

BikeBytes

The Magazine of The Scottish Motorcycle Club

WELCOME...

To the newest edition of BikeBytes, I hope everyone's done their Christmas shopping! The season has now wound down with the colder weather in place, but there have still been Club events taking place with talks at Club Nights, and the Christmas night out taking place in the middle of December. Enjoy this latest issue, I hope everyone has a good Christmas and stay safe on the roads!

Route 66 and the American Midwest

Chairman John Hill and I set off in September on another two-wheeled adventure this year when we headed to the States for a heady mixture of Harleys, Route 66, old towns, big cities and blue, blue skies. Throw in some great blues, soul and rock n' roll along the way and you get the drift.

We flew first to Chicago on a Saturday morning where we spent a couple of days just chilling out, picking up our bikes there on the Monday. Having done a couple of previous Stateside trips by bike, I persuaded John that the Softail Heritage Classic was the bike to go for. As well as looking the part, they come with a screen and saddle bags which mean that they're ideal for touring. Any reservations John had about this beast were quickly dispelled after a run round the block to check out the controls and then we were straight out into the traffic and heading south into the sun. As a rule I think the general level of discipline, respect for speed limits etc is much better there than here. This probably doesn't apply so much on the 6 lane expressway type ring roads round the big cities but that kind of cut and thrust stuff is probably the same the world over.



Our first day took us to Springfield, Illinois following Route 66 as far as possible. This is sometimes easier said than done as the road has been replaced by newer ones much of the time and signposts are not always obvious. Nonetheless, we found our way round some of the old villages where there are still relics of the past by way of old gas stations, diners and so on. Springfield itself was a pleasant town where Abraham Lincoln worked as a lawyer before becoming president, and he is now buried there.

We continued south next day to St Louis, Missouri in glorious sunshine, which was to stay with us the entire trip. It also got pretty hot as we proceeded south and we were now moving from temperatures of mid 70s to low 90s in old money. There are still states where you aren't required by law to wear your crash helmet so we were to see many riders in T shirts and jeans which seems a bit crazy to us. I think we got a few strange looks when we arrived at places with all our gear on as it just isn't normal in these parts. St Louis itself is a sizeable place with a good blues scene and we quickly found a spot – or was it two? – that night for something to eat, beer and great music. Not too late a night though as we had a full day ahead.

Many of the roads here of course consist of vast straights as far as the eye can see, so not exciting from a purely biking point of view. To vary things a bit, we headed next day for a scenic run through the Mark Twain National Forest as we continued south. Here we found rolling countryside and bends to keep our interest up before settling for the night in Poplar Bluff. In the steak bar that night we joined in the local custom of having a few monkey nuts whilst we waited for our order, throwing the shells on the wooden floor. Strange but true. Doesn't seem quite right but that's what you do!



Arkansas next day and we stopped in the quaintly named town of Pocahontas for our morning coffee for no other reason than I liked the name. A bit of a backwater this one and we couldn't find a single coffee shop or cafe so settled for an Italian Restaurant which was just getting ready for the lunch trade. The girl eyed us rather suspiciously at first – I don't think they get many bikers here and certainly not in full kit. She seemed to find it strange that we wanted a coffee and especially strange that we might want milk in it. Lack of milk seemed to be a recurring theme on our travels outside the cities and usually we had to settle for a rather horrible creamer thingy or go without. She did seem to warm to us however as we got into a bit of conversation and suggested some shops we could visit around the town before leaving. We managed to resist the shopping temptation and headed on as we were still in bendy countryside. We crossed the great Mississippi that evening and into Memphis, Tennessee.

If you are into music – and possibly even if you aren't – Memphis is a Mecca for its musical offerings. First evening, we headed to the late, great BB King's bar in Beale Street where we spent several hours listening to different live acts, mainly blues and soul. What an atmosphere, definitely a night to remember. The following day, we did more of the same but also fitted in a visit to Graceland during the day to Elvis's home.

Memphis was our farthest south stop so after two nights, it was time to head north again towards Chicago. This was mostly just a matter of hitting the Interstate to cover the distance back in two days. We wanted to get north of Chicago as our next and last full day was to be Milwaukee, home of Harley-Davidson – as well as being famous for Budweiser beer of course. We hadn't pre-booked anything here so after cruising around a few places with very Scottish names (Glencoe was especially impressive with mile after mile of enormous houses with immaculate lawns), we found a place for the night in a rather posh (ie. expensive) Hilton. Not much choice in these parts but I hadn't wanted to pre-book every stop to give a bit of flexibility. We did better the last night when we came back from Milwaukee when we found a room just as good for half the price. We had also found a motel the previous night at a quarter the price but the less said about that, the better! It did help though to even out the accommodation costs for the trip. Anyway, whether you are a

Harley fan or not, a visit to the museum is well worth it. It is a huge, modern complex with restaurant/bar/cafe etc and really good exhibitions of their bikes through the ages. Interesting to note that Davidson's roots are Scottish and Harley's are English. There is a 'Davidson Legacy' based in Angus where they have refurbished the family's old cottage and three of their members were in the museum at the same time as we were and came up and introduced themselves to us. We may even incorporate a visit to the cottage on a future run, out of interest.



Next day, we headed back to the Eaglerider bike store to return the bikes and head to the airport. We had a great experience all round, met interesting people, enjoyed the bikes, soaked everything there was to soak up and had great weather. Probably a little too much by way of burgers, beer and chips but I have started the diet now. If the idea appeals, we could certainly recommend it. It has to be done on a Harley of course. I've used Eaglerider on a few occasions now and found them very helpful. I wouldn't have a Harley personally – too much chrome to keep clean in our climate – but they make a lot of sense in a country like the States with the big open roads and the sunshine. I think John has been converted and I'm sure I saw the beginnings of a beard and pony tail by the last day or two!



