

A view of the race from the chopper

LOSING OUR WAY AND OUR MINDS AMONG SAND MONSTERS & BOTSWANA DAISIES

By GG Alcock

Pics: Oakpics, Mishka Moller & GG Alcoc

Kimberley, Kalahari, Botswana...

Starting this story at the start, as Simon Fourie doesn't like any *in media res* story starting anywhere else, this is a story of our craziness, a story of a challenge overcoming rational adult thinking.

James Cunningham, Gavin Morton and I, GG Alcock formed Team Zama Zama to do this Dakar style navigation and off-road racing event which will test endurance, brains and skill... and madness! The route, Kimberly, into the Kalahari into Botswana and then back to South Africa is more than 5000km, which is per day the longest rally in the world after the Dakar. A daily race of 600 to 750 km across the most arid, unforgiving terrain in Southern Africa. Jonathan Everest drove support, with water, fuel, tents and the odd hug we hope. Were' on 500cc KTM's home-built by ourselves as rally machines with big fairings, soft rally seats, big tanks, mouse tyres, roadbook, ICO, GPS ..

Many of the bikes we will race against are purpose built 450 and 690 Rally Replica rally machines with 35 or 40 litres of fuel against our 20 and huge power for those open sand roads.

Scrutineering in Kimberly is a serious affair, bikes are inspected and there's even a check that you have all the right riding gear.

Day 1 & 2

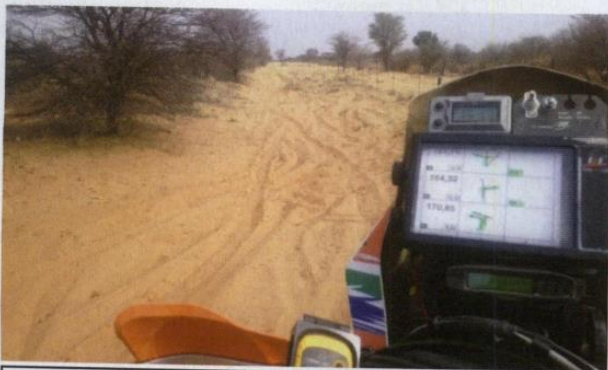
are a marathon stage, meaning that there is no support, we sleep at a mystery location and have to maintain and fix our bikes over the 1500km of unforgiving terrain that follows. Johnny, our support driver, sends a WhatsApp message to our fan club "All 3 riders out of the Parc Ferme and their way. Focused, nervous and determined. A gentle rain fell as they left, a true African blessing."

Fifty meters from the start and Gavin crashes into a pavement in the dark and his ICO, a key navigation device stops working. I catch up with him and we ride together.

Then James's fuel pump expired and, my roadbook breaks off the fairing mount, it's the

rally equivalent of a roll of toilet paper with squiggles, distances and degree headings on it, and without it I'm stuffed. Not a good start for team Zama Zama!

Gavin and I start the 300km special, the actual race section, it's a taste of what's to come, a soft sandy river bed, seems easy enough we have trained for months on sand, but the locals have dug the equivalent of the western fronts trenches and tank traps mining sand and digging for water. I scream in my helmet as I come around a corner, choose a less ridden line and see five holes all six foot deep and the size of a grave, all they will have to do is close the hole with me inside! I'm flying and just power up and manage to fly over, the bike hopping over the holes, my heart in my mouth. What follows is just about every kind of terrain in Africa - open gravel highways where we get some serious speed, flat open pans with tracks heading off into a distant haze, soft sandy twee spoor and long sandy fence lines with thorn scrub which rips and tears at us, our jackets and tops are ripped and even our riding boots! An error on the roadbook has



The legendary sand roads of Botswana, some straight, some wobbly