

MY KIT SECRETS

MARIA COSTELLO

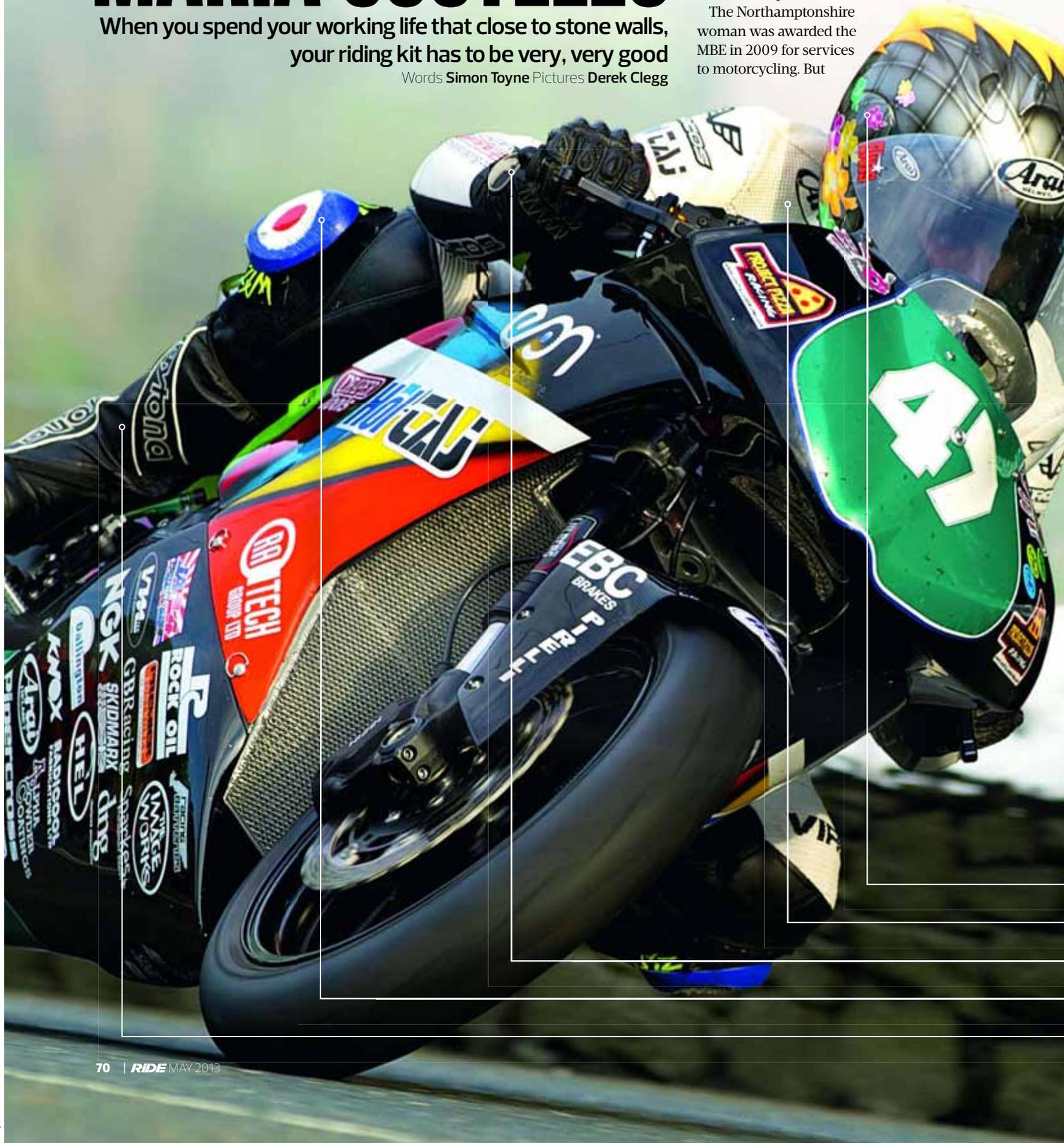
When you spend your working life that close to stone walls,
your riding kit has to be very, very good

Words **Simon Toyne** Pictures **Derek Clegg**

MARIA COSTELLO, 39, has blazed a trail for female motorcycle racers everywhere. In 2004 she became the fastest woman to lap the TT, and the following year she took third place in the Ultra Lightweight race at the Manx Grand Prix. She's the first female solo racer to stand on the podium of both the TT and the Manx.

