

Indicators and numberplates don't seem to be slowing them down... or preventing them from having a ball



Words Simon Hargreaves, Tony Hoare Photography Rory Game, Chippy Wood

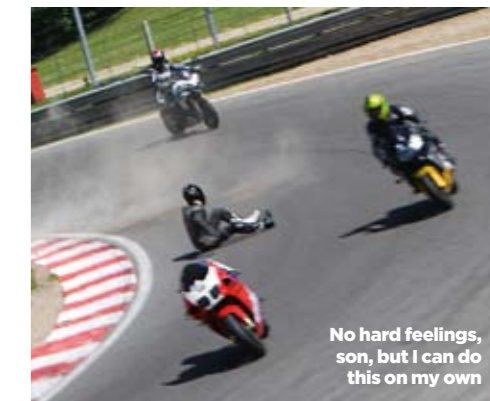
# BRANDS HATCH RECLAIMED



**Bike's first road bike trackday proves you don't need tyre warmers, a van and a stopwatch to enjoy thrashing round Britain's racetracks. All you need is a road bike...**



There's a camaraderie that comes from the need to ride home and the standard of riding on track reflects it. The safety margins are wider when you know your bike is also your only transport home





Extra points were awarded for boundless enthusiasm



Road test editor Mike shows that riding a tourer is no bar to a swift lap

It's just before lunchtime at Brands Hatch, on a trackday with a difference. There's an unusual atmosphere. It's quiet – even though there are bikes out on the track. The peacefulness is thanks to the drone of road-legal exhausts replacing the piercing punch of race cans. The back of the garages is calm, too. No vans or trailers. No trailing leads and clutter. Today is about the bikes and their owners. We mingle, we socialise, and if someone has a problem, it's shared.

Bike's first Reclaim Our Tracks day at Brands Hatch in June was a roaring success. Riders alienated by the culture of normal trackdays turned up with the sole aim of experiencing their bikes on a track. No pressure to hit the apex every time here.

Normal trackdays are great, but they've become increasingly the preserve of those with specialist machines and all the racer paraphernalia. It can be a bit like racing without the swapped paint and trophies.

Bike's Reclaim Our Tracks events are aimed at another category of riders. Lines range from the accurate to the laidback. You've paid for all the track so feel free to use

**Normal road-going motorcyclists are intimidated by the idea of riding on track. Here people are able to relax and ride their bikes on a circuit without the usual pressures**



it. There are plenty of fast riders here in the quicker of the three groups, but it's ego-free and welcoming. Many of the riders are younger than we find on a normal trackday and there's a far broader range of machinery, from trailies to tourers. But almost every rider has booked the day on the strength of it being for road bikes only.

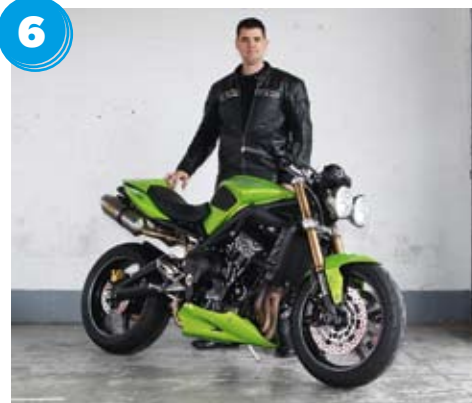
We know the normal road-going motorcyclist is intimidated by the idea of riding on track; this is amplified by the culture that has grown up around the regular trackday. Bike's stance has attracted criticism from trackday regulars and trackbike owners, but this intimidation is very real. But it's absent at Brands, as people relax and ride their bikes on track without the usual pressures. The Reclaim Our Tracks days bring something new to the motorcycling mix.

On the day, a few people get it wrong. A ZX-7R owner locks the front and is thrown into a prone position across his tank, hands off the bars as he veers towards Druids. His scramble to regain control has the opposite effect and he exits stage right, landing on his arse as his bike continues to negotiate the turn. It coasts off the track and gently lies down in the gravel as its owner scurries after it in hot pursuit. Pride and panels are both scuffed, but he's straight back out in the next session. A Daytona 600 owner has a light tumble but copious quantities of gaffer tape bodge a repair to get him home. There's a camaraderie that comes from the need to ride home, and the standard of riding on track reflects the lack of a van. The safety margins are that much wider when you know your bike is also your only transport home.

To those who made it to the day at Brands, thank you. To those booked on our Cadwell day on August 17, see you soon (details, p26).



Rider and heavily gaffer-taped Daytona 600 were out in the next session



## BRANDS HATCH RECLAIMED WHAT YOU SAID...

### 1 Paul Courtney, 2009 Kawasaki ER-6n

'This is my first trackday and it's unbelievable. I've seen so many races here, the first time I went down Paddock Hill Bend I felt a bit like an impostor. But it's not as scary as I thought, and though there are a lot of quicker people it's quite an adrenalin rush. There's a good atmosphere, and everyone's friendly.'

### 2 Derek Prebble, 2006 Yamaha MT-01

'Today's my third time on track. It's a lot more relaxed than most trackdays; sometimes you feel like you're turning up to a BSB event. I'd bought a CBR600 to do more trackdays, but I found myself doing silly speeds. My modified MT-01's a laugh to ride. In fact, I've sold the CBR to buy the full Akrapovic exhaust.'

### 3 Dave Grimshaw, 2007 BMW R1200S

'I've only had the BMW for about five weeks, so today's my first trackday on my first sportsbike. Before that I had a Victory Vegas 8-Ball cruiser; I can't go too quick on the road, because I need my HGV licence for work. I've never even been to a track to watch racing in person, so I had absolutely no idea what to expect from today. But I wasn't nervous at all. Today's been excellent.'

### 4 Jonathan McBrian, Suzuki GSX-R750

'This is my first ever trackday. After the first session, I'm okay – a bit too cautious. There are a lot of people overtaking me, but it's a lot of fun. As slow as I was going, I'm surprised how far over you can crank the bike. I can see how I can progress, and it absolutely helps that this is a road bike-only trackday. I'd be worried if there were race bikes out there.'

### 5 Shaun Gillespie, Honda 929 FireBlade

'This is my first trackday – I think you guys have had such a good idea making it road bikes only because people can try it and see if they like it. The first session went so quickly. I thoroughly enjoyed it and I can't wait to get back out there again. I can go faster, I know I can – and it's lovely to have so much space and such good tarmac to ride on. For a first-timer this is probably the perfect track because it's pretty easy to learn.'

### 6 Rob Hancill, Triumph Street Triple

'I love the fact you don't have to worry about pot-holes, trees – you just worry about riding the track. It's great it's for road bikes only. I did my first trackday here a few months ago. When I turned up there were race trucks and tyre warmers; all I had was a rucksack. Today is really nice – a good atmosphere.'



## NOW RECLAIM CADWELL PARK

There are a few places left on the Reclaim Our Tracks event at Cadwell on August 17, and you can even turn up the night before. So get your tailpack out, bungee on a tent and sleeping bag, and join us in the paddock. For a guided rideout to the circuit on the Monday night, turn up at *Bike's* office. The ride through two counties takes about an hour and a half.

If you've booked onto the day at Cadwell Park, you'll get details via email from the organiser. If you just want to come for the ride, email [bike@bikemagazine.co.uk](mailto:bike@bikemagazine.co.uk) for details.

**CADWELL PARK** Britain's most challenging and rewarding track. A full day on the full circuit for £99 with *Bike*.

**THE RULES** Only road bikes with headlights and numberplates will be allowed on track.

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