

# TRIED & TESTED

MCN STAFF RATE THEIR RIDING KIT

★★★★★

The perfect scouting companion



Classic looks are a win



12 months ON TEST

Oxford Heritage 30L Backpack £99.99

# Retro style, modern benefits



**Tested by Ben Clarke for 12 months/ 4000 miles**

I've been especially thorough in my testing of this rucksack, checking its robustness by having it run over by a car – but more on that later.

I chose the Oxford Heritage based entirely on its aesthetic, which fits perfectly with the Indian 101 Scout I've been riding on the MCN fleet this year. But the added benefit of its waterproof design (waxed cotton outer, waterproof liner which has never let me down) and its cavernous 30-litre capacity made it a practical choice, too – ticking both head and heart boxes.

The rucksack has a 1940s military surplus chic and it wouldn't look out of place at a WWII battle re-enactment, especially in this khaki

colour – it also comes in black. Look a little closer and the faux leather buckles and strap loops look a bit cheap and nasty, but at less than £100 this can be forgiven.

The shoulder straps appear thin with little padding to speak of and I was concerned that they might start to dig in when I stuffed the bag full of laptops and disc locks and spare clothes and waterproofs and all the rest of the gubbins I end up carrying on my commute.

But thanks to the broad surface area and just enough wadding in the right places, I've had no problems. This is also helped by the chest and waist straps that keep the load away from your shoulders and spread more evenly across your torso.

The price you pay for the old world roll-top, side clip, and buckle strap system is that it takes a few

seconds to secure or undo and it can be really annoying in a hurry – especially if, like me, you often realise you forgot things moments after completing the procedure.

And while I'm considering the negatives, the stitching is a bit lacklustre in places, especially on the pleather strap loops, and one of the snap fasteners broke off the pocket after only a few weeks of use. None of this has affected functionality, but it's still annoying.

I can forgive all of the bag's niggles, though, for its admirable performance in an unplanned and unexpected crushing test. I foolishly left it leaning against a camera car on a video shoot and then stood gormlessly with my thumb up when the videographer asked me if the coast was clear behind him.

A couple of tonnes of Volvo

promptly reversed straight over the rucksack. I was shocked to discover that every seam, buckle and strap was completely untroubled by the experience despite the fresh tyre print running across the waxed fabric.

That's more than can be said for the now banana-shaped MacBook inside, but at least it gave the IT department a good laugh. I didn't much enjoy the ensuing call to my boss, though...

**MCN rating ★★★★★**  
[www.oxfordproducts.com](http://www.oxfordproducts.com)

## PROS & CONS

- + Looks great and utterly waterproof
- Slightly rosey finish in places. Faff to get into



Waterproofing has never let me down



Buckles are a great-looking hinderance. Straps aren't leather