course, is that you can push it harder and harder and then wish you'd got another twenty horsepower to fling you at your favourite corners even faster. Totty had heard, through the Hawk GT/Bros Club that 750cc Africa Twin desert race replica cams and pistons can be persuaded into the Bros motor to give a bit of a boost to the wanky standard 45bhp. Being the sort of bloke who doesn't do things by halves Totty realised he could save himself all the

hassles of re-boring and timing discs by just dropping a complete XRV (Africa Twin) engine between the spars. The only problem was he couldn't find a suitable donor engine...

It's at this point that most of us would just say 'fuck it', sell the half-finished project on to some optimistic fool then go down the pub and bore all our mates about what might have been. But after a working life spent with computers that are so smart they can fly a plane that has the aerodynamics of a one-winged bumble-bee, a quick surf of the Internet holds no fear for Totty. So he logged-on and got busy with that mouse. Skirting some top porn websites he finally alighted on a netted-up German breaker's home-page and located an Africa Twin engine. A spot of virtual-shopping later and he was the new owner of the complete engine, oil cooler and CDI unit which all came winging over from Munich for the princely sum of £800.

Although it was a bit of a tight fit the XRV lump went straight in, mostly because the engine mounting holes on both sets of crankcases are identical. With the swop completed, he'd achieved everything he set out to get — instant 60bhp (a 25% increase over stock), together with a corresponding hike in torque. A new wiring loom needed to be made up, but calling on his military boffin training he soon had one knitted and functioning. Everything fired up right away, but there was a bit of a problem. As in 'front wheel straight over your head on a whiff of throttle but a top-end of about 43mph'. Thanks for nothing, trailly-type gearing... B&C Sprockets of Potterhanworth,

Original Make and Model: 1988 Honda 650 Bros (41bhp @ rear wheel)

Engine: 1993 Honda Africa Twin 750cc (XR750), currently stock cams and bore – soon to be increased by 1mm with Hi-Comp pistons to 800cc, 36mm Keihin carbs with modified slides/needles/jets, modified airbox and Hi-Flow filter, anti-backlash gears removed from crank, heavy-duty clutch springs, EBC plates, sound deadening bobbins junked from clutch unit, Dale Walker Holeshot performance race pipe, 60bhp (25% power increase)

Frame: Stock Bros/RC31

Front End: Complete Honda CBR600FM front end in Bros yokes, revalved forks, Earls braided brake lines, Ferodo race pads

Rear End: Stock single-sider, revalved and resprung FireBlade shocker, Earls braided line, Ducati 916 chainguard

Bodywork: Stock, but modified sidepanel to accept larger Africa Twin CDI, frenched-in plumbing pipe in tail unit to allow clearance for wiring

Electrics: Stock bar Africa Twin CDI/rectifier unit grafted into loom, 100/80W headlight bulb

Paint: Gordon Alexander, Academy Street Body Shop, Forfar (01307 463591). Helmet paint by Andy Beazley at Splat! Design (0116 2341222)

Polishing: By owner

Engineering: All by Jim Smith and owner, billet curly sidestand to clear exhaust routing in T75 alloy, adjustable ride height via shim-stack, billet rear sets in T75 alloy, Africa Twin oil cooler on aero-alloy brackets

Thanks To: Shaun Wits and Lutz of Munich, Andrew Hart Honda – Dundee (01382 667281), Jim Smith's ABDR Motorcycles, Steve Beatty (Hawk GT/Bros Club) <http://www.the.net.co.uk>, Andy Connolly and Paul Stephenson for many bruised knuckles, long suffering wife Jackie – I'm sorry, I really am! BEATTY @ the.net.co.uk

chainwheels, so at least Totty can now use the first two gears without fear of having the thing park on his head. Even though he went as large as he could on the gearbox output shaft, and fitted the smallest possible sprocket on the rear, the Severe will still rev into the red in top gear. He's gained an 18mph increase in top speed though...

The extra zip in the acceleration, together with a better top speed, is ideal for Totty's favourite pastime of fucking-off much larger and more powerful bikes at track-days. The conversion has left the Severe 70lbs lighter than stock, so it's even easier to stuff it under other bikes in the corners and get 'em severely (groan) pissed off. Plus they think they've been stuffed by a standard shaft-drive Revere, which has got to be a top wind-up. The whole job stands Totty at a mere £3900, including the purchase price of the original bike, and in twenty years of motorcycling he reckons his special gives him the best money/grin factor return ever. As usual, with most of the specials we feature, further mods are planned. He already has an MHP one-off exhaust on its way, ready for fitting on his return from the South Atlantic, and a set of 800cc high-comp slugs are going to find their way into the barrels at some point. So he didn't avoid the reboring bother, after all. In fact, the more we quizzed Totty about the bike the more we realised how completely in love with it he is. Quite a lot of specials end up being advertised for sale as soon as they're finished so the owner can move onto the next project, but not this one, no sir. It ain't for sale and thrashing it all over the shop gives him a right old trouser-tent. There, knew I could get a throw-away tent reference in there somewhere...