Alan Hopper.

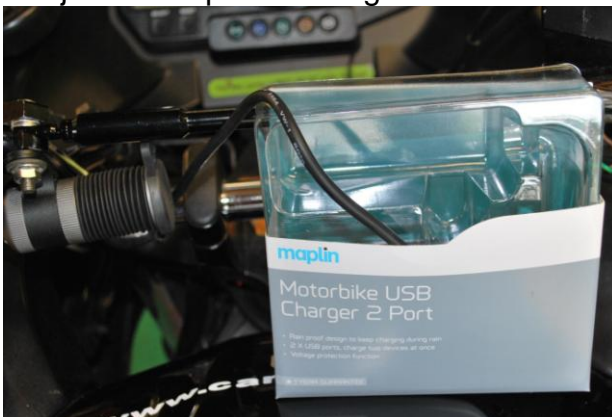
Maplin USB Charger Socket

Alex Muir wrote a piece last edition on installing a charging socket on his bike, and I did the same recently on my TDM900A. The unit was bought from Maplin's in Falkirk for £9.99 as a reduced price. The current is £24.99 unfortunately so I got a good deal for an excellent piece of kit. The current listing on their website is here:

<http://www.maplin.co.uk/p/maplin-motorbike-usb-charger-2-port-n73dp> which shows it with red knurled rings whereas mine are a more discrete grey. The unit is able to provide enough amps for an iPad and another item at the same time, which not many of these units can do.

The unit is very well made with the main body, assembly rings and mounting clamp all in metal. The cable is long enough to reach from my handlebars to the battery in the middle of the bike and the ring connectors on the ends are good quality and fit the battery posts.

I had installed an after-market cross-bar on the handlebars and found that one of its end joint bolts provided a good location to fit the unit horizontally.



There is another mount provided to use a sticky pad onto a flat(ish) surface. The cap provides waterproofing when closed, and the bellows extends to cover, but not seal,

the plugs inserted into the unit. The LED lights up when a plug is inserted and in different colours depending on the battery voltage it is seeing. It is intelligent enough to only take power when there is enough voltage available. Altogether a well-made and -designed unit that has performed well to charge my camera and phone.



I used it to feed my phone to play music into earbuds for the Dornoch weekend when I was riding on my own, and can recommend these M E Electronics M6 in-ear speakers with noise isolating seals.

http://www.meelec.com/Sport_Fi_M6_Memory_Wire_In_Ear_Earphones_Clear_p/earphon_e-m6cl-mee.htm that I bought on eBay for £17 +p&p. They give almost as good a quietening performance as my yellow 3-part mushroom EAR earplugs, using similar tips from a selection supplied. They give a really good (IMHO) sound and have neat wire in the cable to loop it over the top and back of your ears and keep the buds in place, all for £17 – brilliant. I chose the see-thru' version but they come in a range of colours. The lead has a clip and I used this to hold it all in place with the cable fed down the channel between the two zips on my jacket, out at the bottom and into a pocket for the phone. I used a lengthy USB cable to connect that to the charger unit.

While researching all this I found that the French have just passed a law that prohibits use of earplugs that have speakers in, so the MEs would now be illegal over there. Speakers fitted into helmets and separate earplugs are OK, but not the combination, so these would have to be left in their neat little zipped box if I were to go to la belle France.

Steve Middleton

Notices

There have been a few notices from cafes etc recently – if anyone is interested, see below:

My name is Maria I am the Manager of Basecamp Cafe, based at Laggan Outdoor Activities, on the A75, Gatehouse of Fleet. Just to let you know we have a great cafe, free wi-

fi and view for those long rides, or an activity for the more adventures. Check us out on Facebook. We are launching a coffee loyalty card, would you mind if I sent you some or if you are riding pass any day to drop in.

I know you have a monthly meeting for your club but I thought you might like to know of a new bikers monthly social night that has been on the go since January. It's called Glesga Auld Bikes and is just a good old social night loosely aimed at old bikes whatever your interpretation of that happens to be. It meets at The Tradeston Ex Servicemen's club at 6 Beech Avenue near junction 23 of the M8 not far from Ibrox and starts at 7.30 on the last Tuesday in the month. There have been speakers and presentations and occasionally a video about bikes shown. These do not run for more than about an hour so plenty of time left to Gab. It's not a club has no rules no fees (save for the room cost of £2/person/night) there's a bar and tea and coffee. I gave a presentation about going to the track event at Montlhery last year and will do another about racing classic bikes in America. There are other speakers lined up, essentially its just a social night to spent some quality time with like minded biking people and hopefully make new friends. There is a Facebook page and all are welcome, no restrictions, come along and have an enjoyable night.

Long Way Up

Steve Wilson who participated in the 'Long Way Up' adventure from South America to Alaska came to the Club Night in November to give a talk on the trip. A collection was taken up on the night that raised £110 for DeafBlind Scotland, who were the charity the team were riding to raise money for. Wilson Hutchinson has written to thank us for the collection:

Hi John,

Please pass on my sincere thanks for the very kind donations to DeafBlind Scotland linked to our 'Long Way Up' adventure. It is greatly appreciated. I enjoyed the evening and the engagement from all the club members.

Sincerely,
Willson (£110 raised)

And Finally...

As it's Christmas, enjoy these motorcycling Santas:

<http://news.motorbiker.org/blogs.nsf/dx/59-motorcycle-riding-santa-clauses.htm>

Contact the Scottish Motorcycle Club via the Membership Secretary: Gordon Robertson
E-mail: secretary@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk