



# Shining On\*

*The newsletter of Ulysses Club GB (UCGB)*

**Issue 89: Summer 2024**

*\*How dull it is to pause, to make an end. To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use! From Ulysses by Alfred, Lord Tennyson*



*Members from many countries gathered at the Ulysses International meeting in Zell, Germany in May*

*Despite the record warm but also record wet spring the club has held many meetings this quarter, with some intrepid members venturing out as early as March, and building steadily to a particularly busy May. As a result this issue is packed with reports. Highlights include the UCGB AGM in Worcester as well as the International meeting in Germany, and much else besides.*

*We now have a new Committee, and with more hands to help there are plans to grow the club gently and possibly to organise regional groups more formally. A key date for your diaries is the announcement of the International Ulysses meeting for 2025, which will be held in the UK on the weekend of May 9-12th.*

*Enjoy!*

Ba [barrycroft@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:barrycroft@yahoo.co.uk)

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## New Members

A big welcome to the club to all new members. We hope that you get to meet up with others in the club soon.

Watch the Forum <https://ulyssesclubgb.org/> and/or the Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1184024328746560> for upcoming meetings.

If you have a favourite cafe/ride/activity near you tell us about it and we'll turn it into a club run.

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## Committee Report

Elections were held at the AGM (see AGM report below), here are your new Committee members:



*L to R: Peter Aylott, Charles Warner, Patrick Laycock, Martin Lockley, Simon Marsh, Nick Clamp, Keith Alexander*

### Contacts

|                         |                                                                                                  |                                                                                      |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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| Martin Lockley          | <i>(Secretary)</i>                                                                               | <a href="mailto:secretary@ulyssesclubgb.org">secretary@ulyssesclubgb.org</a>         |
| Simon Marsh             | <i>(Treasurer)</i>                                                                               | <a href="mailto:simonmarsh200@gmail.com">simonmarsh200@gmail.com</a>                 |
| Nick Clamp              | <i>(Shining On review)</i>                                                                       | <a href="mailto:nj.clamp@talktalk.net">nj.clamp@talktalk.net</a>                     |
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| Non-elected appointees: |                                                                                                  |                                                                                      |
| Barry Croft             | <i>(editor Shining On)</i>                                                                       | <a href="mailto:barrycroft@yahoo.co.uk">barrycroft@yahoo.co.uk</a>                   |
| Barry Boggild           | <i>(website/forum</i> <a href="http://ulyssesclubgb.org/">http://ulyssesclubgb.org/</a> <i>)</i> | <a href="mailto:bboggild@ntlworld.com">bboggild@ntlworld.com</a>                     |

Draft Minutes of the AGM can be found under 2024/Worcester on the Forum at:

<https://ulyssesclubgb.org/forums/topic/minutes-of-agm-meetings/> .

Monthly Committee meeting Minutes are here:

<https://ulyssesclubgb.org/forums/forum/document-and-file-library/committee-meeting-minutes/>

## ***Alan Hilton update (Peter Read)***

You will recall that Alan had a nasty bike accident last autumn which left him with head injuries, from which he is not likely to fully recover. He spent months in the Oxford Radcliffe hospital but was recently moved to a nursing home. Nick & Keith visited him on their return from Germany. They report that Alan's move from hospital to the more private, personal & less formal surroundings of Larchfield House has had a beneficial effect and that he is more communicative and alert. They updated him regarding the German weekend and received a positive response from him.

It would be really great if he could receive more visitors, especially as, other than meal times, visiting hours are unrestricted. Nick reckons late morning around 11-ish is a good time to visit as he's more likely to be awake then, but evenings are also fine. As a reminder his location is:

**Cherwell Wing, Larchfield House, Larchfield Road, Maidenhead SL6 2SJ 01628 639428**

The situation may have changed by the time this newsletter is published so we suggest that members wishing to visit call first, or keep up to date via the Forum:

<https://ulyssesclubgb.org/forums/topic/alan-hilton-3/> or the Ulysses Club GB Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1184024328746560> .

Many thanks to all those from our club and from Ulysses clubs abroad for the many warm messages and also to those who have already visited Alan. On behalf of all our members we offer our very best wishes to Alan and his family.

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## ***ANNOUNCEMENT***

### ***Ulysses Club International Meeting 9th - 11/12th May 2025 (Patrick Laycock, President)***

In 2025 it is the turn of Ulysses Club GB to host the International meeting. This 2-3 day event will be held at the Whitehouse Hotel in Worcester, a central location in the UK providing opportunities for riding in many well known and popular parts of the country. The city also has an impressive cathedral and a long history that can be explored by those looking to soak up the local culture. Ulysses GB has used this location before and the excellent hotel facilities, the friendly staff, the ride-friendly location and the history of the city all combine to ensure an enjoyable and memorable experience for visitors.

