

FEBRUARY 2026

POND LIFE



LAKE SIDE

CHAPTER HARLEY OWNERS GROUP 7958

EASTER EGG Donations

Lakeside will be supporting Billerica Food Bank again this Easter.

An Easter egg will be given to every child that the Food Bank supports....no child will be left off the list!

We are asking you to donate Easter Eggs (which you can bring along to natter night / or a cash donation via the chapter, (ref: Eggs Foodbank), for eggs to be purchased by the chapter on your behalf!

THANK YOU

Please join us to ride to the Food bank to deliver the Easter Eggs!

**Wednesday 25th
March 2026**

**Meeting at Starbucks
Halfway House 9am**

**> Hoppity Hop Little Bunnies
Hop to see you there! <**

PAGES



6

DIRECTOR'S THOUGHTS

Phill gives a rundown of the last month as well as what we've got coming up soon.



7

HEAD ROAD CAPTAIN & SAFTEY

Ash has some words of wisdom - this month about tyres.



11

LADIES OF HARLEY

Pam shares the news for the ladies.



21

SIGN-UP DAY

Mary gives us the low down on this year's Chapter Sign-Up Day - Saturday 28th March .



22

EVENTS

Sue and Pam tell us about the Putt Shack gold evening, as well as what's coming up next.



28

MEET OUR MEMBERS

John Dutney tells us of his globetrotting escapades, personal challenges and setting out on the right road.



+

So much more....

COMMITTEE



DIRECTOR
PHILL POSTON



ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
CARL WEBB



CHAPTER SECRETARY
NEIL SEARLE-JONES



TREASURER
STEVE WINTERS



MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY
MARY HARRIS



LADIES OF HARLEY OFFICER AND
JOINT EVENTS OFFICER
PAM SMART



FUNDRAISING OFFICER
CHRIS BELL



HEAD ROAD CAPTAIN AND SAFETY
OFFICER
ASHLEY SMART



COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER
AND JOINT EVENTS OFFICER
SUE STURTON



PHOTOGRAPHER
MANDY SMITH



WEBMASTER AND HISTORIAN
KEVIN SMITH



WELFARE OFFICER
LYNN GUNN



EDITOR
TONY HITCHING

FROM THE EDITOR

Hello and welcome to this February edition of Pondlife.

Probably like so many I'm glad to see the back of January for so many reasons – miserable weather, the “down” after the lift Christmas can bring (although I appreciate that it can also be a difficult time for some), and bloody New Year Resolutionists taking up all the space in the swimming pool and the equipment in the gym! But the Chapter that never stops riding helped to lift the spirits with some Ride-Outs in January and it was great to catch up with friends again.



Looking forward, February already has a few rides booked, but I daresay that with a careful eye on the weather we may well see some rides added by our intrepid Road Captains. So keep an eye on Comms and our calendar in case a ride is slipped in at short notice. Looking further ahead, the ride calendar is certainly filling up, and later in this edition I list all the rides so far scheduled for 2026 by date. Having sat and typed them all out, there are a lot!

Elsewhere in this edition Phill gives us an overview of what's been happening and what is coming up for the Chapter, Ash gives us some useful tips on looking after our tyres, Pam lets us know what the Ladies have been up to and what they plan to get up to, and Sue and Pam – our wonderful events team - give us the low down on the Putt Shack evening as well as all the events that are coming up (don't forget our Birthday Bash – tickets are going fast). And in case you missed it by jumping straight to the inside pages, just inside the cover page are details of this year's Easter Egg collection for Billericay Food Bank. This was really appreciated by the Food Bank last year and I know it will help put a lot of smiles on faces again this year. Mary also reminds us about this year's Sign-Up Day on Saturday 28th March.

Finally, I would like to pass on a big “thank you” to John Dutney for our “Meet Our Members” section this month (as well as being our cover shot). It really is a tale of globetrotting, personal challenges and of course his love of bikes (lots of them). I thoroughly enjoyed reading it as I was putting this edition together and I know you all will too.

That's all from me, other than to say enjoy Pondlife and I'll see you on the road soon.

Tony H



DIRECTOR'S THOUGHTS

January seems to have flown by...Good...!!

Hopefully February will be kind and we can get on with some Ride Outs as the weather improves. We still managed to squeeze a couple of rides into January with a blast to Maidstone HD and Café 206, both rides being really well attended. Let's not forget the Putt Shack Golf social event, which I'm told was really good fun!!



A number of Chapter Committee positions are up for renewal in the coming months. Committee Officers have a tenure of 2 years and Primary Officers 3 years. After this time they can state that they wish to be re-elected in that office or stand down. To be fair, this is not a job - these people give their time freely to ensure that we all have a fantastic Chapter, and to be completely honest, they all do an amazing job!! Any Officer is (of course) at liberty to leave at any time they wish - it's not a prison sentence.

Absolutely anyone is allowed to join the Committee if they wish, just ask me or any other Committee member anytime. We always advertise vacant roles in Comms, Pondlife and on the Facebook page.

Even if there's nothing obviously available, it's really good to know people are interested.

From a Road Crew perspective, if you wanted to become a part of the awesome team that lead and support all the Chapter Ride Outs you can always speak (or email) Ash, or talk to any of the current Crew. It's really good fun, you'll get training and as much support as you need.

With regards the 365 Chapter Challenge and Mileage awards, did you know that if you're away on a trip riding a rented Harley Davidson, if you keep the paperwork noting the bike's mileage at the start and the end of your trip it can be entered at a Dealership as your personal mileage towards the 365 awards...!! Just sayin'.

That's it for this month. I'm off snowboarding so hopefully I'll come back in one piece and see you all at Natter Night on February 11th.

