

TRIPLE

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The First Triple Trio Winner

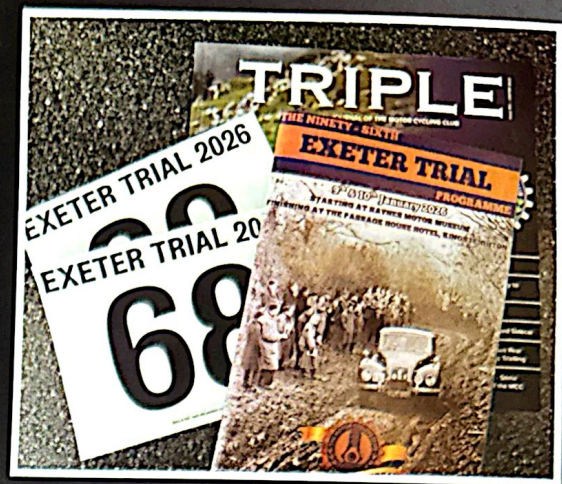
The President's Challenge

Morgan 4/4 90th Anniversary

Triple Triple on a Bike

The International Scene

Exeter Trial 2026 Final Results



WELL HELD! SUZIE'S WOBBLY BUT WONDERFUL EXETER

Susie Prevett

Storm Goretti had only just dragged her windy a**e across the country, leaving Cornwall blown away, whilst Wales was buried under snow, its roads glistening with treachery. The forecast, miraculously, looked glorious for the trial, but not glorious enough for Mo, who was snowed in back in Carmarthen. So, it was just Steve and I as team 'Plain and Simples': just one Simpleton Suzie, ha ha! Kelvin, Andy and Mike all made it, so team 'Chicken Legs' was assembled in full feathery glory, ready to strut their stuff across the South West.

After the usual pretrial logistics shuffle involving vans, bikes and a few laughs, we gathered at Steve's mate's place in Yeovil. Spirits were high. Nerves humming. The road to Haynes Motor Museum felt like the traditional drawbridge lowering to begin the adventure. The 96th Exeter Trial was on!

It wasn't nearly as cold as last year, thanks to the weather gods. My Gerbing jacket remained unplugged, the hefty battery only used twice on these events, one of those times on last year's



frozen odyssey. My little Scorpa can't power it directly, bless it, so warmth is a luxury, not a promise, and my layering usually does the trick. Unfortunately, despite being ok the previous weekend, my front wheel felt awful on the ride up. A quick check revealed the likely culprit: wheel bearings on their way out. Great! Just the sort of pretrial spice you don't ask for, but get anyway.

At Haynes it was a swift ride around to scrutineering, and after a solid pass, we got our control cards signed and headed off to the museum entrance to park up and 'sign on'. With ACU licences not needing to be renewed until the end of January this time, it meant no worries about any issues there.

Before we knew it, we were off. Steve and I were first off and a little later Team Chicken Legs, hot on our tail. Without Mo we wouldn't be competing for any team awards, which is just a bit of fun anyway, but it was nice to know we'd get to catch up with the others at all of the various stops being close together.

The Opening Gambits: Tests, Mud, and Settling Nerves

The run to Observed Test 1 (OT1) at Windwhistle was steady, despite the wonky wheel. Tarmac made it feel worse, but I crossed my fingers (metaphorically; you need them for the handlebars) and hoped the bearings would last. It definitely wasn't as cold as last year, but still a tad chilly, but no need to 'plug in' to my battery. Being a nice, straight, speed test it was no issue, but as usual I wouldn't be winning any prizes for speed!! It was one of two speed tests, so just one left to go in a few hours.

Then came OS1 'Underdown', the familiar muddy plunge that funnels riders into its slippery embrace. I queued, chose the right rut, and powered (ok, don't laugh) the Scorpa up the left turn with far more composure than last year. Clean! I think I missed the 'section ends' board, but continued for the rest of the lane like it was a section, just in case... you don't want to get caught out like that!

One down. Fourteen to go.

There was a deviation after this due to a road closure, and frustratingly I managed to miss the turn off the A30, so Steve and I had to backtrack before getting to Musbury garage for a quick fuel top up. Feeling we were now behind, we didn't stay long and headed off again just before our Chicken Leg friends. No Curly Wurly this year, what tragedy!