*(The usual format is for folk to arrive on the Friday in time to check in and join an organised dinner. On Saturday there will be a range of guided rides likely to include the Malvern Hills, the Shropshire Hills, the Wye Valley and/or the Welsh borders, plus a list of suggested local attractions for non-riders. On Saturday night UK members will retreat for a short while to hold our AGM then rejoin for a shared meal. More rides are likely on Sunday for those staying on. On Monday morning for those not wishing to disperse immediately a tour of the local Morgan factory has been suggested, or possibly a trip to the National Motorcycle Museum for those headed north or east. Visitors new to the area may wish to extend their stay with a tour of Wales or similar, which GB members can help you plan. Details to follow. Ba)*

The hotel has a reserved block of rooms that will be held for the exclusive use of Ulysses numbers. By using the reference **ULYSSES090525** reservations can be made against a credit card for the 2 or 3 nights beginning 9th May 2025. Contact details of the hotel are below.

Rates are as follows;

- Double room, 2 persons, 2 nights of 9th and 10th, Dinner, Bed and Breakfast, £160 per room per night. One additional night if required on the 11th is £130.
- Single room, 1 person, 2 nights of 9th and 10th, Dinner Bed and Breakfast, £110 per night. One additional night on 11th is £95.

The hotel has secure allocated parking, health spa facilities, a well-stocked bar and Ulysses will enjoy exclusive silver service dining in its own banquet room.

The hotel is ready to take your reservations now, referring to Rachael Mitchell, General Manager and quoting deal code **ULYSSES090525**. Free cancellation up to 28 days prior to the event. Cancellation after that is subject to an (unspecified) charge. We've not pursued this further as our experience has been that the hotel is very flexible and does not apply charges to cancellations within this period given justifiable circumstances. We suggest booking now then making a final decision next April.

**The Worcester Whitehouse Hotel**, 62 Foregate Street, Worcester WR1 1EA

Tel : +44 (0) 1905 24308      F : +44 (0) 1905 23440      [rachael.mitchell@worcswhitehouse.com](mailto:rachael.mitchell@worcswhitehouse.com)

For info only (book by phone or email) see: <https://www.worcesterwhitehouse.co.uk/>

I look forward to meeting everyone at this superb location in 2025.

Members from other countries are particularly welcome. Put this in your diaries now!

Any queries should be directed to Martin Lockley via [secretary@ulyssesclubgb.org](mailto:secretary@ulyssesclubgb.org)



## Local Meetings

*The place to announce these is generally the Forum and/or Facebook, but please do remember to tell me, and please send me meeting reports afterwards, with photos (via [barrycroft@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:barrycroft@yahoo.co.uk))*

**Northern – generally meeting in or near the Peak District or Yorkshire**

**Two Wednesdays** a month there's a meet somewhere for lunch. The venue changes but there is usually somebody there for this long-established meet-up, generally at 12 noon for lunch.

**North West**

**Second Sunday of the month:** Venue varies but usually in or near Lancashire. Check the Forum for details.

**Midlands – usually north of the M4 up to Birmingham**

**Wednesdays:** Venue varies but there is a tendency to meet up at airfields. Crickley Hill in the Cotswolds is also popular when it's warm and sunny. The Touchdown Café at Wellesbourne Airfield seems to be the popular default option. Watch the Forum or Facebook for the latest.

**Southern - usually within a few miles N or anywhere S of the M4, between London and Bristol\***

In summer we often meet for lunch at Compton Abbas airfield, sat high in the hills just south of Shaftesbury. This is now under new ownership but the sit-down restaurant and outer snack bar and picnic area are still there. Nick is also prone to announcing weekend or mid-week visits to various places in the mid south or south midlands at short notice, some of which may be of interest, so keep an eye on the Forum <https://ulyssesclubgb.org/forum/> or FB <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1184024328746560>

**South East - a new group!**

Membership has grown large enough for folk in the SE to start getting together. Many thanks to Brian Aylott for organising the first meeting (see below).

*Can I ask that anyone organising a get-together puts meeting details on the Forum and/or Facebook? I know that most local groups have a WhatsApp group for their members but if you only use that for announcements then members from other groups or indeed other countries who may be visiting or passing through your area won't know about it. The best place to look for more info should always be the Forum and/or Facebook.*

*\*"The south" is surprisingly big - it's about 370 miles from Land's End to Broadstairs, about the same as Land's End to Manchester! Those near the middle have the best of both worlds at the moment and also enjoy regularly meeting the overlapping South Midlands folk. A new SE group has just sprung up, but SW members even in Somerset find many meetings too far away to be practical, while Devon and Cornwall members are always overlooked. The Committee are aware and are contemplating organising at least informal smaller regional groups. If you're remote but willing to help with local coordination and recruitment let me or someone on the Committee know, thanks. Ba*

