



## The Hoggit

Magazine of the Oxford HOG Chapter







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I'm outdoors enjoying the sunshine and peace and quiet of our garden; with only the birds singing, preparing the May edition of the Hoggit.

Many of you, I expect will be taking advantage of the lovely weather we are having at the moment and getting out on your bikes.

Blue has just been for his MOT at E. Johnson in Waddesdon; a friendly family run business that has been there since the early 1980's. Thankfully, he passed.

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

#### What's in this edition?

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.



"Yes, there's mood lighting, candles and soft music. After a long trip, my motorcycle needs a relaxing environment."

Enjoy, and Ride Safe!

Anne

## The Roads are Awaiting

With the lucky group on their way to Croatia we're left with a rather uninspiring weather forecast ahead but if not riding we can plot and plan and with a good set of waterproofs we can even brave the British summer.

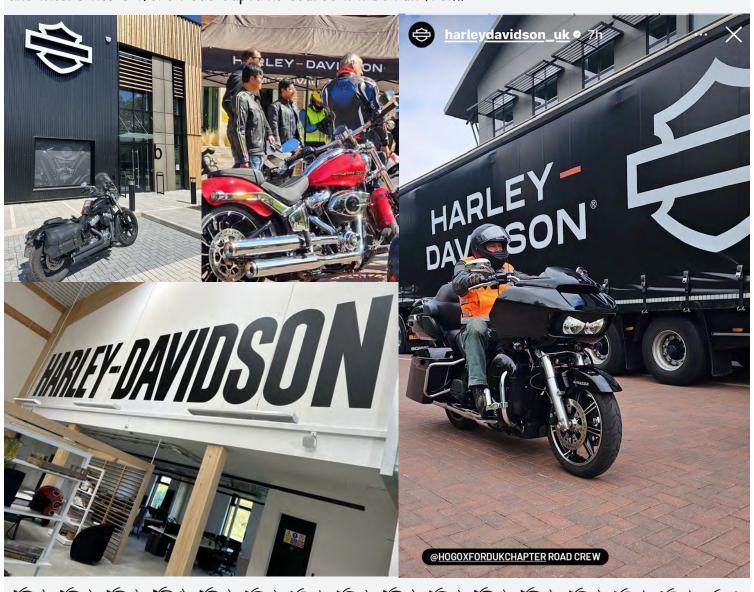


Luckily for me Easter was kinder and I managed a great few days in the Peaks from visiting Chatsworth House and riding Winnats Pass to exploring around Bakewell and Buxton the sun shone for me and it was great to get a few miles under the belt. The Yondermann café was a great spot for some lunch and a chat to fellow bikers doing the same riding the Peaks and enjoying the sunshine.





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.



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I've also started my annual Women's motorbike hunt. This year's theme is



So far, I've been to Malmaison (old prison) The Highwayman Inn, The Rat Trap, The Old Prison, a few village stocks and The Old Stock Inn. It's a great way to donate to charity and have fun exploring. I also paid for the Bike and Brew Passport which is a new one for me this year and so far only made it as far as the Kingsley café for a stamp but there are almost 100 places to visit so hopefully I'll get a few more stamps over the coming months. So, add in the HOG ABCs and I have no excuses not to be out riding and exploring all summer long.

Ride safe and have fun

Bridey x







When we presented Thames Valley Air Ambulance with our fund raising cheque at the December Chapter night at the dealership, we were invited to take part in the Ride Out for Rescue on Sunday 25th May, 2025. This was the second year for this event and saw 157 take part, helping to raise over £3,500. The charity ride saw participants set of from Thames Valley Headquarters at Stokenchurch House, Oxford Road, Stokenchurch; riding out through the Chilterns; passing by local spots including RAF Benson when their iconic helicopter is based.

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 are when it matters most.





## May Chapter Night wight chapter wight

The Oxford Rugby Club, Tuesday 13th May and there was a fantastic turnout. Everyone who ordered food enjoyed it.

