



May issue 2025



The Hoggit

Magazine of the Oxford HOG Chapter



Proudly sponsored by Cheltenham Harley Davidson





"See you next year, but with more than 500 miles on the clock" called Mr. Johnson waving as I left, let's hope so.

Firstly, Bridey director's piece 'The Roads are Awaiting'; followed by Thames Valley Air Ambulance Ride out for Rescue; then the presentation of rockers and pins at May chapter night; Paul welcomes new members; after that, Dave's article about his first ride out as lead to AV8; Assistant Director and Head Road Captain Stew writes about the trip he organised to Belgium (also covered later on with articles from Steve and Nigel; Geoffers shares his experience of the ride to Five Zeros Supercars Barn; next is an advert giving details for the ride to the Sammy Miller Museum; following on from that is Pam's Ladies of Harley piece; Frank shares details of his trip to Buysscheure, France; Pat and Barry attended Bridgwater's Cider Rally which had a Mexican feel about it this year and finally 'Looking ahead' gives details of up coming rideouts and events. Don't forget to check out our website and Facebook page for more details.

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to this edition of the Hoggit, and to Dave O'Dell for the use of his photographs. The deadline for the next edition will be Thursday 31st July. By then there will have been many more ride-outs and events for you to write about.



Enjoy, and Ride Safe!

Anne

A group of approximately 15 people are seated at several small, light-colored wooden tables in a modern, casual dining area. The room has a grey wall, a wooden floor, and a red sofa in the background. The people are dressed in casual attire, and some are holding glasses, suggesting a social gathering or meeting. The atmosphere appears relaxed and friendly.



More recently we were asked to run the Tour Experience for Harley-Davidson out of Bee House and I have to thank the fabulous roadcrew volunteers who gave up their weekend to lead potential Harley riders around the Oxfordshire countryside. A busy weekend it was also lovely to see some chapter members pop along to say hello and even take the opportunity to try out some of the fleet. If you were there and didn't get your HOG helmet lock let me know as I have a few to give away. We even got to have sneaky look inside the new HQ which is a lovely modern open plan space and where the Oxford Road Captains course will be run from.





WICKED...

Ride safe and have fun

Bridey x





Unity Support riders provided marshals to help keep everyone safe during the rideout. The Bike Insurer sponsored the event. Every rider and pillion received a 2025 Ride out for Resue patch.

Congratulations and thank you to everyone involved. The fundraising will help deliver lifesaving care when it matters most.





Please introduce yourself to them at chapter night, ride outs or other events. We hope they will enjoy riding with the chapter.

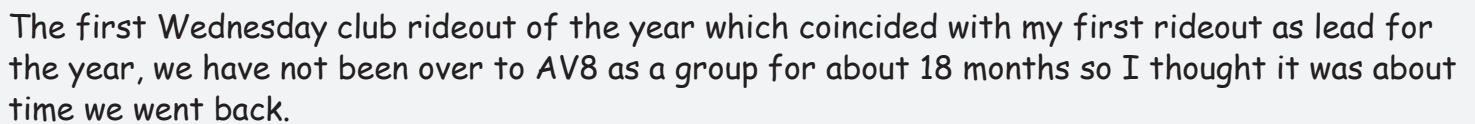
Here is how I found and bought my first Harley Davidson.

The first Harley I ever rode was from the dealership in Bordeaux. It was a preowned Fat Boy low 2010. I've always really liked the look and style of the Fat boy and after a few days mulling it over I sent over a deposit with the agreement that the bike would be ready for collection in 7 days. 3 weeks later and the bike hadn't even entered the workshop for its prep I asked and received my deposit back.

My second Harley Davidson I rode was again another Fat Boy (2013) in the south of France. I rode from Cannes to St Tropez. The scenery on the ride was amazing, ocean on one side and mountains on the other, but the bike wasn't. It felt totally different to the one in Bordeaux and to be honest I had real problems trying to manoeuvre the thing. so back to the dealers and the sales person suggested I took out a Fat Bob (2014) for a few hours which was such a nice machine and handled so much better than the Fat boy I had just ridden. But, I couldn't get on with the forward controls and asked for a price for floorboards to be fitted instead. Golly I had no idea how expensive that would turn out to be, so home I came without a bike.