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## ***Forthcoming National Meetings***

### **SW Ireland tour Sept 22-29th (Barry Croft)**



I've organised a 1-week tour in September of the spectacular SW of Ireland. In brief:

- Sun 22nd Sept Day 1 Ride to and catch a ferry of your choice, ride to 1 night stop in Waterford.
- Mon 23rd Sept Day 2 Ride to and assemble in Killarney, our base for the next 4 nights.
- Tues 24th Sept Day 3 Tour of the Dingle peninsula.
- Weds 25th Sept Day 4 Tour of the Ring of Kerry.
- Thurs 26th Sept Day 5 Tour via Castletown of the Bere peninsula.
- Fri 27th Sept Day 6 Check-out and tour via Bantry Bay and the Wild Atlantic Way to Cork.
- Sat 28th Sept Day 7 Check-out and ride to catch the ferry home.
- Sun 29th Sept Day 8 For those still in transit, ride home.

Andy and I have produced a range of GPX route files which are now available in the Ulysses public folder on *MyRoute* at <https://www.myrouteapp.com/group/routes/12946#> (this is the favourite route planner for many, and basic membership is *free*), or they can be downloaded as a ZIP file *Irish Routes.ZIP* from our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1184024328746560/files/files>

GPX files are small as they are simply a list of coordinates compatible with most satnavs, so I suggest you upload them all to your satnav then you can find your way about if we get split up. Your particular satnav will then turn these into routes. Different satnavs have different algorithms and may create subtly different routes though, so I've used lots of waypoints in an effort to make sure all agree! I've created long (for sunny days) and short (rainy) versions for each peninsula, plus a number of interesting variations if people want to go off exploring. If you have *MyRoute* look at the maps to get the idea.

The plan is that on day 1 we get to Ireland and stay near the east coast. Next day we'll head straight to Killarney in time for lunch and in the afternoon go for our first taste of the nearest mountains. Then each day we will explore a different one of the four peninsulas working north to south and anticlockwise. Ideally we'll all stick together but if people want to do different things subject to discussion we could split up. Join the discussion on the Forum at <https://ulyssesclubgb.org/forums/topic/sw-ireland-tour-sept-22-29th/>

Your choice of ferry line, sailing time and port will depend on where you live. Some will prefer *Fishguard* or *Milford Haven* to *Rosslare*, others *Holyhead* or *Liverpool* to *Dublin*. I've identified reasonably priced

hotels in Waterford, Killarney and Cork which have so far accommodated together the first 8 to book. More are most welcome. If you're late to the party and can't get into one of these let me know.

We'll mainly be doing anticlockwise tours along the coast roads of each of the SW peninsulas (the bottom third or so of the popular *Wild Atlantic Way*), including a couple of short ferries if the weather is kind, but I also have shorter wet weather routes and 3 or 4 beautiful mountain passes in mind which I've included as options. For comparison these are generally not as civilised as, say, Swiss passes, but they are all on tarmac and there's nothing as tough as say the Hardknott Pass in the Lakes.

In case we don't all ride to Killarney together I have a biker-friendly cafe/pub in mind as a lunchtime rendezvous point (the hotel won't let us check in early and doesn't have a safe place for left luggage). Then time and weather allowing, I have in mind a short taster ride into the National Park that afternoon before we check in.

Budget? Fuel will depend on your UK mileage plus about 800 miles in Ireland. Ferries are around £80 each way solo. Some hotels don't offer breakfast, and we'll be eating (and drinking) out every lunchtime and evening. Fuel is a bit cheaper than the UK, food about the same, but hotels are pricey. As a solo rider I'm budgeting around £1.8k for everything.

## Resources

Stena: <https://www.stenaline.co.uk/>

Irish Ferries: <https://www.irishferries.com/uk-en/Travel-to-Ireland/>

Accommodation: <https://www.booking.com/index.en-gb.html>

Recommended hotels:

22-23rd *Waterford Viking*,

23-27th *Killarney Court Hotel*,

27-28th *The Bosun Monkstown*,

28-29th *St Martin's B&B Rosslare*.

Guide to the WAW: <https://www.thewildatlanticway.com/>

For tour details see the Forum: <https://ulyssesclubgb.org/forums/topic/sw-ireland-tour-sept-22-29th/> and Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/events/1347573429230349/> . If you've forgotten how to access the Forum email [bboggild@ntlworld.com](mailto:bboggild@ntlworld.com)

At the time of writing 8 people including myself are booked but two of those are now in doubt. There's plenty of time for others to join. If you do book then let me know so I can add you to the list.