A Rising Rhythm: Gatcombe, Waterloo, Norman's Hump, and my Nemesis

OS2 Gatcombe Lane soothed the nerves; long, rocky, straightforward. Then came Waterloo (OS3), the hill that chewed me up last year. But this time? A dream. I took the entry wide as the mud wasn't too bad and then had a good run up at the hill, especially the first bit, which is what threw me off last year and caused me to stop. I was really happy to clean it and it was then on to the next challenges...OS4 Norman's Hump with a restart, and then my nemesis, 'Clinton' (OS5). I managed the restart well on the 'Hump', sitting a bit back in the box to give my little Scorpa the best run up I possibly could...it needs it! Despite a bit of struggle for traction in a couple of places, we made it clean. Whoop whoop!

Then Clinton. My nemesis.

A friendly rider named Ben, on a beautiful Norton Model 18, shot up it effortlessly, despite some of the others on lighter bikes ahead of us stopping on the start of the hill. I followed with renewed resolve. The mud at the bottom was less thick than last year. I took a wide entry, picked my line with care, and the Scorpa danced and skittered but kept climbing. Clean. I got a few cheers from the merry marshals...thanks Nick and Georgie who I'm sure were probably willing me on!

Through Ice and Darkness: Wiscombe, Rill Path, Stretes, and Greendale

OT2 at Wiscombe was different this year: more technical, less icy, still requiring every scrap of concentration. Again, a sedate effort from me, but

managed it well and managed to go the right way! I can't remember if it was here that I almost had a directional brain fart on the corner before the 'B' line, but anyway, all was well and managed not to stuff it up!

OS6 was 'Rill Path' and another long, relatively straightforward section, even in the dark and when tired, and I cleaned it well, thankful of the length of the section to warm me up a bit! Then on to Stretes, OS7, and no sheet ice down the hill on route this time thankfully. I seem to remember it was a bit bumpy, but I kept the Scorpa going and managed not to get deterred too much and made it to the end clean once again. That was seven pre-breakfast cleans for both Steve and I (plus all of Team Chicken Legs): my personal best! I was very much looking forward to some brekkie at Greendale, however what awaited us was not so much fun!

As we approached Greendale, I noticed the tarmac looked a bit 'sparkly'. Bugger! I also knew that the temperature was dropping as my visor was misting up more, and I was struggling to see at times despite the Pinlock. As we got closer to the Farm shop there was a makeshift sign saying 'ice' in big letters, and I tried not to tense. I very gingerly made it to the car park where the marshals advised us to take it steady and it was fine... for now. Inside, we ate like champions (perhaps too much like champions; the scone nearly finished me off, but bloody delicious). Later, outside, the challenge awaited.

We left Greendale at our scheduled departure time (6.18am for me)... And that's when the world turned glassy. The tarmac outside shimmered like a trap. Ice. Everywhere. The bikes glittered. My shoulders tensed. The trial had only just begun its true test. Challenge accepted! The level of acceptable risk is different for everyone and means different things to each person, and for me, for now,

I'd keep going. Anyone can drop out at any point if their acceptable risk level has been surpassed, and that's part of the trial...and January can definitely have its additional challenges!

The Frost Trials: Tillerton, Fingle, and the Dawn of Daylight

We rode cautiously toward OS8 Tillerton Steep. Ice everywhere, often hidden. Progress was slow, controlled, nervetightening. Tillerton itself? A glorious clean, bouncing, choosing lines, letting the bike lead the dance where it needed to. Success! That was it now for sections in the darkness...yay! I think it was at this point a new companion joined us, Chris on a Honda Cub. A lone rider, until he wasn't. Trials make friends of strangers quickly. I think he'd normally do the event with his brother, but he unfortunately couldn't make it. I know some people enjoy tackling the trial solo, but I personally prefer the company of friends (and new friends), which is an important part of the experience for me, and getting through it together, sharing the experience, having a bit of a laugh along the way.

Fingle Hill (OS9 and 10) arrived with first light painting the sky. It's always energising, especially



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on a clear day when the views of dawn breaking over the countryside are quite breathtaking. I found Fingle more bumpy and slippery than usual. Maybe it was just me? Anyway, both of the winding, rocky trail sections I managed to clean without too much issue, remembering to stop after the section ends of Fingle Hill 1. These are sometimes the things you can forget when tired! So just five sections left to go, but with plenty of challenge to be had.