Congratulations to Paul Gulliver who was presented with his Road Marshal rocker by Stew and his 10 Ride out pin from Paul Mac. Congratulations also to Kim, Bob who also received their 10 Ride out pin; Ruth 30 pin and Stew and Bridey who received their 40 rideout pins.







#### A warm welcome to our New Members

On behalf of our chapter I should like to welcome our new members: Brian, Lee, Richard and Peter; who has kindly written a piece about his Harley.

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

Hi my name is Peter and I am very happy to be accepted as a new member and I am looking forward to some great rides.

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. A much as I tried to convince myself that I would get use to them I know deep down that I wouldn't.

Months later it was Malvern next to a used motorbike dealer and a test ride in the pouring rain in December. yep it was a Fat Boy again. But this time it felt so different to the others. I had no idea why. The bike had excellent service history, it was a14 years old (2011) and had 8 main dealer stamps and 6 independents, it came with all the bills and invoices for all the work and it was fully loaded with all Harley Parts from the main dealer in Guildford; panniers, screen, wing mirror extensions, roll bag, engine bars, heated grips, sissy bar, rear luggage rack with additional brake light, speedo with taco, wind deflectors, led rear light, toe and heel for the gear change, led front fog lights, wider handle bars, Vance and Hines exhaust, air filter and some other bits and pieces. The mileage was the highest I had seen on a Fat Boy at 47,000, but it didn't feel it at all. The dealer did the front fork seals and clutch for me, fully serviced it, new mot and a 3 year warranty with a 3rd party so I bought it after the 2nd test drive. They even delivered it to me for free as the bike was a week later than they had promised.

It has taken me a while to figure out why this and the one in Bordeaux handled so differently to the others, and its down to the above mentioned handle bars being wider that standard. For me it just fits perfectly. I would have never guessed it would make that much difference. So when the bike arrived in mid January I spent ever Sunday I could at the industrial estate practicing my figure of eights, and right and left turns. I also took a back to riding course, which was excellent. This is my first bike in over 25 years, amazing how much you do remember but also how much you have forgotten.

So far I have managed 1054 miles on it and loved every one. I had Revs change the exhaust back to a standard one so that I can hear myself think and I had to change the temp sender on the engine as it wasn't happy to carry on doing the job it was meant for. I have had to put gold reflective tape on the bottom of the right panier as the exhaust now runs to close to it and under the rear heat shield I have fitted an exhaust wrap and this has reduced the heat reaching the panier incredibly well. So it's time to ride and make as many memories as I can.



Peter

## Wednesday Club Ride out



The first Wednesday club rideout of the year which coincided with my first rideout as lead for the year, we have not been over to AV8 as a group for about 18 months so I thought it was about time we went back.

For those who don't know the Cotswold Airport is the former base RAF Kemble and was once home to the Red Arrows up until 1983, RAF Kemble ceased being an operational base in 1993, it is now used for storage and recycling of retired airliners, as well as flying schools, clubs, industrial units and not forgetting a lovely cafe.

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!

The meeting point for the start of the ride was at Costa in Faringdon; it was great to see a couple of bikes already parked up, as we arrived. Since it was only a small group the briefing was done in the comfort of Costa. So with Ruth and I up front we were joined by Nigel, Frank R and Bounce. The closer we got to Kemble the drier the roads became and the clouds began to break up a little which is always a good sign.

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

Thanks for the great company guys

Cheers

Dave



## Head Road Captains Bit



It's been a slow start to the riding season for me.

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).

What it failed to mention however, was that you also needed to negotiate a sheer, rollercoaster, drop onto a polished concrete basement floor, so smooth you could skate on it. Easy the second time, but real heart-in-mouth stuff the first.

Apparently, Mons was the European Capital of Culture in 2015. It has a few museums and places of interest but unfortunately, culture vultures that we are, we didn't see any of them. Like many other towns in the region though, Mons has a large cobbled central square packed with restaurants and bars which, over the course of four nights, we did our best to visit as many as we could.



