

# WHITE HORSE *Scatter*



GEOFF STOVOLD and friend suffered blown fuses on this one, but made it round



(quite a lot of which can involve off-road riding) which carry bonus points ranging from 0 to 15. The day ends with a riding test to act as a tie breaker. Friend Richard and I (riding a well sorted Yamaha XT500 and a mongrel late '50s Royal Enfield 350 Clipper respectively) decided to try our best to win. This meant selecting only waypoints carrying the maximum bonus points of 15. We also maximised the off-road riding because we both enjoy it.

My Clipper (converted for off-road use) was a bargain basement Facebook marketplace find with no provenance that it had actually been off-road. I have used it a bit locally and

tried to sort a lot of the little problems it had, and earlier this summer I took it to Devon to do a bit of off-roading with Nathan Millward. It didn't cover itself with glory. The first day it required tools out a couple of times to keep it on the road, while on the second day it died completely and had to be recovered back to our hotel. The terminal malfunction was later traced to a rocker arm securing mount coming adrift in the rocker box. This was bolted back down tightly and has given no more trouble since. Still, optimism is one of my strengths and I looked forward to a trouble-free White Horse from which I would emerge covered in glory and wreathed in laurels.

## Navigation Tech

In the good old days people used maps for navigation, made copious route notes on paper and mounted them in some sort of transparent holder for consultation – Richard and I decided to use modern technology. I did most of the route plotting using the MyRoute system recommended in this magazine in earlier articles. I also used my OS Maps digital subscription to help pinpoint the waypoints. Using these tools I created 12 GPX route files that would take us from waypoint to waypoint. Richard





**Left:** Three Triumphs go to (just visible in the distance) Stonehenge

**Below left:** BSA Starfire rider looks happy, as well he might

**Below:** That's what's so great about four-stroke singles, they are so easy to pull out of a hedge

**Opposite page:** Somewhere on Salisbury Plain – White Horse does have tarmac sections as well

**Opposite insert:** Geoff and the Clipper made it round, but not without incident



reviewed my routes and improved on some of them.

My plan was to upload the GPX files into my iPhone and use an app called OsmAnd to do the actual navigation. I have used OsmAnd quite a lot and it is pretty good, though it tends to over-navigate, telling you about every bend in the road. It can also get confused if you stray from the route. This is why I broke the day up into 12 short routes rather than one long one, to minimise the risk of terminal confusion.

Richard planned to import the GPX files into his motorcycle satnav and use that for navigation. It's very good at road work but gets a bit confused when the route takes us off-road. OsmAnd is a lot better off road but a phone is a compromise as a satnav, as it doesn't like heat and can shut down. Nor does it like the wet. Several times during the day I had to give it a rest, when we relied on Richard's TomTom.

## Fuses, Misfires...

Having arrived at the Three Magpies outside Melksham for the start, we found the organisation was excellent with our goodie bags including a badge, sticker, bottle of water and the waypoint questions to be answered. There were 100 entrants on a very wide

mix of bikes from one chap on a pre-WWI belt-drive machine to huge BMW GSs. Whatever you were riding, the weather was near perfect – a bit too hot when stationary but fine when riding.

Our first leg to the first waypoint at White Sheet Hill was quite long at about 23 miles, but the Clipper was behaving perfectly. From there we had to do a couple of miles off-road on our second leg. The going was a bit rough and the bike got a bit of a hammering. We stopped mid-way to take some photos of the view, and this was where my troubles started. Unfortunately the Clipper uses a coil for ignition rather than a magneto, so the electrics have to work to keep the bike going. It didn't want to restart after our photo stop and this was quickly traced to a blown fuse. I could not see any reason why it should blow but, surprisingly, I had a spare, and we were soon off again. We stopped at the first garage to prudently stock up on fuses, which was just as well as over the next few waypoints a failure to restart because of a blown fuse became a habit. Once started, it ran well.

Until about halfway round during a really long off-road stretch across the Salisbury Plain when the Clipper started to misfire. It seemed to have all the symptoms of a blocked main





**Left:** Sylvan setting for Richard's XT500

**Below:** Rests were allowed

jet, so at the next waypoint I extracted the jet from the bottom of the Monobloc Amal. I blew through it and it looked clear, but on setting off again it became clear that the fault was not fixed.

I remembered the old adage, "if you think it is carburation, it is ignition." At the next waypoint I pulled the plug cap off and it readily parted company from the HT lead, so clearly this must be the problem. I then lost a key component of the plug cap in the dirt. The plug cap was ditched, the HT lead stripped back a bit and the wire attached directly to the plug. Surely it would run OK now?

It appeared not. The bike still misfired and still required a fuse change at every stop. Finally, we got to our last waypoint and wrote down the answer to the waypoint question. More seriously, I had now run out of fuses and resorted to using a piece of wire stuffed into both ends of the fuse holder. This is not a recommended bodge as fire and explosions may occur.

## Hitting the Deadline

Richard had been keeping an eye on the time and pointed out that we might miss the finish checkpoint deadline of 5pm. It was mainly a fast run of about 14 miles along the A361, so Richard took the lead and set a cracking pace as we overtook everything including several Triumph twins and a large Benelli. With its wire bodge, the Clipper now started to run properly although strange smells sometimes emanated from the electrics box and the ammeter was doing a mad dance. By lying prone on the tank and keeping the throttle wound right open I was just about able to keep up with Richard's Yamaha.

Then on entering Devizes disaster struck when the Clipper petered out on exiting a roundabout. "Go on!" I said to Richard, "you may still make it." Stalwart chap that he is, he was having none of that and waited whilst once again I delved and rummaged in the electrics box. Radical bodge number two was to bypass all the electrics and just run a wire from the battery to the coil. With huge relief, the bike burst back into life and ran perfectly back to our finish. I could not now stop the bike without getting tools out, so I left Richard to book us both back in while I rode back to our hotel.

## Next Year...

During the day we rode about 120 miles, of which maybe 15 were off-road. We covered all our checkpoints but although we were too late to do the tie breaker riding test we both really enjoyed this excellent event and hope to do it again. And



despite all our trials I am still fond of the Clipper. At its heart is a first rate engine that has quite a lot of poke for a 350 and a wonderful ability to plonk in first gear without stalling, a great help to a novice off-roader such as myself. And the cause of all those electrical troubles? A wire chafed and nipped between the frame and the petrol tank.

## Keith Johnston (Clerk of the Course) adds...

We had 78 machines and 85 riders and passengers on a vast range of machinery from 1913 (Sun Pre-cision, Sunbeam 2.75hp and Ariel TT) through to modern road and trail motorcycles, to showcase the VMCC offer. Colin Durnell rode his 1937 P&M Red Panther down from Wolverhampton, completed the event and then rode back, having achieved best performance on a post-vintage solo machine. Chris Woolley suffered a throttle cable break on his Bantam, but was able to rig up a 'get you home' modi-fication using the choke lever and scooped our two-stroke award into the bargain. Adrian Shawcross from Cheltenham was the lucky recipient of the Moto II navigation device kindly donated by Beeline and offered in our prize draw to riders and volunteers.

Richard and Alison Sansom did a magnificent job as Joint Secretaries of the event. Sincere thanks al-so to section volunteers John Bowler, Stewart Muir and Derek Daniels, who ran the special test; to Emma and Les Smitherman for running our refreshment tent and to those section members who donated cakes and back copies of V&C to promote the VMCC to prospective members.

White Horse Scatter 2026: Sunday 12th July.

Photos: Geoff Stovold, Bob Papps and Andrew Dockree.