The SW is arguably the best bit of Ireland, and certainly the most popular in summer. You drive on the left, the natives are friendly and speak English (with a lovely accent), the scenery is amazing and the food and drink are familiar but different. Being in the Common Travel Area the usual EU restrictions do not apply, there's no 90/180 rule, no fingerprints, you don't even really need a passport (but it's best to have one) or a GHIC card (but ditto). The schools will have gone back when we tour so it should be quieter. The big unknown is the weather, which most of the year is 50:50! If you haven't been before then the SW is a great intro to a lovely country, but be warned: if you get the bug you'll want to come back and tour the other 2/3 of the WAW...

Questions or comments [barrycroft@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:barrycroft@yahoo.co.uk)

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## Meeting Reports



### **The Garden Shed Cafe, Wellesbourne, March 7th (Pete Bull)**

Good brunch at the Garden Shed cafe with Martin, Les, Andy Waywell and - all the way from Hampshire - Andrew Chapman. The world's motorcycling problems were solved over two cups of warming coffee. Two of us on newly acquired Tiger Sports! Great food, and the home-baked beans were delightful.

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### **The Lincolnshire Fens meeting, March 8th (Pete Bull)**

The intention was to meet at the Inside Out Homestore Cafe in Peterborough but we ended up at the Iron Horse biker's cafe/bar as the other had closed down. Excellent food and chat with Charles Warner and Peter Read.



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## The UK AGM weekend, May 2024 (Ba)

An enjoyable weekend was had catching up with friends old and new. The ride up on Friday was mixed though! Three of us rode up from Somerset. The English side was fine and dry but as we crossed the Severn to the Welsh side the drizzle started. By the time we stopped in Chepstow for lunch it was proper rain, so we decided against the narrow and slippery Wye valley and made our way ever more slowly up the west side of the Severn. By the time our leader Alex's satnav-phone died (drowned I think) it was pouring hard, so I took over and just punched the hotel and "fastest" into my Garmin - which of course took us up the M5 jammed with stop-start bank holiday traffic. Filtering with panniers on in a monsoon with raindrops inside my visor isn't my idea of fun. It was a good test of my gear though - my Oxford Mondial laminated jacket and trousers worked perfectly, but there was a little ingress into the heel of my (old) Alpinestar Gortex boots, and my supposedly waterproof Knox gloves were wringing wet...

Various rides had been laid on for the Saturday which was mercifully dry. Our group ventured into Shropshire and up into the Cleve Hills, with amazing views. My ride leader spurned the 2nd man drop-off system (used by everyone from the Police and IAM to our local bike club), and prefers the "let's try and stick together" method. Which only works if the leader keeps an eye on his mirrors and stops when he loses people. So of course he did lose half his group - then did exactly the same again on Sunday. We were OK though, we found a nice pub for lunch!



For those not familiar with the drop-off system I can recommend it - it's not foolproof but it's a lot better than trying to keep a group together through busy towns with wiggly alleys, stop-start traffic, traffic lights, roundabouts etc. It takes no time to learn and even spotty yooofs in my local club get it. Have a look at the demonstration video Alex posted recently on our FB page or find it on Youtube at

<https://youtu.be/6ueszy31hk?list=LL>



Saturday night is always AGM time, and although not everyone gets excited by democracy in action I cherish it. It was a particularly good meeting, with more new faces than old now on our freshly-elected Committee, plus a lively discussion in AOB and an acknowledgement that the club needs and now has the hands to adapt to the future. Once again our evening meal was very good, and the serving staff seemed genuinely happy to

serve (the hotel is comfy and has a good vibe and I was pleased to hear we'll be going back there next year). Afterwards there was the usual lottery (where I won a bottle of bubbly) followed by an auction of donated prizes. Raising £750 for our Headway pot, now standing just under £1000. Then on to the bar...



On the Sunday I decided to visit Croft Castle in the Welsh borders, home of my distant ancestors. Five others came too and it proved to be a good day out, with interesting and largely empty roads both ways and even a (bijou) castle to look around. A knowledgeable National Trust guide showed me the giant family tree and I was even able to find the point at which my more recent ancestors became disinherited and poor! Losing our leader again wasn't totally his fault this time as Andy and I had to stop because we'd lost tail-end Clive!

On Monday rather than head straight home a group of us booked onto the nearby 2 hour Morgan factory tour, where we were shown step by step how they hand-make their beautiful cars, fascinating. I want one!



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## The German International Meeting, May 2024

*Peter Read's report:*

My 13th Phingsten/Summer weekend and, per usual, a first class event organised by Ulysses De. Really great turnout from Germany, the UK, France & Switzerland, plus a visitor from Australia. The Norwegians claim they were still snowed-in!

After rain of biblical proportions on the way there on Friday the weekend weather was sunny & warm with just the odd shower. Our new President excelled with his German address & with the exception of Charles, who was unable to attend, all of our new committee were in attendance, so it was a great opportunity to meet their counterparts from other countries.