Ride Safe,

Phill 'Rainman'



HEAD ROAD CAPTAIN & SAFETY

As we head into February many of us are still riding, looking out for those occasional sunny dry but chilly winter days. There have been two official Chapter rides already in 2026 with many more planned. The ride calendar has been populated for 2026 and there will be additional rides added as the weather improves over the coming weeks/months. Always look out for communications via email and Facebook on what is happening in the forthcoming week.



Looking ahead when you will be putting miles on your Harleys, whatever the model/age you need **tyres**! And regardless if you're relatively new or a seasoned biker, tyres can seem something of a black art! - how long should they last, do they go hard, what pressures should you run them at, what's the minimum tread depth are all great questions..... I've done some research and hope the pointers below answer some of your/my questions....plus it provides you with something to read whilst the rain and cold weather continues.

How do I choose the best motorcycle tyre?

It sounds obvious, but the most important point is that the tyre must be the right size for your motorcycle, with the correct speed and load ratings. Then, be honest with yourself, and choose rubber that's recommended by the tyre manufacturers to suit your needs.

A good example is sports tyres – many people think they should buy the stickiest race rubber they can, but unless you're riding hard on track, it won't get up to temperature properly, so potentially won't perform as well as a more road-focussed tyre, and could sacrifice wet weather safety too.

Durability, performance, all-weather capability, the types of road you ride, the luggage you take, if you carry a pillion and even the climate you'll be riding in should all be considered; there is no best all-round tyre, but technology has moved on so far in the last few years that you can expect good wet and dry grip, as well as longer life from much of today's road rubber.

What makes a good tyre for different conditions, like dry, rain, snow etc?

The design of a decent motorcycle tyre is all about its construction, compound and tread pattern. Advances in the materials used have developed dramatically, with new elements offering manufacturers multiple options for both carcass design and compound variation. The traditional balance of a hard compound for mileage and a soft compound for grip has been modified by additional elements that make the rubber behave in very different ways.

Tread design is crucially important for water clearance, while also allowing movement, which helps to generate heat in the tyre and to improve performance.

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What does the writing on the side of my tyre mean?

In this photo we have a 180/55 ZR17 (73W) tyre, which means it's 180mm wide, and the profile height is 55% of that, so 99mm. The 17 relates to the rim size – 17inches – while the 73W is the speed and load rating; 365kg and 168mph (270kmh). Because that rating is in brackets, it means the tyre is capable of speeds above the figure, but if there were no brackets, it'd mean the rating was the maximum. The 'M/C' simply denotes that the tyre's intended for use on a motorcycle. You can also see the direction of rotation – if this is the wrong way round, your bike will fail its MoT.



The maximum load – here it's 365kg – is the most the tyre can support at a standardised pressure – in this case 42psi. This isn't necessarily the pressure recommended for your bike, so check your owners' manual or the tyre manufacturer's fitment guide.

This circle shows that the tyre is homologated for use in Europe, with the number indicating the country in which the approval was made – in this case Netherlands.



How can I tell how old my tyres are?



The production date of any tyre made since 2000 can be found on one of the sidewalls, at the end of the 'DOT' (Department of Transport) code. The last four figures – typically after other letters and numbers – show the production date.

The first two are the week it was made, and the last are the year. So this tyre was made in the 9th week of the year 2017.

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Tyres used to have a three-digit date code, as it was considered that none would be used for more than a decade. Unfortunately, this made it very hard to tell if the rubber on a bike you were buying in 2005 with a 327 code was made in the 32nd week of 1997, or the 32nd week of 1987. Just know that a tyre with a three digit code on now is too old!

Why are tyres so slippery when they are new?

The final part of manufacturing a tyre is the curing process – a carcass containing all the component materials is typically placed into a very hot mould and cured under high pressure for about thirty minutes. To assist in the removal of a cured tyre from its mould, a small amount of release agent can be applied before the process begins. A thin residue of this remains on the surface of the tyre, leading to the warnings issued about scrubbing in new rubber.

Some manufacturers have got around this process now, and Continental for instance has developed a unique way of modifying premium tyre moulds, negating the need for any mould release agents; the finish is slightly rough and provides instant grip when the tyre's used for the first time – it's called 'Traction Skin'.

A new tyre will always feel significantly different to your old, worn one, so it's recommend riding with care at first, building up speed and lean angle over time.

Continental's 'Traction Skin' prevents the slippery feeling some new tyres have



What is the minimum tread depth on motorcycle tyres?

The legal tread depth limit for motorcycles in the UK is 1mm across three quarters of the width of the tread pattern, and with visible tread still remaining on the other quarter. At this point though, the ability of your tyre to disperse water will be limited, and it will be performing far from its best in the dry.

For anything under 50cc, the law simply states that you must be able to see the original tread pattern across the whole tyre!

If I don't ride many miles, how long will my tyres last? Will they go hard?

As long as a tyre is stored in a cool, dry place, and away from direct sunlight, chemicals or other ozone effects, it will be fine for a long time. Tyres do slowly age, but Continentals for instance can be sold and used unconditionally as a new tyre from up to five years after the date of manufacture.

Do I need to put my bike on stands when I'm not using it?

Bikers sometimes worry that they'll get flat spots on their motorcycle's tyres if they leave it standing for any length of time. In fact, the most important thing to do is simply keep them inflated correctly; with your tyres at the correct pressure there's no need to lift the bike off the ground.

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How do I check my bike's tyre pressures?

Check the pressures when the tyres are cold. As you ride a bike on the road, the tyre warms up, and can increase up to around 0.5 bar (about 7psi) – don't let your tyres down to remove this as they'll be under-inflated when you next ride.

Use a quality stand-alone pressure gauge, not the one fitted to your pump, or on an airline.



What tyre pressures should I use on my motorcycle?

Your bike's owners' manual will tell you the recommended pressures, or sometimes a sticker on the swing-arm or hugger. Use them – the bike will have been thoroughly tested to find a safe recommendation based on getting heat into the rubber, and the load you're likely to carry.