I then travelled to Argen to view an early 2005 fat boy from a non franchised dealer and after first looking at the lack of service history decided to have a cup of tea instead and travel round the corner to the main dealers to see if they had any thing in that might suit me. They had a 2013 Fat Bob in stock but it was not in great condition with a lot rust, which is unusual for France in that region as they don't salt the roads in winter.

Up to Cheltenham next to test ride a new 2024 Fat boy, but I really preferred the styling of the earlier ones. Wolverhampton a few months later had a Fat Bob I viewed but didn't ride; back to Cheltenham a week or two later to test ride with Liam a 2015 Fat Bob with a stage 2, same problem with the forward controls. As much as I tried to convince myself that I would get use to them I know deep down that I wouldn't.

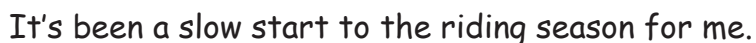


So the Wednesday morning arrived along with some very dark clouds and a little bit of drizzle, its going to take more than that to stop me getting a cuppa and a slice of cake; though I'm not sure Ruth had the same mindset!

Once we arrived we enjoyed a nice lunch and then the obligatory photos before we headed home.

Thanks for the great company guys

Cheers



Back in March, poor old Phoebe needed an op' on one of her legs, so I've been doing a lot more dog sitting and a lot less bike riding than originally planned. As a result I missed out on a few of the early Chapter rides, but I did manage to get to the Cheltenham dealership for their barbecue, as well as our season opener to Choppers and Dave O'Dell's ride to Five Zero supercars (which was both a great ride and an excellent destination). Fortunately, things with Phoebe had improved by the time our trip to Mons, in Belgium, came around, which was good because I was supposed to be leading it.

We've had a trip abroad in May for the last few years, ever since Covid. It's been just a few days away, across on the tunnel, into France or Belgium. However, when you're booking up a riding trip six months in advance there's always a risk that something comes along to stop you from going. Last year we had two last minute withdrawals and this year was no different. The prize however for the most unlikely reason went to Frank Jacques, who tripped over his dog and tore something in his knee a couple of days before we were supposed to be leaving. (We are all wishing you a speedy recovery, Frank). So we were down to six by the time we met up at Folkestone on Tuesday morning.



It's further to a lot of places in Scotland than it is to Belgium but for me there's something special about crossing the Channel and riding on the continent. It feels like you've gone 'abroad'. The weather's generally better (but not always), the money's different (so you're never quite sure how much that beer cost) and they ride on the other side of the road of course. All of this adds to the feeling of being somewhere different.

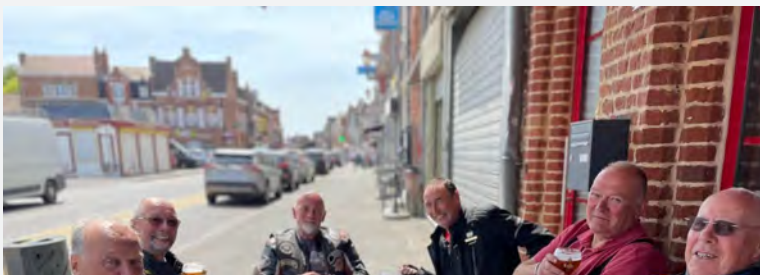
There's the extra cost of the tunnel (ninety odd quid return) but, on the plus side, it always seems that if you shop around you can often get decent hotels a bit cheaper than you can in the UK. We always try to find a hotel near the centre of the town we're visiting, with secure parking for the bikes. Our chosen hotel's website offered basement parking but pointed out that the entrance was a bit narrow (not a problem for those with bikes).

The monks don't brew Leffe beer at the old monastery in Dinant any more but there is a small museum charting the history of beer making there over the centuries, as well as a tasting room where you got a beer and a complimentary Leffe glass included within the price of your ticket. It was an odd place but worth a visit, as is the town of Dinant.

cemeteries we'd seen before, it was one of the most peaceful war graves I think I've visited.