*(Nick Clamp led a group of Brits on an extended tour, taking several days each way plus the weekend Black Forest meeting in the middle. This is his report):*

Outbound photos taken en route to Zell am Harmersbach in the Black Forest for the Ulysses Germany International gathering. First overnight in Cambrai and Metz, with sunshine and showers but better than expected. Thanks to Eve for most of the photos.



On the Saturday in Zell our German hosts had arranged rides (and other activities for non-riders). The riders were able to enjoy the fabulous and famously beautiful Black Forest.



One option on the Sunday in Zell was a visit to the *Motorrad & Spielzeug* (motorcycle and toy) museum - toy motorbikes naturally!



On the return from Zell towards the UK on Monday the group stopped overnight in Neustadt.



Tuesday was Neustadt to Cochem via the Wein Strasse and the Rhine. Lots of road closures but it stayed dry till Cochem, which is recovering from recent floods. A Taiwanese coach party were all over Steve and his patches at St. Goar, so I gave them a Ulysses card which prompted more photos and selfies. Great fun.

Wednesday we left Cochem and rode through the Eiffel region and Luxembourg to Bastogne for our overnight stop. Thursday morning, coffee stop in Givet and a motorway blast to St.Omer for the night, then tunnel crossing Friday. Weather has been better than expected with only a few showers, bikes filthy however, especially after the muddy roads into Cochem. Thanks to Eve and Liz for the stolen photos during this trip.





#### *Pete Bull's report:*

It would be untrue to say that the forecast for torrential rain did not contribute to our decision to travel in the MX5 to the International Gathering in the Black Forest, but it was not the only factor. Our replacement for the Pan European, a Tiger 850 Sport, was ready and kitted out for the 1500 mile trip, but it would have been the first two-up ride with Mrs Twosheds and my confidence was not as high as it should have been – perhaps I am developing a modicum of common sense as I speed through my seventies. Had it been a solo trip I would not have hesitated.

As it turned out we were not the only Ulysseans to decide to plough through the forecast torrential rain on four wheels; a number of the German club did so as well. Some of the Germans delayed their ride to the meeting until the Saturday because of the weather. We later learned that Saarland was very badly affected by flooding on the Friday – our German friend Harry unfortunately had to return home to sort out a flooded house. However full marks to the hardy and sizeable contingent of Ulysses Club GB members who arrived fully saturated on the Friday afternoon with clothing and boots tested to the limits.



The hotel at Zell am Harmersbach was comfortable with the benefit of a swimming pool and a steam room & sauna to warm up cold bones and a good variety of local beer to chill them down again. It was good to see so many arrive from the different European clubs and also to meet Peter's friend Ian who had travelled from *Australia* to stay with Gernot and borrow a motorbike from his stable.

I enjoyed the novelty of a pressure-free weekend as our new president Patrick Laycock did a commendable speech after dinner in two languages. The usual array of group rides was on offer for both the Saturday and the Sunday. On Saturday we decided to join Peter & Mim on a guided tour of a delightful and popular Black Forest town called Gengenbach offered by Uwe & Silke and Thomas & Jutta. The weather changed overnight and we had a pleasant, sunny day, as did the now dried-out UCGB riders, who took advantage of the group rides through the beautiful Black Forest.

Sunday was a special day for me as Gernot, who was leading a ride, had offered to take me out in his sidecar for the day. This was a special treat as our first family transport in the 1950s was a BSA M21 600cc with a single seater sidecar. In my youth I shared the single seat with my mother, covered by a tip-up aluminium and Perspex "top". I later acquired the combination from my father at the tender age of 16 and used it as my own transport until I sold it after I completed university. Kitted out with helmet, gloves, motorcycle jacket and trousers and boots – all squeezed into the MX5's tiny boot along with 10 days' luggage – I took up position in Gernot's renovated open "chair" which was attached to his BMW 850 GS, which proved to be an admirable tug for a combination. I had complete confidence in Gernot who only last year had ridden 3000 km to Norway and back with Wally in the sidecar. It was interesting riding so low with Gernot's knee and the right-hand cylinder alongside and a great view of the front forks in action as he accelerated and braked – something that is rarely seen by a rider.

I was able to help Gernot overcome the illogical physics of getting such a vehicle around the bends by leaning appropriately. You really get a feeling of the scouring forces on the front tyre from that position.

The ride was a delight with stops at the Hexenloch café ("Witch's Hole Mill") and Kandel, the highest mountain in the central Black Forest, where we watched the paragliders take off. The ride down from Kandel to the valley floor was great fun with plenty of hairpin bends and a poor road surface – all exciting stuff from my lowly position. All in all a great day and many thanks to Gernot for his kindness.



On the Monday we followed Uwe & Sike through the northern Vosges to St Wendel in Saarland for an overnight stay at their home. Thomas & Jutta joined us for drinks and a meal on what was another sunny day. We reflected on how Ulysses Club has enabled us to build up lasting friendships with so many people from different countries.