She's a regular on the Irish road racing circuit, and in 2010 she became the fastest woman to lap the Ulster Grand Prix.

The Northamptonshire woman was awarded the MBE in 2009 for services to motorcycling. But



despite her high profile within biking, she has as much trouble getting gear as any skinny woman rider who demands maximum protection and comfort. She's had her share of high-speed crashes, and she knows what works for her.

HELMET

"I like lightness in a helmet. And I also like a secure, snug fit. That's why I chose the Arai RX-7GP. It's really, really light, and the crown and cheek pads come in six sizes, which means that even with my XS head I can get a perfect fit. And when you're belting down the TT's Sulby Straight at almost 190mph, you need a perfect fit.

"Another thing I look for in a helmet is a fully washable and removable lining, which helps prolong the life of the helmet.

"Seeing it splattered in dead flies and battered from stone chips at the end of every practice or race session is a great feeling. Mine has a personalised Martin Robinson paint job."

GLOVES

"When I crashed at the bottom of Bray Hill in ill-fitting gloves I found out the hard way that on impact gloves can stay intact but if they're loose enough to move across your knuckles they'll take your skin with them. I've learnt my lesson and now wear gloves that fit like, um, a glove. I've got a pair of Bering RX17s and they're brilliant. The double closure system on the wrist means I get a really secure fastening around my little wrists."

BACK PROTECTORS

"I'd never race without a back protector, and I'd never ride on the road without one either. I use a Knox Aegis back protector, and have recently moved from a six-plate



Arais have looked after Costello in several big offs



On the circuit, gender becomes irrelevant

“Seeing my helmet battered by stone chips at the end of a race is a great feeling”

to a slightly larger seven-plate, not because I've grown but for added protection and confidence. It's so comfy I forget it's there."

BOOTS

"I've worn Daytona Security Evos for years. They have a carbon fibre inner boot that takes some breaking in, and for that reason I sidelined my first ever pair during a race meeting, opting instead for a comfier pair

of boots from a different manufacturer. I wish I hadn't as I crashed. The boots were too flimsy and I broke my ankle.

"I've never worn anything other than Daytonas since. The inners are made from a plastic hard shell with a hinged joint at the ankle and are covered in shock-absorbing padding. The outers are equally sturdy and are made from tough kangaroo leather with a Kevlar heel and built-in ceramic toe sliders. The calf fastens with a zip and then Velcro to cater for different calf sizes. Yes they're expensive (£1200) but they're worth every penny because they're so protective."

LEATHERS

"Although my leathers are badged as Bering, they're actually Vircos leathers. Vircos are an Italian company who have been making suits since 1982. Look closely at the Moto2 and Moto3 riders and you'll see that they're actually wearing Vircos leathers, even though the branding will be different.

"My Vircos are made from 1.2mm certified cowhide and come with CE-approved removable shoulder, elbow and knee armour. The shoulder and knee armour are also adjustable, which came in handy when I had a plate on my collarbone and needed the armour in a more comfortable place. And despite being thin the leather is reassuringly sturdy – my first suit lasted two seasons, even though I gave it a bit of a battering."

SLIDERS

"My mechanic/boyfriend is in the RAF, hence the roundel design on my Wiz pucks. They're durable and have loads of feel. You don't actually get your knee down much at the TT, though."

→ **Helmet:** Arai RX-7GP

→ **Leathers:** Vircos

→ **Gloves:** Bering RX17

→ **Sliders:** Wiz

→ **Boots:** Daytona Security Evo