The spectre of rain had hung over us for a couple of days, but we'd been lucky. On Saturday, as we made our way back to the UK our luck ran out and the heavens opened. We stopped off briefly at the Lille dealership for a coffee and a look around. They were having their own Harley Experience tour day, but the weather wasn't being very kind to them and after half an hour we pressed on to the tunnel. Surprisingly when we reached Folkestone it was dry again and the journey round the M25 was done in the dry. I arrived back at home that evening having done a thousand and nine miles door to door.

Chapter trips aren't the same as commercial tours, nobody makes a living from them. The accommodation hasn't been personally vetted; the routes haven't been ridden in advance and the restaurants and attractions along the way haven't been sampled beforehand. There's plenty that can go wrong and there will be cock-ups along the way. It makes you wonder why anyone would want to take on the risk of leading a trip. The answer has to be because riding with your mates makes it fun. I had a whale of a time this year and I'd like to say thank you to my fellow travellers for making it a holiday to remember.



This year the chapter has no fewer than three trips abroad on the books. If you're going on one, I hope you have a great time.

Ride Safe

Stew





Geoffers



Meet by 1000 hrs for a start at 1015 hrs.

The ride is approximately 70 miles.

The route will be south through Andover, Stockbridge, Romsey and then into the New Forrest and onwards to the Museum in New Milton.

There is no charge for attending the event, however, normal entry charges apply to the museum itself.
Adults £16 and seniors £14.

Refreshments are available from the café on site.

Fun prizes presented at 1230 hrs; including the oldest bike ridden and best in show.

Geoffers





It was lovely to get out on the bikes again . Started with a run up to Cotswold cafe early April. It was a bit nippy to start off with but soon turned into a lovely day. Good ride out. Everyone seemed to enjoy.

Greg and I have done a couple of recces ready for later in the season out to the Old Prison and the Baton at Upper Heyford. A new venue suggested by Micheal. Looks great and good food.

Following our very successful meet up with Rolling Hills at the BBQ at Cheltenham dealership; I met up with several of the LOH from Rolling Hills and Great Weston. Hopefully we plan some joint adventures with them later in the season.

A small but lovely spanner in our riding season is the arrival of our new German Shepherd puppy, Freki who is completely full on and has been renamed Fangasaurus. First and last thing during the day as he rags your legs and feet about. Beware if you meet him adorable looks don't always make for an adorable puppy; he has exceedingly sharp puppy teeth. I look forward to being able to bring him along to Chapter night.

We had a lovely ride out to Coventry celebrating international female day, with our finely tuned small group. Thanks to Bridey for leading and myself for tailing. I can't remember where we went to now, but it was a Smoke House with some tasty food for lunch.

Thanks to everyone who came to our first LOH coffee morning at Oxford Rugby Club. We raised £80 for our charities; British Heart Foundation and Pancreatic Cancer. It was good to see you all.

That's all from me for now. Look forward to joining a few rides during the summer, puppy allowing.



Pam





Buysscheure, France



On Wednesday morning we rode to the UEFA 1914 Christmas Truce memorial, at a place called Chemin du Monte de la Hutte, in Belgium, where there is the memorial, but also what's left of the British, and German trenches. It is mind blowing how close they are to each other, just fifty meters or so.



On Thursday we went to Lille, for the now customary visit to a Harley Davidson dealership, and purchased the obligatory dealer T, and pins. Whilst there we met a couple of local chapter members, who, along with the staff were very friendly, and helpful. From there we rode to Saint Omer, via Lens, for food supplies, and headed back to camp.



That brings us to Friday, when the afternoon's weather didn't look too good, so we went to Arques, near Saint-Omer, and a large outdoor superstore, similar to Go Outdoors. Whilst Mike looked for a new sleeping bag, I went to a nearby roundabout to photograph some stork statues. I wondered about the reason for storks, but apparently there are lots of them living in the marshes near Saint Omer, and they are seen as a symbol of good fortune, and fertility. We then rode back to camp, via a place called Watten, and visited a rather fine windmill. Friday evening, after my meal, as the rain didn't amount to much, I went for a nice walk around Buysscheure, saw some nice houses, and met some very friendly local French people.