Incorrect pressures reduce the life of your tyres, and can affect the handling; if you run them low, the contact patch can be reduced – not increased – because the tyre deforms, lifting the middle section away from the road. They'll also easily overheat and can be damaged. If you over-inflate your tyres, they'll again wear unevenly, handle poorly and give an uncomfortable ride.

You might find different pressures recommended for different loads and riding – Continental recommends that you ride at the highest pressure stated in your owner's manual. If you don't have the bike manual, check the tyre manufacture's website.

Should I reduce my tyre pressures in wet and bad weather?

No. They're designed to work at a specific pressure. Some people reduce the pressure of their tyres in the winter, believing they'll grip better. They'll get warmer as they move around more, but the contact patch will be reduced due to deformation, and the tread pattern will perform less efficiently; they'll wear out quicker and be potentially dangerous.

Is it safe to repair a motorcycle tyre after a puncture?

There's a British Standards recommendation, but it is just that – a recommendation – so you will find some differences between manufacturers and dealers.

Only the central 50% of a motorcycle tyre's width can carry a repair, and not the sidewall. It's also not recommended to attempt to repair a tyre with less than 0.8mm of tread – if it's that worn, invest in a new one.

Roadside repair kits aren't considered a permanent fix, and should only be used to get you home; most manufacturers will still tell you that you're best off having the bike picked up if you suffer a puncture at the roadside. A blow-out on a bike is extremely dangerous, and as your tyres are all that connect you to the road, it's worth using common sense when considering any repair.

Ride safe and have fun.

LADIES OF HARLEY



LADIES OF HARLEY

Welcome to the latest Ladies of Harley Pondlife Article, a space where curiosity meets creativity.

I hope you are keeping well and are looking forward to Spring! I have seen daffodils in the supermarkets and they put a huge smile on my face! I was more impressed that they are still only £1:00 a bunch, although I think the bunches are smaller!

Again, we are gearing up for our Sign-Up Day, (Saturday 28th March 2026) and nothing brings people together quite like the smell of fresh cakes and savoury treats. To make the day a real success, I am inviting all chapter members to roll up their sleeves and bake something special for our fundraising table.

Whether you are known for a legendary lemon drizzle, a batch of irresistible sausage rolls, or a tray of brownies that disappear in minutes, your contribution will make a huge difference. Every item donated helps us raise funds and creates a warm, welcoming atmosphere for all members old and new.

If you can bake, please let me know what you would like to bring. Big or small, sweet, or savoury – it all helps. I am also happy to collect your bakes or just bring them along on the day.

If life is a little too busy, please feel free to pop to your local supermarket and purchase sweet or savoury goodies!

Thank you for supporting the chapter and adding a little homemade magic to Sign Up Day, you are all amazing.



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💖 A Funny Valentine's Poem for the Lakeside Ladies

Roses are red,
Chocolates are sweet,
Our chapter's full of ladies
Who can't be beat.

You're charming, you're brilliant,
You sparkle, you shine —
And somehow still manage
To be early most of the time.

You laugh, you support,
You bring joy every day —
And you do it with style
In your own fabulous way.

So, here's to you all,
The delightful, the fine —
Happy Valentine's Day, ladies,
Now pass the wine.

Happy Valentines to all our Lakeside Ladies



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Shrove Tuesday 17th February 2026 (Pancake Day)

Pancake Day, also known as Shrove Tuesday, is a cheerful tradition that brings people together over sizzling pans and sweet, fluffy treats. It marks the final day before Lent, historically a time to use up rich ingredients like eggs, milk, and sugar – which is why pancakes became the star of the day. Families and friends gather to flip, stack, and top their creations with everything from classic lemon and sugar to chocolate, fruit, or savoury fillings. Beyond the delicious food, Pancake Day carries a sense of fun and community, turning an ordinary Tuesday into a celebration of simple pleasures and shared moments.

Pancakes Recipe

110g/4oz plain flour, sifted

- pinch of salt
- 2 eggs
- 200ml/7fl oz milk mixed with 75ml/3fl oz water
- 50g/2oz butter

To serve

- caster sugar
- lemon juice

Method

1. Sift the flour and salt into a large mixing bowl with a sieve held high above the bowl so the flour gets an airing.
2. Now make a well in the centre of the flour and break the eggs into it. Then begin whisking the eggs – any sort of whisk or even a fork will do – incorporating any bits of flour from around the edge of the bowl as you do so.
3. Next gradually add small quantities of the milk and water mixture, still whisking (don't worry about any lumps as they will eventually disappear as you whisk).
4. Now get the pan really hot, (using oil or butter) then turn the heat down to medium and, to start with, do a test pancake to see if you're using the correct amount of batter.
5. As soon as the batter hits the hot pan, tip it around from side to side to get the base evenly coated with batter. It should take only half a minute or so to cook; you can lift the edge with a palette knife to see if it's tinged gold as it should be.
6. Flip the pancake over with a pan slice or palette knife – the other side will need a few seconds only – then simply slide it out of the pan onto a plate.
7. Stack the pancakes as you make them between sheets of greaseproof paper on a plate fitted over simmering water, to keep them warm while you make the rest.
8. To serve, sprinkle each pancake with freshly squeezed lemon juice and caster sugar, fold in half, then in half again to form triangles, or else simply roll them up. Serve sprinkled with a little more sugar and lemon juice and extra sections of lemon.

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Upcoming Events & Activities for Our Lakeside Chapter Ladies

We've got a fantastic line-up of events coming your way, and there's truly something for everyone. Whether you're in the mood to relax, try something new, or dance the night away, this year's calendar is packed with moments to enjoy together.

We'll be kicking things off with an Indian Cooking Evening on the 27th March 2026, where spices, laughter, and delicious aromas will fill the room as we learn to create authentic dishes side by side. For something a little more leisurely, our Ladies' Brunch on 8th March 2026 will offer good food, good company, and the perfect excuse to indulge.