Our drive home across France allowed us to visit the impressive cathedrals of Reims & Beauvais plus the usual stop at the former Grand Prix circuit at Gueux. Our night stop at Reims was in an excellent Logis which was a walking distance from the surprisingly classy centre.

TRAVEL NOTE: We sailed back from Le Havre on the smallest of Brittany Ferries' fleet on an overnight crossing. It was good value, rather quaint and, being used mostly by truck drivers, had relatively few cars and bikes, so it was quick to get through passport controls in Portsmouth. Travelling to Kent for a lunchtime ferry or shuttle is not a pleasant experience for us as London gets in the way and the A1, M11, M25 and M20 are no fun. Riding out through southern Belgium or through Lille at rush hour is not pleasant either. We find it easier to get to and from Portsmouth and taking an overnight ferry takes off the pressure of getting to the port on time and also allows for an early start the following morning. The non-autoroute roads skirting Paris to the north (via Beauvais – Compiègne – Soissons – Reims) or the south (via Chartres – Fontainebleau – Troyes) were pleasant enough as long as you allow time for the constant changes of speed going through towns and villages and beware of the large number of speed cameras. Then the drive home from Portsmouth avoids the horrors of Kent.



*(Pete Bull: then and now!)*

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*Congratulations to Michael Dunlop, finally matching his uncle's TT record...*



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## Member Articles

### The Distinguished Gentleman's Ride 2024 (Barry Croft)

Two of us joined the Taunton group of the *Distinguished Gentleman's Ride* on 19th May, Rab Gosbee on his old Thunderbird triple, myself on my Enfield Interceptor, both in our smartest clothes. Fabulous sunny morning out bowling along the leafy lanes. Thanks to my sponsors this year I raised £87, and over the 5 years I've done it a total of £340. I know of at least 2 other GB members who joined their local group rides, and with dozens organised across the country there'll be one near you. This is an annual International event with rides being held the same day all over the world, to raise money for prostate cancer and men's mental health, and this year over \$7 million was raised.

To quote from the website: "*The Distinguished Gentleman's Ride was founded in Sydney, Australia, by Mark Hawwa. It was inspired by a photo of TV Show Mad Men's Don Draper astride a classic motorcycle wearing his finest suit. Mark decided a themed ride would be a great way of connecting niche motorcycle enthusiasts and communities while raising funds to support the men in our lives.*"

Why don't you join in next year? See: <https://www.gentlemansride.com/>



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## The Breakaway Welsh Trip, 19th-22nd May (Clive Solomons)



### SUNDAY 19TH MAY

A pleasant if chilly ride from Tadley over to Swindon to meet up with Martin Sanders and Clive Wells, my companions on this leg of the journey. Kevin Clarkson also greeted us and although he had organised the whole trip, planned the routes, booked the hotels, was unfortunately unable to ride due to having injured his back.

After copious tea and biscuits, checking oil, and tyre discussions, we commenced our journey up the A419 towards Gloucester and then cross country to Hereford for lunch. The weather was positively hot and very sunny, and we enjoyed a pleasant al fresco lunch.

On leaving the lunch stop we somehow lost Clive, and after waiting for his non-appearance, we decided to go back thinking he was waiting for us somewhere. Not finding him, we realised he had gone ahead without us. Cheers mate! Martin and I continued to the tea stop at the Elan Valley where we finally found Clive Wells and also met Andy Waywell, who had come cross-country from his home to complete our party.



From the Elan Valley we took a cross-country route through the hills and mountains to Aberystwyth. This was a wonderful road round the valley reservoirs and lakes, with steep descents, climbs, hairpins and sheep. A true biker's road with little traffic so we were all in our element! A pleasant evening in Aberystwyth followed, with abundant beer.

### MONDAY 20TH MAY

Another bright and sunny day greeted us as we hit the road heading north. Unfortunately, stupid me

managed to ride off leaving my prescription sunglasses on my top box. Despite a detour back and retrace, they couldn't be found. Fortunately, I could wear my normal glasses and use a dark visor. Note to self: always check you're wearing your glasses before riding off!

Having caught up with the others, who were about to send out a search party, we continued up the winding A487 through Machynlleth to Portmeirion. This is a fascinating Baroque / Italianate style village built by Clough Williams-Ellis over a fifty-year period. Many of you will recall the 60's TV series, *The Prisoner*, starring Patrick McGoohan in which it was immortalised as "The Village". Sitting in a café, in the sun, looking out through the trees surrounded by these wonderful buildings, it felt like being on the Mediterranean!