Saturday, and the ferry home came around way too soon, but all in all it was a very interesting, and pleasant few days away on the bike.

Frank





Sunday was the Grande Parade into Burnham-on-Sea, a huge crowd turned out to wave us on our way and the weather was perfect.

Entertainment on the last night was just a little bit different! Interaction with Pontins Blue Coat staff for line dancing, a Quiz that no one seemed to be able to follow and some very energetic and imaginative Chapter Challenge Games.

All in all a very good relaxing few days spent with great friends, at a great venue, in a great part of the world. Moggie and her team work their socks off to put this rally together. It was rumoured that numbers were down on previous years, but it in no way detracted from the rally and they made sure everyone had a great time

Dates for next year are May 1st to 4th 2026, Fancy dress theme Pantomime and tickets go on sale on 1st June so don't miss out.



Pat



Belgium is one of those European countries that doesn't get much promotion as a place to visit. It has Bruges, a wonderful little town primarily contained within what appears to be a moat or canal. Well worth a visit. Belgium famously has some terrible roads for bikers, potholed motorways and cobbled road villages and town squares. Then it has priorité à droite which simply means priority from the right. For us that means traffic can enter your route from roads on the right without giving way, a complete contradiction with UK rules. The Belgians (and other Europeans) do give a warning when this is likely, displaying a little yellow triangular symbol with a black line through it before entering the danger zone. Hercule Poirot was apparently a Belgian private detective, although fictional and from the pen of a Brit, so he has no history here. Then there are Belgian chocolates, the desire of so many women, including my wife Barbara.



As with all our bike trips into Euro land, we met up in Folkestone close to Le Shuttle, as it is now branded. I still call it Eurotunnel or just 'the tunnel'. The Holiday Inn there was a welcome sight on that warm Monday afternoon after my journey but that's another story. Nigel was already there having his first drink and Chris soon joined us.



With no one else about to turn up before our stomachs needed filling, we trudged off to Nigel's favourite Gurkha restaurant half a mile away for an evening meal. The menu was alien to Chris and myself but we opted for things which turned out to be quite good. On the other hand, Gurkha Nigel ordered something that looked like dumplings and tasted like dog food. An ample amount remained on his plate. By the time we returned to the hotel Stew was in his room. Geoff and Gary would meet up with us at the tunnel reception on Tuesday. Frank and David were no shows as both had their own problems to contend with. And so we were six.

Breakfast was good and familiar then off to meet the others. After a quick dip into Duty Free for a couple of bottles of cheap whiskey we lined up for the usual passport/security checks and onto the next waiting area. Fortunately weather was good again. The train trip was uneventful except that we caught a slightly earlier one than intended. Our route to Mons was mainly rural, plenty of villages and towns, but where were the people? I think the French and Belgians are vampires who dare not venture into the sun. The brave few drove tractors and other farm equipment throughout our route. We arrived at the hotel underground car park at 17:40, a journey of a little over five hours including a lunch stop. After a cool down shower it was meet up in reception and out into town where we found the usual cobbled centre square surrounded by bars and restaurants. Still bathed in glorious sunshine we took a table at a bar and ordered beers.



And that is how it turned out shortly after leaving the hotel. It was very wet motorway jaunt down to Lille and a stop off at the very impressive Harley dealership where they were having the equivalent of our recent HQ event with ride outs on new bikes. After a good look at their wares and a view of their extensive chapter area upstairs, we continued to Coquelles. We had already had a brief conversation about taking the earliest no extra expense train on offer at the log in machine. Chris forgot. His ticket was for a later train but we convinced him to join us when the call came. I was off to duty free again for another couple of bottles. One of my previous purchases had been consumed by a friendly bunch in the hotel. As I exited Duty Free, I could see the guys on their bikes so I sped up and reached my bike just as they rushed away. The call had come. I quickly stashed the booze and hopped on my steed, partly dressed and no helmet I caught up at the first passport control. It gave me time to zip up, don the helmet and gloves and then find my passport. B