If pampering is calling your name, our Spa Day at the 'Glass House' (date to follow) promises calm, comfort, and a well-deserved break from the everyday. For the more adventurous among us, we'll be heading out for a Paddle Boarding Session, guaranteed to bring sunshine, splashes, and plenty of giggles, (see flyer for details).



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Later in the year, get ready to unleash your inner dancing queen at our ABBA Party Night, where glitter, nostalgia, and big sing-along energy will take centre stage. And of course, we'll wrap up the season with our much-loved Christmas Show, a festive celebration full of sparkle, joy, and togetherness, (dates to follow).



With so many wonderful activities ahead, I cannot wait to share these experiences with you. Let us make this year unforgettable and have some fun!

Please keep an eye out for information through Emails, WHATAPPs or at Natter Night.


Keep safe and I hope to see you soon.

Pam

XXX

P.S. - Don't forget to check out all the following LOH events we have planned. See the flyers below.

(continued next page)

A decorative border of tropical leaves in green, yellow, and blue surrounds a central dark green circle containing text.

LOH Brunch 'The Inn at the Belfairs' Leigh-on Sea

**Sunday 8th March 2026
Time: 10:30am to 12:30pm**

Ladies come and treat yourselves to brunch and a chat.
Where we can catch up on all the Ladies of Harley Events planned
for this year!

Deposit (£5:00) to be paid by the 8th February 2026

Payment to the Chapter - account REF:

"LOH Brunch" – Deposit non-refundable

I hope you can make it!



Come and join us on an exciting Indian Cooking Demonstration Lesson

Friday 27th March 2026

Time: 19:00

Cost: £5:00

(payable to the chapter, REF: Curry Night)

Address: 2 Gardiners Cottage (Pam's House)

**Ladies, please join me in an Indian Cooking Lesson, by our very own
Shilpa Winters. A chance to learn how to make the most gorgeous
Indian Cuisine!**

There will also be an opportunity to make Chapatis too!

**Places are limited so please let me know as soon as possible if you
wish to attend!**

Pam XX

SAVE THE DATES!!!!!!!

Lakeside Ladies of Harley

Paddle Boarding Event Repeated!!!!

Date: 18th July & 20th September 2026 (Both Dates)



St Andrews Lake

2, Quarry Grove, Rochester, Kent ME2 1BA

Cost: to be confirmed (3-hour session)

Time: To be confirmed

**It really does not matter that you have never paddled boarded
before and you do not need to own a paddle board.**

Come along, try something new with friends!

**We have repeated this event as it was so much fun and we did not
stop laughing and some of us even conquered some fears!!**

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Pam

XX

I hope you can join us!

JOIN US FOR A

2026

LADIES OF HARLEY CHRISTMAS PARTY CRUISE

DECEMBER

12th

16:00PM

**CELEBRATE THE SEASON IN STYLE WITH A 5
COURSE DINNER, SHOW, DISCO &
OVERNIGHT FESTIVE STAY INCLUDING
BREAKFAST.**

**FOR £149:00 PER-PERSON
(sharing a cabin)**

(please pay the chapter Ref: Cruise) Non-refundable

**Please contact Pam as soon as possible
to book your place!**

**Ambassador Cruises
Tilbury**

CHAPTER SIGN UP DAY 2026

WHEN: 28TH MARCH 2026 9:30 AM TO 3:00 PM

**WHERE: FUNCTION ROOM, KINGS ARMS,
BAKER STREET, ORSETT RM16 3LX**

Just a quick reminder that Chapter Sign-Up Day is fast approaching (28th March from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm). The Chapter has a great year of riding planned (over 85 rides already in the calendar, with more to come), and a great year of social events – including our 15th Anniversary Party and monthly Natter Nights.

It will be great to see everyone on the day, where as well as renewing your membership, you can enjoy a treat from the ever popular Cake Stall and try your luck on the Tombola. There will also be a chance to buy Chapter Merchandise and to visit the “nearly new” stand for a bargain. Come by bike and you can join Ashley (Head Road Captain) and his crew for a Members’ Refresher Ride at 12:00 – route to be revealed on the day.

Don’t forget - new members are always welcome. Bring them along on sign up day or to a Natter Night where they will be able to find out more about us.

If you are unable to attend, you can sign up online by completing the Chapter Membership Form and making payment to the Chapter Bank Account. The 2026/27 form will be available online at the end of March.

DON’T FORGET TO MAKE SURE THAT YOUR HOG MEMBERSHIP IS UP TO DATE.

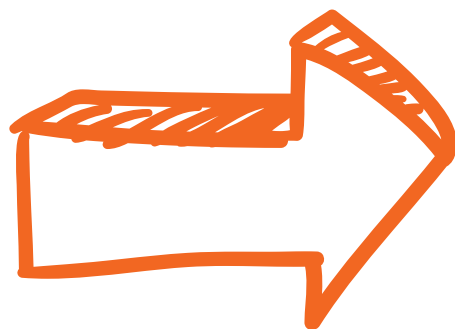
Look forward to seeing you all there.

Mary

Membership Officer



EVENTS

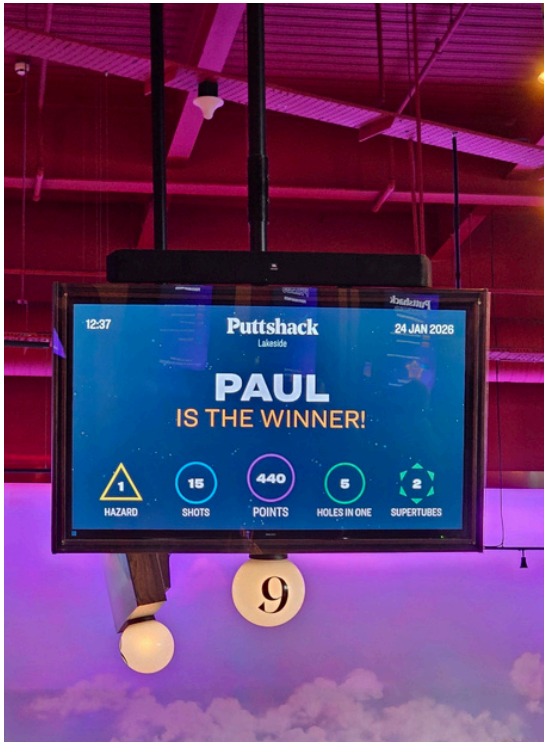


EVENTS

The Putt Shack

Fifteen intrepid swingers (we were unfortunately one woman down) descended upon The Putt Shack, hoping to put their golfing skills into action.