On Wednesday, I'd planned a scenic ride to Bouillon, deep in the Ardennes region. Back in the day when trips abroad meant navigating with a Michelin map strapped to your tank, they used to helpfully mark the scenic roads with a green line. Before setting off for Belgium I'd transposed a route from a 2003 copy of one of their maps into the Harley app then downloaded it into the Satnav. Michelin didn't disappoint and it was one of the nicest rides I've done in a while (if I say so myself). It started off following a winding road running alongside a river before getting progressively tighter and twistier through the hills. The day was made even better by a lunch stop at a restaurant that looked nothing much from the road but was fantastic once you walked into it.

On Thursday my mind really wasn't in the game to begin with. I led everyone on a wild goose chase looking for fuel and eventually we got split up. Using WhatsApp we managed to regroup at a petrol station and, having filled up, set off again. Almost immediately I could smell petrol however, and when I looked down I realised I'd left my filler cap at the pump, so had to pull over and dash back on foot to retrieve it.

Fortunately things improved after that with a visit to the Mahymobiles museum. Once the private collection of the guy who owned the Holiday Inn chain, the vintage cars (and a few bikes) are now

on display to the public. Many are in an original, unrestored condition and the museum owns nearly a thousand in total, split over two sites in Mons and Ghent. It is well worth a look if you get the chance.

I'm not sure I could say the same about the Battle of Waterloo museum which we visited in the afternoon though. We arrived in time for a late lunch at the restaurant, but when we found out that entry to the visitor centre was over twenty quid a person we decided to give it a miss.



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Friday was our last full day before travelling home. The weather was getting colder, but it was still dry and so we rode to Dinant to visit the Leffe brewery museum, stopping off at the Strepy-Thieu funicular boat lift. Unlike the UK, canals are serious business in Europe and I don't think any of us were prepared for the scale of the lift, which was capable of taking several boats at a time the seventy-three and a half metres up (or down), from one section to the Canal du Centre to the next.

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.

Our final stop was the St. Symphorien cemetery, just outside Mons. We'd been in two minds as to whether we had the time to visit it, but I'm glad we made the effort. Known for having both the first and last allied soldier to die on the Western Front buried there, St. Symphorien was unusual in that it contained the fallen from both the allies and Germany. Less formal than many of the

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



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On Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> April, 10 bikes met up in a car park in the middle of Grove in preparation for a ride out to the Five Zeros Supercar Barn in Bradford -on-Avon. The ride was to be led by Dave O'Dell and tailed by Paul Gulliver.

After the briefing we set off using second man drop off and headed out of Grove on the A338 as far as Hungerford. The weather was ideal for riding, dry and not too hot.

From Hungerford we took to the A4 westwards which allowed relaxed cruising at a reasonable speed. Traffic generally was light and there were no issues. Going through Marlborough we continued on to Calne.

When we reached Calne, we turned south onto the A3102 and rode passed where we had held the Big Chill Rally back in 2019. We stayed on the A3102 going through Melksham and arrived at the Five Zeros Supercar Barn. Dave had warned us that the car park was gravel with large stones but on arrival we found the one of the two huge barn building was empty and provided perfect parking on concrete flooring.

The main barn is a petrol heads dream. I did note that although there was information displayed on most of the cars giving performance details such as engine size, 0-60 times and top speeds, there no information as to cost.

Aston Martin, Ferrari, Lamborghini, McClaren, Koenigsegg and Porsche were all displayed in pristine glory for us to drool over.

There was a diner in the barn and Dave had reserved a table for us as a group. Cheeseburgers and Milkshakes seemed to be the order of the day and they went down very well.

After another longing look at the super cars it was time for photos to remember the day by and then a return ride homewards. We had arranged that members of the ride would peel off when they were nearest home and so the number in the ride gradually got smaller as we neared our homes.

A very pleasing day out in ideal conditions. Well done Dave and Paul...

#### Geoffers

#### \$\int\delta\



If you missed this and you fancy a ride out; the Five Zeros Super Car Barn, Kingston Farm, Holt Road, Bradford on Avon BA15 1TS, is open seven days a week Monday to Sunday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Hot food available until 3 p.m. There is no admission fee and you do not need to be a member, so everyone is welcome to enjoy the diner and look at the amazing Super Cars that are on show. Do check their calendar for private event closure dates. Ed.



