



'I went through the windscreen and landed in the driver's lap, much to their surprise!'

NICK'S BIKES



EARLY DAYS

Triumph Speed Triple
"I failed my test three times"



FIRST RECORD

Triumph Daytona 900
"My first speed attempt in 1996"



FASTEST EVER

Yamaha YZF-R1
"I rode it around the world in 19 days"

NEW SERIES
MY LIFE IN BIKES

Nick Sanders

Adventure riding's answer to Valentino Rossi tells MCN about the bikes that helped him tackle the world - and win

AGE: 55 OCCUPATION: LONG DISTANCE RECORD-BREAKER NATIONALITY: BRITISH

What was your first bike?

It was a Honda 90 step-thru - brilliant fuel economy and a crap riding experience, but it gave me freedom as a kid. I used to carry all my worldly possessions on it when I lived on my boat (such as a TV and full-size racing bicycle). Yep, I was a nutter even then! I ended up crashing it into a car when I was 18. I went through the windscreen and landed in some driver's lap, much to their surprise. Luckily, I wasn't going fast enough to do any serious damage.

Name the bikes you've owned

My first bikes were the Honda 90 and 50, super-sad but lovely. I failed my bike test three times because I couldn't demonstrate the use of a clutch. Then came the MZ 250 and after that was the entire Triumph range from the mid-90s. I owned Speed Triples, the Thunderbird, Daytona 900 and T595. Then I moved on to Yamaha. I rode the single-cylinder XT660 (which I love) to

Timbuktu twice, the Super Ténéré the length of the Americas three times, and four R1s round the world on four separate occasions. I also rode my Enfield Bullet 500 round the world, too.

What's in the garage at the moment?

All of the above, I never sell or give away anything I've ridden - apart from a Ural combo.

Which has been the best/worst?

The best is definitely my 2005 R1, the bike I rode around the world in 19 days. At 171kg it is light, skittish, super-quick for overtakes (and undertakes) in India, and just perfect for short arses like me. The worst bike I've owned would have to be my Enfield. It broke down every three days and made me cry with frustration.

If you could have any bike in the world what would it be and why?

I quite fancy the Yamaha XV950 for a



Nick's glad to be alive for wife and baby

'I failed my bike test three times because I couldn't demonstrate the use of a clutch'

muckabout in America. But I'm happy with what I've got. A mate is fitting a sidecar to one of my XTs at the moment so I can carry my dog about, and some of my kids.

What would you do if you saw someone trying to nick your bike?
I'd f**kin' nut him, but if they were really big I'd be very polite and ask someone else to do it...

What are your favourite pieces of biking kit?

My trusted helmet: an HJC RPHA 10+, it's so quiet and extremely light. I also use Touratech's Campanero suit because it's 100% weatherproof. I rode 100,000 miles in my last one and lived in it for a year, it looked well dirty but it still kept me dry.

Who's your favourite motorcycle racer of all time?

Sheene for his character, McGuinness

for his staying power and Robert Dunlop because we were mates and I admire his sons. Cameron Donald is a great street racer and so was Martin Finnegan. I was one of the last people to film him before he died. And also Guy Martin, probably a bit hard work until you get to know him but a great character nonetheless. Who can you not like, they are all heroes.

What was your most memorable experience on a motorcycle?

When I returned home after setting the Guinness Record for riding around the world the first time in 1996, I rode into the arms of my wife knowing she was going to have my first baby and I was still alive to be its dad. And when I finally rode the length of the Americas on a Super Ténéré in 21 days I felt I'd really achieved something, for me, for the bike, and importantly for my sponsors. But the best motorcycle experience is one I can have everyday; just jumping on my bike, flicking it into life and knowing that for a few minutes, hours or days, I'm truly free.

■ **Next week**
Comic Ross Noble talks bikes