After a few teething problems registering and administering everyone's balls we headed off to the 'Violet' 9 nine holes. The 9 holes were all very different with true or false options with minus points for the wrong answers and hazards on the course also deducted points. We bounced balls on drums, tried to catch a duck and sent the ball round in circles.



Paul Harris was the star attraction and the overall winner which allowed him to pick a prize.



He chose a free game, putting the pro Kev aka Mr T to shame although he said 'he was playing bad on purpose', but I'm not so sure. Paul managed to also win another free game and Mrs Kev, who was also showing her husband how to do it, a meal for two.

So a good half term for Paul's grandsons is in store with free golf and food as Mandy donated her prize to them. We finished the afternoon with a drink and a chat. Everyone had a great time and no golf clubs were thrown.

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Paul: "I don't see what all the fuss is about with golf - there's nothing to it really!"



Kev: "Yeah, alright!"

Looking forward, don't forget all of these fantastic events we have planned for you. Check out the following flyers.

Sue and Pam

(continued next page)

It is cold and frosty outside so come and celebrate with
Lakeside Chapter



Chinese New Year Celebration Meal

Year of the Fire Horse

When: Friday 20th February 2026

**Where: Songs Chinese Buffet Restaurant
Chelmsford Essex**

Time: 19:00 seated at tables

Cost: £19:99 – payable on the night.

Please let me know, so I can book you a seat at the table.

**Please contact Pam for questions and to place your name
on the list.**

Honfleur 2026



Come and join us on a weekend jaunt to Honfleur

We'll be hopping on Le Shuttle early on Friday 26th June 2026, taking a scenic route to Honfleur and returning on the afternoon of Sunday 28th June 2026.

We will find some fun things to do and some delicious eateries for you!

We are staying at The Mecure Hotel which has secure parking and you will find the link below

<https://all.accor.com/hotel/0986/index.en.shtml>

We will let you know which trains to book closer to the date.

Please let Sue or Carl know if you'd like to come along and we'll add you to the what's app group

Many thanks and hope you can come along!

**COME AND
CELEBRATE
LAKE SIDE IS
TURNING 15!**

SATURDAY 4TH JULY 2026

AT

YE OLDE PLOUGH HOUSE

BRENTWOOD ROAD

RM14 3SR

(ACCOMMODATION AVAILABLE CONTACT VENUE)

01375 891592

FREE EVENT FOR MEMBERS

GUESTS £10

(PAYABLE TO THE CHAPTER REF: 15TH PARTY)

**FINGER
BUFFET
DRINKS
FROM 6PM**



**DJ / BAND
CARRIAGES
AT
MIDNIGHT**

Hurry only 40 tickets left!!

MEET OUR MEMBERS

In another of our “Meet our Members” articles, John Dutney tells us of his motorcycling adventures, from youthful days in Australia, through his many, many bikes since and how he decided on his beloved Harley...oh yes, and all the journeys in between and still to come.

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Character Over Perfection: Why a Harley Finally Felt Like Home

I got my first motorbike in 1979 — a Kawasaki KH125. It wasn’t fast, refined, or particularly good at anything, but it had character. Looking back, that probably explains why I’ve spent most of my life on motorcycles that made me feel something, rather than ones that simply worked perfectly.

My parents wouldn’t let me have a bike while I was still living at home, so when I moved into a rented house with a couple of mates at 18, it was one of the first things I did. A small act of rebellion, and a declaration of independence on two wheels.

I “bought” it from a girl I was at art school with. She used the little Kawasaki to commute but didn’t like it as much as she expected to. I think I gave her 100 Australian dollars, with the promise of another \$100 a month later.

I never did get around to giving her that second payment.

I ran into her about 20 years later and offered to settle the debt. She laughed and told me to forget about it. The bike, like the money, belonged to another version of us both.

I had that bike for a few years. When I left Australia for what was meant to be a six-month working holiday in the UK, I left it parked in the garage of the flat we were living in. I’ve no idea what happened to it.

Fast forward 25 years.

In that time I met my wife in London, bought houses, became a British citizen, had a son, and developed a serious problem with alcohol and Class A drugs. Somewhere along the way I also bought a Honda CBX750 from a bloke in a pub in Tottenham for £250. I rode it home with the chain slapping around dangerously, as if the bike itself had doubts about the arrangement.

What I didn’t have was a motorcycle licence.

My Australian licence had lapsed, and I’d already had to retake my car test when I first bought a car in London. That weekend I rode into the car park of Walthamstow Town Hall, where a portacabin advertised Learn to Ride a Motorbike. I parked the CBX, walked in, and said, quite sincerely, “I’d like to learn to ride a motorbike.”

(continued next page)

I signed up for a direct access course and learned how to pass the test — mostly on bikes far smaller and better behaved than the one I'd arrived on.

After that, the bikes came and went:

Yamaha TRX 850

Another Honda CBX 750

Honda NTV650

Moto Guzzi Griso 1100

Honda VTR1000 Firestorm

It was while I owned the Firestorm that I got clean and sober. I haven't had a drink or taken a drug since 2009.