We left Portmeirion and rode a marvellous mountain road around the lakes at Bala and on to the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct (do not try and pronounce it if you've had a couple of beers!) This is an amazing structure built by Thomas Telford over a ten-year period and cost £47,000 at the time (about £3m in today's money. Having a Civil Engineering background, you wouldn't build it for that today!) It comprises 18 cast iron arches on stone pillars and carries the Llangollen canal 130 feet over the River Dee. From here we rode to our

overnight stop in Chester via the Snake Pass (? did you mean the Horseshoe Pass? Ba) and Ponderosa Café and yes, at the end, more beer!

TUESDAY 21st MAY

The day was overcast but still warm as we headed out. We had decided to visit *Another Place* by Anthony Gormley on Crosby Beach. Although only 25 miles away, it took over an hour to get there via the Mersey Tunnel and Liverpool City Centre (not for the faint hearted). However, we were rewarded with the incredible sight of these 6-foot cast iron figures erected in the sand. Apparently, there are 100 of

them spread over 2 miles across the beach, but just our luck it was high tide, and we could only see some of them. Nevertheless, an imposing sight.



After this, we headed south to Ironbridge to view this extraordinary structure which crosses the River Severn in Shropshire. Built over a 2 year period in 1777 at a cost of £6,000, this was the first cast iron structure of its type in the world. Interestingly it was originally estimated at £3,200, so even then, construction costs doubled!



As we sat in the sun drinking tea and eating locally made pork pies, much debate ensued. Tomorrow's forecast was for wall-to-wall rain. Should we cut and run tonight and avoid tomorrow's deluge or stay another night and take our chances with the elements in the morning?

WEDNESDAY 22nd MAY

We decided to stay one more night in Telford and woke up to the predicted deluge. Originally the plan was to take a leisurely route back via Bridgnorth, but as the forecast was for no break in the rain, we decided to get to our respective homes as quickly as possible using motorways. I can honestly say it was the worst conditions I have ever ridden in, with torrential nonstop rain. Still, everyone got home safe, managing to avoid the numpty car drivers without any lights on! It took days to get all my kit dry again. 650 miles in total for the entire trip.

All in all, a splendid 4 days with good company, food and beer and some new to me magnificent sights. Thanks guys. Also a big thank you to Kevin for organising it all.

*(Nice photos Clive. On the sunglasses thing I realised a while ago that wearing sunglasses on a bike isn't a great idea, if you plunge from sunlight into a tunnel you're blind. Even photochromics don't react quickly enough. Better to wear plain glasses and use a flip up/down sun visor. IMHO! Ba)*

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## Ba's Bikes

*We're hearing the serialised tale from our editor **Barry Croft** of the numerous ~~old wrecks~~ "classics" he's owned during his many many revolutions around our Sun, drawn from his ever-expanding CV (Cycle Vitae). Last issue we read about his post-accident cruiser phase. This issue we learn how Barry got back into normal biking after his battered body mended...*

By 2012 I was getting a bit fed up with the Vulcan. I liked it's easy chuggability and comfort, but my old injuries had faded so comfort was no longer prime - and the VN cramped one of the main pleasures of riding a bike: the bends! I didn't want ultimate performance any more but I wanted a bike with better handling and especially better ground clearance.

One bike I'd been thinking about for a while was the Triumph Bonneville, but I'd tried an early 790 and it had been too feeble. After a little searching - and a close near-miss with an eBay con-man - I found a low-mileage **865cc Triumph Bonneville T100**.



This was exactly the model I wanted – the 60's styling I grew up with (two-tone, wire wheels, plank seat, twin clocks and peashooters), with the recently upgraded 865cc engine (but the last year with real carbs). I bought it in February 2012 with just 6000 miles on the clock. I tweaked it a little – Triumph "off road" pipes, a K&N, Thruxton jets and needles – and after the VN800 it felt fast! At first it was too revvy on motorways and redlined in top but gearing it up from stock 18 to a 19t front sprocket made it lazier, ideal for touring. Mirror extenders were tried then discarded again as too vibey. I added a QD summer screen for touring. It already had a rack with a QD topbox and it happily took my old magnetic tank bag and throwovers for touring. My first decent trip out was Wales with the recently-born Ulysses GB!

It looked so authentic old boys would catch me in car parks and garage forecourts to reminisce. It handled really well. I've never been a knee-scraper, but it was lovely to relax and do the natural speed I

wanted on roundabouts and through bends and know that I wouldn't suddenly touch down! A common problem for me is reaching the ground with my little legs, but this bike was no problem.

Negatives? Well the biggie was the chrome, which proved awfully thin, with the wheels in particular peeling and going rusty despite all my efforts. Which I put down to poor quality control, since Triumph had just moved their manufacturing to Thailand. This put me off Triumphs for a while I'm afraid...