# Sunday 15th June Sammy Miller's Museum Harley Davidson Bike Meet Harley Davidson Bike Meet Sammy Miller's Museum



There will be a ride out to the event starting from Chieveley Services.

- 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.

Let's hope for fine weather. See you all at Chieveley.

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.





## **Buysscheure, France**



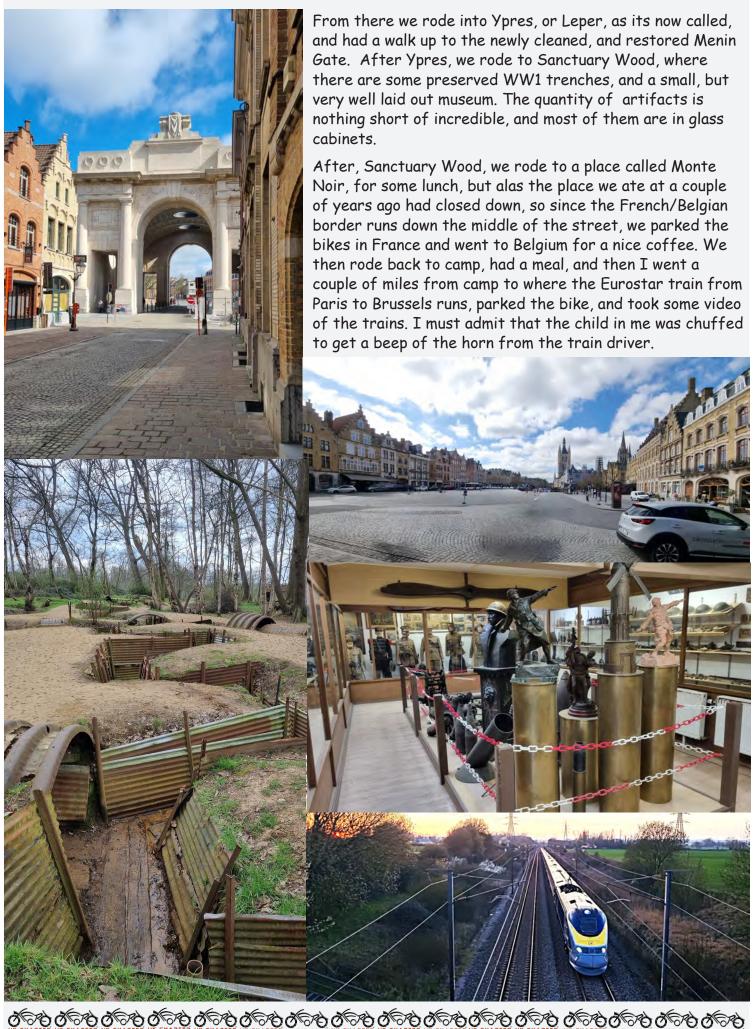


Tuesday March 25th saw us make an 0500 start from Devizes to catch the 0945 sailing from Dover, over to Calais for our latest little jaunt. We stayed at a camp site at Buysscheure near Saint-Omer, owned by some friends of my mate Mike, who although they weren't officially open, allowed us to use a two-bedroom cabin for the four-night stay.

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







This is the first rally of the season so is surely one not to be missed. This year it was actually the 32<sup>nd</sup> rally according to the rally pin. Held at Sand Bay Holiday Park right on the coast and not far from Weston Super Mare. The price includes accommodation, breakfast and evening meal, all rally entertainment, rally T-shirt and rally pin, so represents fantastic value for money.

It is exceptionally well organised and is probably one of the best rallies in the UK.

The LOH party theme this year was Pyjama Party and included free cocktails and a very competitive Quiz. Our team was disqualified 5 times, surely a record and certainly a personal best!

Saturday Night was the Fancy Dress with a Mexican Theme, Bridgwater members truly went to

town with their costumes. Rock band in the main hall and Mark G in the Queen Vic (backroom bar) singing covers of popular songs. We thought he was so good we have booked him for our Froxfield Beer Festival on June  $7^{th}$  this year.