The bikes kept coming, and the pace picked up:

Honda CBR1000XX Fireblade

Yamaha XJR1300

Honda CB1100XX Super Blackbird

Suzuki GSX1300S Hayabusa

Kawasaki ZX1400

Another Hayabusa

Triumph 900 Speedmaster

Yamaha XS650 flat-track custom

BMW R650 bobber

BMW R1200GS

BMW K1600GT

In 2022 I retired. To mark the occasion, I bought the six-cylinder BMW K1600GT and set off on a month-long solo tour to Budapest via Spain and Majorca. I covered around 5,000 miles.

The BMW was technically astonishing — smooth, powerful, effortless. It did everything brilliantly.

It was also, without question, the most boring motorcycle I have ever ridden.

When I returned to the UK, I immediately started looking for something else.

I test-rode a Honda Goldwing but took it back after half an hour with an aching back. I could probably have spent money fixing the ergonomics, but instead I went home and did what most of us do now: I asked Google.

Google suggested I try a Harley-Davidson Street Glide.

I booked an extended test ride with Maidstone Harley-Davidson, arriving with plenty of preconceptions. It was a warm, sunny afternoon and I had the bike for hours. I rode down to the coast, had fish and chips on the seafront, and rolled back into the dealership around five o'clock with a ridiculous grin on my face.

It wasn't just the bike. It was the reaction.

(continued next page)

Little boys pointed as I rode past. Grown men smiled. People stopped to admire it when it was parked. More importantly, I felt completely engaged. I enjoyed the vibrations, the noise, the slight roughness of it all. I liked the fact that it wasn't perfect.

Two weeks later I bought a 2018 Street Glide from a Harley specialist near Whitstable. A week after that I set off on a tour of Wales. It poured with rain, but I enjoyed myself immensely.

Not long after, I joined the Harley Owners Group and the Lakeside Chapter.

I've never been much of a club person. I'm something of a loner by nature. But the Lakeside rides run all year round, and I get to as many as I can. I've made good friends there – the sort you trust on the road.

In 2024 I rode the Harley to Albania. In June 2025, to Turkey. I avoid motorways whenever I can, preferring A and B roads where I can stop for scenery, coffee, or – more recently – a Turkish tea. The bike has never broken down or left me stranded.

This year I'm planning a trip to the North Cape in Norway, returning via Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

I have finally bought myself a cut and had the Lakeside patch sewn on. I'll wear it on the next ride.

Looking back, motorcycles have been a constant through every version of my life – the reckless young bloke, the lost middle-aged man, the sober rider who now measures time in miles rather than mistakes. Bikes didn't save me, but they gave me somewhere to point myself when I needed to keep moving.

And for now, that's enough.

John Dutney



Me and my ever faithful Harley during my trip to Kelcyre, Albania

Lakeside Chapter Merchandise

For all enquiries and orders contact Ann at:
merchandise@lakesidechapter.co.uk



¾ Zipped Fleece £17.50
Sizes XS – 3XL



Men's track polo £22
Sizes XXS - 3XL



2 Tone Softshell Jacket
£22
Men's sizes S - 4XL
Ladies 8 - 18



Men's Polo £14.50
Sizes XS - 8XL



Zippered Hoodie £25
Sizes S - 5xl



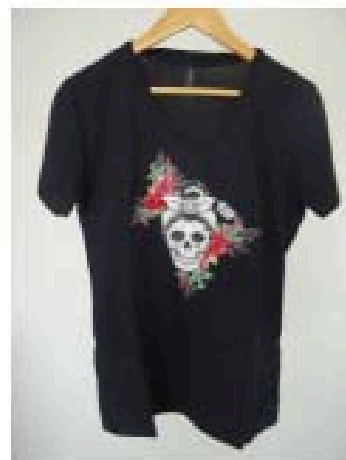
Heavyweight Hoodie £30
Sizes XS - 3XL

Men's Chapter T-shirt £14
Sizes XS - 6XL
Also available as a long sleeve £16
Sizes S - 4XL



Wicking T-shirts £12
(Available in Black or White)
Men's Sizes XS - 5XL
Ladies Sizes 8 - 18
Long Sleeve Ladies £13.50

Knitted Beanie Hat £7



Ladies Skull T-shirt £15
Sizes 8 - 16
This print is also
available in
Zipped Hoodie £25
Zipped Sweatshirt
£27.50



Ladies Chapter T-shirt
£14
Sizes 8 – 16

Ladies Motorbike/Wing T-shirt £15
Sizes 8 - 16

Also available

Sweatshirt £22.50
Sizes XS – 4XL

Unisex Long Sleeve Polo £15

Zipped Sweatshirt £27.50
Sizes S – 2XL

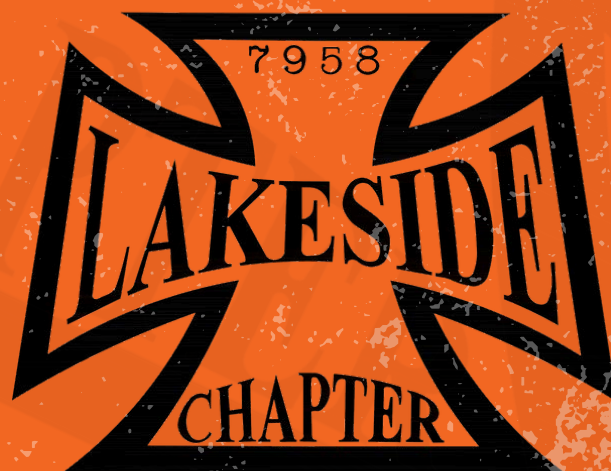
Chapter Cap £15

Coming soon.... new merchandise to celebrate
the Chapter's 15th Birthday.
Watch this space....

£1 EACH OLD SURPLUS STOCK



RIDE OUT ARTICLES



RIDE-OUT GUIDELINES

Chapter activities are conducted primarily for the benefit of H.O.G. Chapter members.