...so in 2014 I went back to my old go-to brand and engine format, and bought a **Honda CBF 1000 A8**, a 2008 (Mark 1) model with ABS. Chosen with a mix of head and heart, and a good decision. I was now a struggling freelance consultant and could only afford one bike, so I needed an all-rounder again, but one with enough oomph for continental touring. Something like that old Sprint RS but comfier and lower. This had the obligatory low seat, and the famous but detuned Fireblade engine, so it had heaps of lovely torque, yet still revved to 10k and did 145mph!

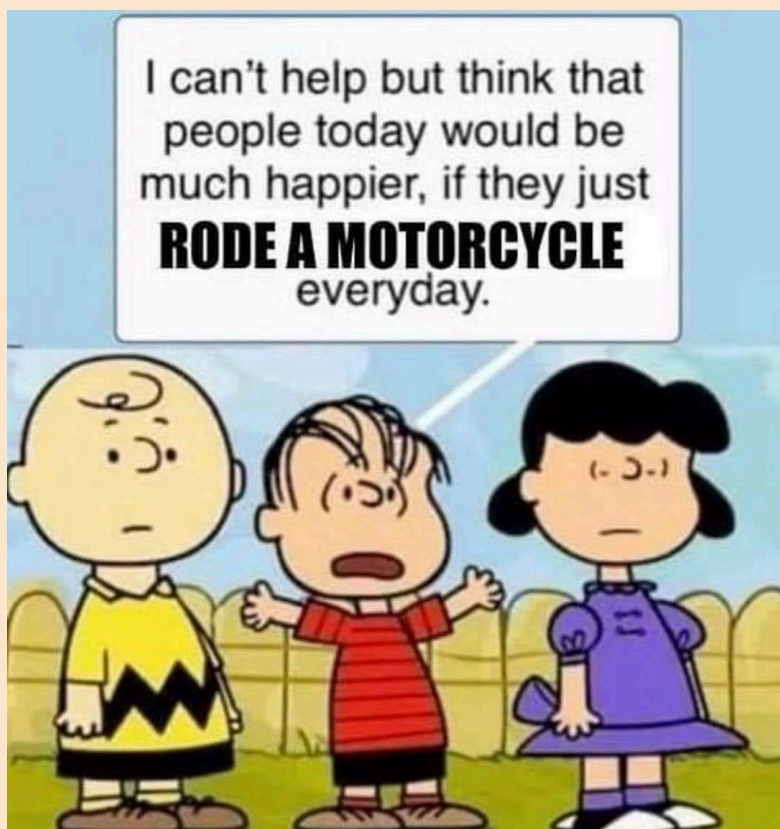


Mine came with hard bags and I already had a top box to match the plate. Crucially the seat was adjustable, so even with my very restrictive 27" inseam, on the lowest setting I found it felt secure and even paddleable (on the flat). The bars were high and comfy, the screen effective. The engine was like a giant puff of wind blowing you along, absolutely effortless and turbine-smooth. Being a Honda it lacked 'character' after the T100, but in every other way was superior. I managed to find a rare red one too, most are silver. With the luggage fitted it proved to be a comfy tourer, with the bags off it was almost a sports bike. This reignited my European touring bug and took me deep into the continent, where it proved to be excellent loaded with luggage on the autobahns, then lovely and sporty with the bags off on French and Swiss alpine roads.

There was nothing really wrong with the CBF but as with many earlier bikes I slowly grew fed up of oiling and adjusting the chain, which also smothered the back of the bike in sticky black stuff. Why so many

bikes are still chain-driven beats me, a chain is a terrible choice for a machine exposed to the elements. The suspension was also non-adjustable, and a bit cheap and nasty. And it did lack any "character".

The clincher though was that I'd noticed "tinworm" – lots of tiny holes, a known CBF fault – appearing in the swinging arm casting! Dealers said it didn't affect the strength, but then didn't want to take it in p/x! It lasted about 3 years, which is good for me, but eventually it was time for another change and I sold it to a local lad. I just get bored easily I think, and I suppose my philosophy especially as I get older is "so many lovely bikes, so little time" ... time for something with more character, probably a twin, and ideally no chain. Aha! I knew which make I hadn't had yet...



*This newsletter has been distributed electronically and can be viewed online or downloaded as you prefer. Feel free to share it, indeed please do tell your friends about the club, that way the club grows in an organic and friendly way.*

*Whether you're notifying me of an upcoming meeting or sending me a ride report, be sure to say who organised it, when, and where. Always post upcoming meetings to the Forum and/or the Facebook page as a priority – this newsletter is only quarterly, so if sending alerts to me too then think at least 3 months ahead. Send all questions and submissions to me at [barrycroft@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:barrycroft@yahoo.co.uk) please.*

*Articles can be written in any format but if other than Word then please send me the pics separately. Feedback is always gratefully received: is the newsletter OK? What don't you like? What would you like to see added?*

*The deadline for the Autumn 2024 issue is late August for publication about 1st September.*

*Many thanks. Ba.*