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  $1^{st}$  to  $4^{th}$  2026, Fancy dress theme Pantomime and tickets go on sale on  $1^{st}$  June so don't miss out.



Pat





#### Tales of Belgium, Leffe and Carpaccio

Legends, lies and libels by Steve Price

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.



But we went nowhere near Bruges and still found great places to be, we used little of the motor-way network (but did see potholes) and didn't catch a Belgian bumper in any of the multitude of towns and villages we transversed through. No detecting was required as we intended doing our own and I don't like chocolate.

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.

Leffe became our favoured tipple. After more top ups we took the advice of our host and ambled around the corner to Citizen Fox, which turned out to be a great pointer for a restaurant. Food was excellent and well worth the outlay.

Day three was to be the best of the weather, for a while. Another long warm ride but through gorgeous river valleys and winding hills. I love this sort of riding, brilliant views and demanding roads. Stew found a great place to stop off for lunch. A village centre deserted by all except us. I'm sure the village was expecting a rowdy bunch of bikers as everywhere seemed to be locked and boarded up, except for one little frontage with a single round table on its tiny veranda. As inviting as Hotel California.



'On a dark desert highway, cool wind in my hair Warm smell of colitas, rising up through the air'



The smell was certainly inviting and we were shown through the establishment to a rear garden alongside a river. It was noticeable that this hidden, extensive restaurant was full with locals. Now we know where they hide. And it was here that Geoff was introduced to carpaccio. Several of us ordered this with salad and Geoff followed suite after it was explained to him what carpaccio is. His plate arrived first, the many sliced circles of carpaccio neatly placed on the large plate with the accompaniments on top. Geoff was still waiting for his meat when the rest of us had our plates delivered. We had to explain that what he thought was a pattern on the plate was in fact carpaccio. There was much merriment and 'P' taking before we ate our orders.

Our destination in the Ardenne region was Bouillon, better known to us ignorant Brits as a soup or broth or maybe a stock. It certainly was a watery place. The wide River Semoy almost surrounds a large

part of the city but we parked up on an inner bank where parking was free, we thought. Gary decided to drop his bunch of keys beside his bike but a very helpful Dutch guy tracked us down to hand them back.

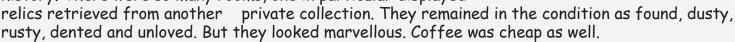
I have no idea how he knew we were the correct bikers as we were now about 400 metres away from the bikes. Lucky for Gary that we were sitting outside and obviously speaking versions of English. Way up the hill behind us was the oldest castle in Belgium, a huge 1000+ year old fortress that stretched parallel to the river for about 200 metres. We didn't have the energy to explore after our 100 mile journey but we did manage to eat and drink again. The route back was quicker, just as far and wetter. Almost within spitting distance of Mons we had to stop to don wet gear. Twenty miles later we were in our hotel car park having passed through minor wet stuff a couple of times. Better safe than sorry. More Leffe that evening, oh, and a pizza. Boring.

Thursday was to be a mixed bag of destinations. Our first stop was to be a motoring museum unknown to me called Mahymobiles. Then onto the Waterloo Battlefield site followed by a visit to the Mons Harley dealership. We all needed to fill up but Stew seemed to be leading us to the Mons dealership first. .

It turned out he had mistakenly put some duff info into his sat nav and we ended up in a warehouse carpark. Mistake rectified, Stew blasted off and I quickly followed. Just around the corner we caught the traffic lights just before the reds popped. Stew was off up the road so I stopped just over the crossroads, to no avail. Despite waving at the following group, they turned right. As it turned out they were on the correct route. Stew and I had to find our way back via so

many one-way roads, taking us past the Mons dealership, until we caught up at a fuel station. Stew still didn't quite have his head in the right place. Tanks topped up, we convoyed out of the forecourt, only to come to a halt 100 metres down the road. Stew jumped off his bike and walked rapidly back to the fuel station. We understood why on his way back when we all noticed the fuel cap in his hand.