Ride Guest Policy

An Event Guest is permitted at the discretion of one of the Chapter Road Captains.

A Chapter member is permitted to invite one guest per event, to participate and may only have the same guest on six occasions in any membership year. If the event is subsidised then the guest will need to pay full cost.

Each guest must sign a Ride Disclaimer and the host Chapter member must take responsibility and must ensure that the guest abides by the Chapter rules.

SATURDAY 10TH JANUARY: MAIDSTONE H-D, 365 MILEAGE

AND SOME SERIOUS JANUARY SALES SHOPPING

Who is crazy enough to even contemplate a Ride-Out on January 10th..??!!

To be fair, nine Chapter members on eight Harleys and then a further four (who we met at the dealership) was waaaaay more than I expected. The weather was absolutely crap for the whole week leading up to the Saturday (and again for the whole week afterwards) but the sun shone down on us, at least for most of the time.



The temperature was holding steady at about 3 degrees with a wind-chill of about -5 so we took the direct route around the M25 and M20 with surprisingly very little traffic.

Maidstone Dealership is a terrific destination. The staff are all really helpful (and a little crazy). Big Phil Hopper had warned them we were coming in advance and so we were treated to coffee & donuts on our arrival.

Everyone took photos of their VIN numbers and mileage and, along with their HOG membership numbers, got their mileage recorded by the ever helpful ladies in the Merchandising department.

From what I can remember, almost everyone spent some money before leaving. Some more than others (Vince bought a new bike..!!).

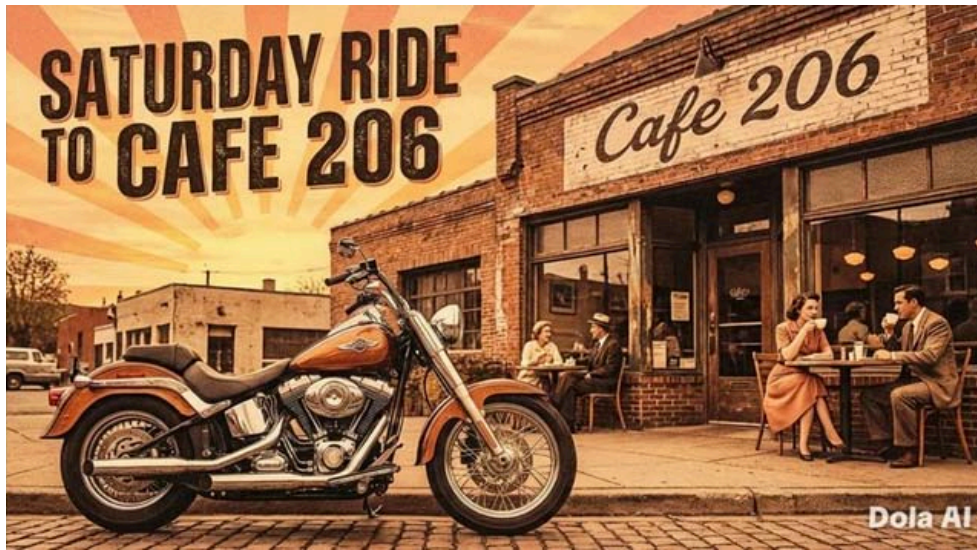
After about an hour and a half serious shopping everyone headed off in various directions, with a number of bikes aiming for bacon sandwiches just around the corner.

Amazingly enough the Chapter is back here in February with Phil Hopper's Valentine's Ride on February 14th. If you didn't get your mileage recorded on the January ride, this will be a great time to make it so.

Many thanks to Vince and Big Phil Hopper for crewing.
Phill "Rainman"



SATURDAY 17TH JANUARY: CAFE 206, ROCHFORD



With the weather forecast looking ok(ish).... I decided to be brave and advertise a short ride to Café 206, thinking it could be a short or long ride depending on the weather and riders on the day. It turned out to be a dry mild Saturday so it was great to see 15 members turn up at the start point.

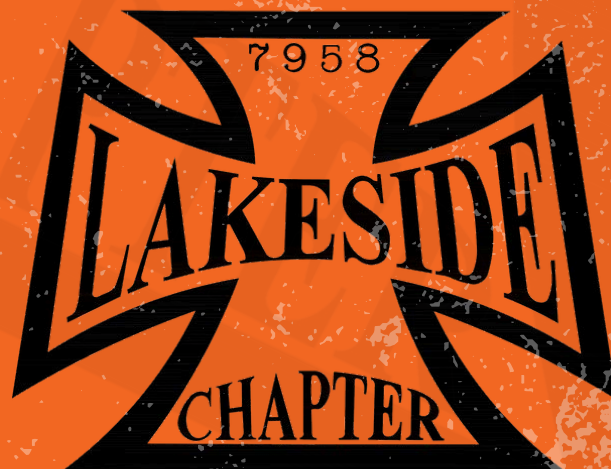
A quick call to the café to increase the table reservation from a “I’ll be lucky to get 6/7” to “we now have 15 people can you squeeze us all in”, which they did before heading off on the ride. As the day was dry I took the indirect route to Rochford so rather than a 12 mile ride along the A127, I extended it to take in West Hanningfield and Hullbridge coming into the top of Rochford for a 26 mile ride with a few dirty looking Harleys - not sure why some members love the puddles more than other! The café is under new ownership and Draystons Motorcycles has gone with a barber shop in its place, food was acceptable but not a vast amount much to a few peoples disappointment when they saw the size of there breakfasts!! Overall a good ride to blow off the winter cobwebs.

Looking forward to the next ride.

Ash



FUTURE RIDES



There are various channels of communication regarding ride-outs and upcoming trips, either local or abroad – Pondlife, the Chapter Website, Facebook and Google Calendar.

At times, due to circumstances beyond our control, rides may be cancelled/changed/postponed at very short notice.