MidMorning Heroes: Wooston, Tipley, and the Donkey Trot to Glory

We all set off again and it wasn't long before we got to OS11a Wooston Steep, despite some black ice in places that we managed to negotiate well, albeit carefully. I love the forestry trail down to Wooston, and I preferred being able to enjoy it in the light, as opposed to last year when it was pitch black for us. This year was the best I'd ever ridden it, with sunlight, a friendly marshal, and a clean to tuck under the belt. Nice one!

Tipley (OS12) came next, and I almost got caught out by some ice on route as we were going through a village. A car a way in front of me stopped, and it didn't look that icy, but as I gently used the brake I could feel the bike starting to go. Shit! I managed to save it, and after a bit of a slippery fishtail and a rush of adrenaline, I managed to keep the rubber side down coming to a very gentle stop. Steve and Chris had watched this and were amazed I hadn't hit the deck. Phew! Donkey Trot (OS13) stood between me and an Exeter medal. Short, sweet, but with a mandatory road stop at the end.

Clean again. Medal assured. But which one would I end up with?

Regroup: Ilington, Cake Regrets, and the March Toward Simms

Ilington Hall was a welcome stop, though breakfast left no room for cake...a terrible loss. Should've got a takeaway, doh! We chatted, regrouped, tended to bramble wounds (Kelvin),

and then got the green light to continue after a 30-minute stop, rather than waiting for our designated time. This also meant that Chris, who was a later number than us, could stick with us.

We got the bikes fired up and then headed down the track to the infamous 'Simms Hill', OS14. The queue was long but the sun was shining. Loads of spectators were making their way up, full of smiles. Chris had let too much air out of one of his tyre's and contemplated a garage stop after this, until I remembered I had a hand pump in my backpack! Problem solved. The nerves were ramping up with the wait, and we could hear the loud expressions of the crowds, especially when someone didn't make it, or only just made it! It was my turn. I set off up to the restart and got myself in a good position



I felt. The flag was waved and I took off again, up the left side of the hill. Then I hit a bump. My front wheel lifted and before I knew it I was on the right side of the hill...damn it! I kept it going and I was sure I'd be off any second. I kept going and finally got past the section ends for the compulsory stop. Yeeeeesssssssss! It was my most bumpy experience of Simms so far, but I maintained my 100% clean record! So relieved. I don't mind falling off in the dark in the middle of the night, but it's always more daunting when it's in front of what must be over 100 spectators, although I reckon the clap would help! Ha ha! When I later saw a spectator's video and heard "well held," it felt like receiving a tiny laurel wreath.

The Final Trial: Slippery Sam and the Golden Realisation

So, just 'Slippery Sam' OS15 left, and it was definitely a bumpy ride. Also, getting there was a challenge in itself with plenty of ice on the road. I was really hoping the sun would have melted it, but seemingly not. We all made it to the section upright and without any dramas. It was at this point, waiting for my turn, that after all my complaining about the sun being in my eyes and not being able to see very well in places that I remembered I had a sun visor! Doh! Better late than never I suppose! The section felt harder this year, maybe bigger rocks, more bounce, more temptation to dab. Whatever it was, I definitely felt it took more concentration and effort. I decided to go right in the restart box, and it went well, then the last part of the section was fine. I was clean through it, and then, waiting for Steve and Chris, it hit me: I had cleaned every single section.

Bloody hell, had I just earned my first Exeter gold? I hoped everything would be recorded accurately and that would be the case, but I couldn't believe I'd managed it. I had felt 'on form' so to speak, but I do

find the night sections and fatigue in particular quite challenging, then the ice thrown in for good measure is always tiring due to the added concentration and nerves. The Scorpa itself is quite an uncomfortable bike to ride for that length of time with its super narrow, firm seat, but it's what I've got and I absolutely love it, and it gets me through. The Scorpa's wheel bearings prayed for mercy, but they'd survived the ordeal. I just had to get the last 9.6 miles to the end.

I love coming over the Teignmouth and Shaldon bridge, the trial's epilogue. Sun shining. Sea glittering. Home stretch. We'd been very fortunate with our weather window for the trial. At Passage House we signed out, donned boot covers, and wrapped up the adventure. I normally carry carrier bags and elastic bands, but the boot covers provided were way easier. It was just with all my layers I struggled to reach my feet so had to enlist Steve to help me, ha ha! It was job done, and with my mini Twirl choccy from the sign off I wandered back to the van to sort my stuff, bid farewell to Steve and head off to get some sleep...and order some wheel bearings!

Between our two teams we earned two class wins (B and C), four gold medals and a bronze. Not bad guys! See you at the Lands End! ■