The Mahymobiles museum turned out to be probably the best car museum I have ever visited. It was one of those places where every corner turned exposed another area of glorious motoring history. There were so many rooms, one in particular displayed



Then onto Waterloo, which was a bit of a let down. There is a gigantic mound of earth on top of which is the Brocante du Lion, a huge metal statue of a lion on top of a plinth. With its paw resting on a globe, it's supposed to represent peace in Europe after the defeat of Napoleon. That didn't work for long. Next to the mound is the old museum which is currently wrapped in scaffolding.



Didn't bother exploring that one but there is a modern underground museum which deserved exploring, or so I thought. The entrance fee was excessive so I just sneaked around a barrier to take photos of the huge battle field mock up. Also charging exorbitant fees was the café where we tried to buy wisely and with minimalistic dipping into wallets. It didn't work out that way.

Time was flying by so we decided to give the Mons dealership a miss for today and head straight for our hotel. We were getting withdrawal symptoms. Another quick shower and out on the town. We all felt that we needed a little something to eat with our several Leffe beers so it was off to Citizen Fox again where salad was top of our menu, at least it was for me but everyone else seemed to dip in. I have to say the Ceasar salad was huge so I was glad to share it.

Friday was our last day of sight-seeing and it turned out to be very enjoyable. Again with the very able Stew leading we were heading into Leffe country. Dinant is another Wallonia river town where a certain Maison Leffe stands. Its other claim to fame is for being the home of Adolphe Sax, the inventor of.... Yes, the saxophone.



The Meuse river dissects the picturesque town which is served by a single modern bridge totally out of character with its surroundings, however, it is a homage to Mr Sax as it is lined with many colourful saxophones. We parked up on the foody side as our first instincts were to eat and drink. Weather today was rather stiff so we took to wearing headgear as we again sat outside to take in the fresher than usual riverside air. Stew and Gary were without hats so they improvised. Amazing what you can do with a neck tube. The Taverne Creperie served up welcome hot toasted sandwiched with a little salad and hot drinks

Now for the important stuff. Across the river was our target for the day, the Maison Leffe. We paid the entrance fee which covered the cost of a couple of goodies later in the tour. Now used as a museum the Maison traces the roots of Leffe beer (pronounced Leff ae) back to 1240AD. All very interesting but the history part seemed to be rushed by certain gentlemen who wanted to

sample the first of the goodies. At the end of the history bit was the extensive bar where we were offered a free drink of our choice. Geoff already had a reddish looking tipple in a Leffe glass so I enquired what it was and tasted it. It seems that Leffe comes not only in Blonde and Brun but also in Ruby. I ordered a Ruby as opposed to my usual Blonde. I think I have a new favourite. The next goody was a Leffe beer glass in a presentation box. Not bad for what we paid. I was satisfied. Chris was not so satisfied with his box later.

On the return journey we stopped off at the St Symphorien Military Cemetery just a few



kilometres east of Mons. If you have ever been to a War Graves Commission cemetery you can't avoid noticing the regimented way the gravestones are lined up. This cemetery is very different being designed as a woodland cemetery. It contains the graves of just over 500 German and Commonwealth soldiers, principally those killed during the Battle of Mons in the First World War. The land was donated by a local owner on the understanding that both German and Allied soldiers would be buried here. The gravestones cemetery includes inscriptions for John Parr and George Lawrence Price (no relation), traditionally believed to be the first and last Commonwealth soldiers killed in action during the First World War.



And so back to the hotel. Poor Chris, he just can't hold his drink, or apparently his Leffe glass. As he entered the lift to go up to his room he dropped a certain presentation box. Opps. One broken Leffe glass. Now a tidy up and out for the best night out of our trip. Huge steaks on sizzling hot stones with chips and salad and sauces. And that was just me. We treated Chris as his birthday is imminent, and Stew as,... well, he is Stew, and we love him (as a guide and leader). Oh yes, and for organising everything. And just to put a smile back on Chris's face, we purloined a couple of Leffe glasses for him. Tomorrow will be a wet ride day, as promised by the weather man.