If requests are made for you to show your interest in a particular event, please only do so via the requested means and please do so within the time frame requested. This is very important and will enable the road captains to accurately and efficiently plan the upcoming ride/event



2026 RIDES BY DATE

FEBRUARY

Saturday 28 February – the Shed, Sawbridgeworth

MARCH

Tuesday 17 March – Rosey Leas at North Weald Airfield

Tuesday 24 March – To Norton Heath and a nice little café

Wednesday 25 March – Billericay Food Bank ride

Saturday 28 March – Sign up day, members' refresher ride

Sunday 29 March – Bimble to the Blue Egg, Great Bardfield

Tuesday 31 March – Rumble to the Riverside Cafe, Saffron Walden

APRIL

Saturday 4 April – Gold Top Shop and Café, Bishop's Stortford

Wednesday 8 April – Pear Tree Pantry, Hatfield Peverel

Sunday 12 April – The Ride and Roast, Kings Arms, Grays

Wednesday 15 April – 2MT café for great food, Writtle

Thursday 23 April – Deb's Diner, Dengie Peninsular

Saturday 25 April – to Newmarket H-D

Sunday 26 April – Brunch at The Goat Pub, Hitchin, Herts

Tuesday 28 April – Meander to Mistley for a café and farm shop stop

MAY

Sunday 10 May – Noah's Park Adventure ride and golf, Barleylands

Saturday 9 May – Brentwood Brewery, Calcott Hall Farm, Brentwood

Friday 15 May to Monday 18 May inclusive – The Iron Horse Rally, Filey, Yorkshire

Tuesday 19 May – Tarka's Café, Halstead

Saturday 23 May – The Riverside Inn Tearoom, Orford, Suffolk

Sunday 24 May – to TTT Motorcycle Village, Sudbury

Tuesday 26 May – Potter to Poppy's Barn, Clavering, Saffron Walden

JUNE

Thursday 4 June – Coach House Kitchen, Hatfield House, Herts

Saturday 6 June – Café 206, Rochford

Sunday 7 June – Flatford Mill, Suffolk

Wednesday 10 June – River Breeze Café and Bar, North Fambridge

Saturday 13 June – The Cutty Sark, Greenwich

Sunday 14 June – Hanningfield Reservoir

Tuesday 16 June to Friday 19 June – Chapter goes mad in Weymouth, Dorset, including Abbotsbury and home via Guildford H-D

(continued next page)

JUNE (continued)

Sunday 21 June – The Tiptree Challenge, Take Two!

Tuesday 23 June – “If you go down to the woods today....”, well – Hainault Forest.

Thursday 25 June to Sunday 28 June inclusive – Honfleur weekend, France

Tuesday 30 June – Hayride to Huffers, Haverhill

JULY

Saturday 4 July – The Birthday Bash Ride to the Country Café, Ingatestone

Thursday 9 July – The Coffee Shop, Takeley

Wednesday 15 July – “Strawberry Fields Forever”, and the Bee Shed Café, Great Baddow

Saturday 18 July – Fish and Chips at Deal, Kent

Tuesday 21 July – Blast to Blossom Bites, Wimbish

Tuesday 28 July – The Jam Jar café, Rowhedge, Colchester

AUGUST

Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 August – the Sykes/1066 Inter Chapter weekend

Tuesday 4 August – Brightlingsea for sun, sand and if you’re luck, sea

Saturday 8 August – Chislehurst Caves, Bromley

Tuesday 11 August – Rambling Route to Riverside Cafe, Hullbridge (on the River Crouch)

Wednesday 19 August – Krazy Horse, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Saturday 22 August – Church Farm Café, in the heart of the Chiltern Hills

Wednesday 26 August – Crooked Chimney Pub, Welwyn Garden City

Saturday 29 August – Ride and Maize Maze, Writtle

SEPTEMBER

Wednesday 2 September – View Point Café, Felixstowe

Wednesday 9 September – “Tea for a few” at Long Melford Tea Room, Long Melford, Sudbury

Saturday 12 September – Homage to the Harley, Littleport Church and the Birthplace of William S Harley’s father. Then on for food!

Wednesday 16 September – The Booking Hall Café at Rayne Station

Tuesday 22 September – Wally’s Café, Acton, Suffolk

Saturday 26 September – Round Robin ride to Bonnie’s Café, Hutton

Tuesday 29 September – Dee’s Diner for large all day breakfast baguette (or whatever takes your fancy), Hatfield Peverel

OCTOBER

Saturday 3 October – Duxford Air Museum

Tuesday 6 October – River Palace, Dobb’s Weir

NOVEMBER

Saturday 7 November – Billericay Fireworks display (marshalling...and a bloody good laugh)

Sunday 8 November – Remembrance Sunday Ride, Orsett

DECEMBER

Thursday 31 December – The Icy Blast to the Estuary Restaurant, Southend

2026 Rallies

Lakeside Chapter will be
attending the following Rally in
2026

See ride calendar for more details



For details on other Rallies go to HOG-POD.com

LAKESIDE CHAPTER RIDE AWARDS

Lakeside Chapter operates a **Ride Out Awards Program** based on the number of Official Chapter Rides each Member attends. You must ensure you 'Sign-In' with the Road Captain each time you attend a Ride Out. This helps the RC know the number of Members on each Ride and will be recorded by the Chapter Historian on the Ride Awards Spreadsheet (displayed on the next Page).

Multi-day Rides and Rally's may count for more than one Ride Award. Check with the RC for this.

Ride Award Pin Badges will usually be awarded at Natter Nights for 10, 25, 50, 75, 100 (and so on) for completed Rides.

There is an All Time Total Ride Award Page and a Total Number of Rides completed (so far) this year so you can track your progress.

**BE IN THE NEXT EDITION
OF POND LIFE**

**SEND YOUR PHOTOS AND
ARTICLES TO:**

EDITOR@LAKESIDECHAPTER.CO.UK