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. Bugger the French.

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A great adventure was had and we all have stories to tell. Thanks to Stew for everything. Long live Leffe. Bring on 2026.

P.S. Sorry Barb, I forgot the Belgian chocolates.



#### Steve





Do I need to say anything Steve? Think Barbara would agree. Ed



Do you have patches that are laying around and need sewing onto your cut?

Esther does a brilliant job at sewing on member's patches.

She undoes the lining on the waistcoat, attaches the patches and then sews it back together so that you do not see any machining on the lining. It's just so neat.

Give her a ring, I just know you will be delighted with the result.

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## MONS 2025

Stew plans ahead....the first email feeler for May 2025 was last September. Previously, we'd been to about every Commonwealth War Grave site (and HQ), primarily in the First World War trenches' area over the last 4 Springs. This year was going to focus more on the Ardennes whilst still being based relatively westward. Our base was the Belgian city of Mons - about 120 miles east of the Eurotunnel, which is still a reasonably long day's riding if starting or finishing in Oxfordshire. The preceding night, a few of us stayed at a Holiday Inn nearby the terminal, and the group of six met up



in good time for a mid-morning train. Our initial transit was uneventful except for a lunch stop of sausages en route. Sadly, but perhaps fortuitously, there is no bar in the Mons hotel. It was offset with a €5 refund for

chocolate each day when one "saved the planet" by declining room service; sadly, that was only 4 bars of chocolate in exchange for one smelly, messy room. As a stroke of sheer luck, Stew had chosen a hotel only a short walking distance from the nightlife district, thus we were providentially rescued.

The weather forecast for the week ahead included

the week ahead included the passage of a cold front

i.e. becoming cooler and wet towards the end. And so it proved to be. Being The Head Road Captain (HRC), Stew had planned a flexible itinerary with spare places to visit around the area. Hence, we chose the warmest day for a longish 10-hour/190 mile twisty tour of the Ardennes hills, meandering valleys and scenic rivers. It was fantastic. HRC had faithfully dug out an old map with green scenic routes marked and replotted the junctions, one at a time, into his Harley route planner.







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Adopting the military code of Seven Ps (Proper Planning and Preparation Prevents Puss Poor Performance), we had a challenging yet faultless ride that was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Our Tail End Geoffers even experimented by eating raw beef for the first time: beef *carpaccio*.

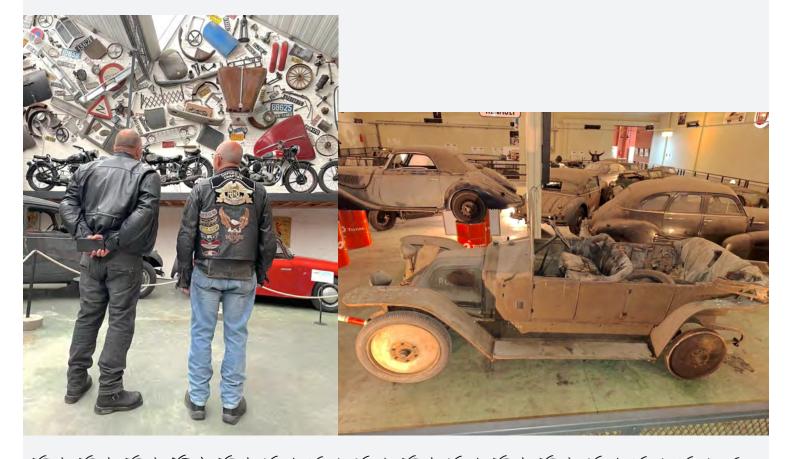
Weary but happy, we returned to the nightlife district. But we found time to replenish on the way in Bouillon, and eventually successfully circumnavigate (the nearest verb I could find) the Beaumont Triangle. It's a little like the Bermuda Triangle but apparently a maze for Harleys. It took 3 goes.



Day 3/Thursday dawned chilly 1°C but the Magnificent Six pressed on regardless. The initial aim was the Mahymobiles Motor Museum (with some of us going via the Mons HD) - a selection of over 300 cars and motorbikes, collected since 1944.

An ethereal photo of unrestored cars is sadly ruined by Steve photobombing. Late lunch was next at the Battle of Waterloo site. The latter was judged to be generally under-whelming - probably

because we declined the 226-step climb to to the top of the 130-foot high Lion's Mound, where we could have imagined about 120,000 allied soldiers giving about 72,000 French soldiers a good talking-to around the back of the bike sheds.



The final sight-seeing day started with a short run to the Strépy-Thieu boat lift, which was once the tallest of its kind: 110m high, 135m long and 75m wide, carrying two 112×12m caissons each the volume of an Olympic swimming pool. The Chinese subsequently built one bigger but you'll have to ride to the Three Gorges to see it.



Surprisingly, we found ourselves at Maison Leffe just before lunch. It is the Dinant site of the original Notre-Dame de Leffe, an abbey of Premonstratensian canons founded in 1152. Apparently, monks make beer and now there are about 2 million hectolitres of Leffe produced each year - none at Maison Leffe. If you've been to a posh school, you'll know that's 352 million pints. I'd prefer a Hooky but Dinant was nice anyway. Finally, we routed back towards Mons to visit the St Symphorien Military cemetery, which turned out to be somewhat of a hidden gem. It was a joint German-

Alliesite site interring about 500 soldiers initially from the Battle of Mons.

Notable was the sad coincidence of it being the final resting place of the first and the last victims of the Great War, spanning from 22 August 2014-11 November 1918. I call it a hidden gem because it is in

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complete contrast to the majority of necessarily huge cemeteries, with their military order of rank and file layouts. It has varied peaceful nooks surround by tall, wafting trees and rustling bushes. Having honoured the fallen, we successfully navigated the Beaumont Triangle not once but twice, en route to a final steak and ale in Mons.



The 300-mile ride home on Saturday, punctuated with a short stop at Lille HD, was wet in France, gusty in England, and culminated with an extra 1072 miles from when I started 5 days before. Usual deserved plaudits and thanks to HRC and Tail End Geoffers for a great job, but also to our other 3 (Chris, Gary and Steve) who not only put up with my banter but rode safely, proficiently and expeditiously throughout. It was a great warm-up for Croatia!

Nigel Demery



#### Looking ahead ....

JUNE	Breakfast Club		
	Saturday 14th June 9.30 a.m.		
	Kingsley Café Eynsham, Witney		
	The state of the s	Meet Chieveley Services 10 a.m. leave	Geoffers
	Harley Day Sammy Millars	10.15 a.m	
	Wednesday Club 18th June	Meet Costa Coffee in Faringdon retail	Stew
	Symond's Yat	park 10 a.m. leave 10.30 a.m.	Stew
	Sat 21th June		Cura
	Avebury		Greg
	Tuesday 24th June		
	Poole Bike Night		Clive Rothwell
	Saturday 28th June		
	Old Prison (Northleach)		Pam
JULY		Meet up at the far end of the Tesco	
	Sunday 6th July		Kev Elding
	Control Tower Greenham Common	10.30 a.m.	
	11 -13 July		
	Welsh Weekender		Bridey
	Saturday 12th July - Breakfast Club		
	14 -18 July		
	Ireland Trip		Mac
	Wednesday Club 16th July		
	Iron Bull Roadhouse		Geoffers
		19/20 July	
		TBD	?
	Sunday 27th July		
	RAF Museum Hendon		Steve P
		03/03 A	
AUGUST		02/03 Aug TBD	Greg
	Caturaday Oth Assaurt		
	Saturday 9th August Durdle Door		Bridey
	Saturday 16th Aug - LOH Coffee		
	morning		
	Sunday 17th Aug - Breakfast		
	Wednesday Club 20th August		Dave O'Dell
	Sunday 24th August		Martin Fisher
	Berks Aviation Museum		
	Saturday 30 July		Pam
	LOH run - Baton, Upper Heyford		

Remember to look out for further updates and information on our website and on our Facebook page.