

Capital Wings

December is a time for stories - Christmas stories such as *A Christmas Carol*, *The Night Before Christmas*, *The Polar Express* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. This month we have our own story written by Big Al, with input from Kerrie and Chloe.

Back in August, a group of Moles ventured abroad and here is their riveting tale told in words and pictures.

Ten Moles go to France

You can guarantee that if you go on holiday with the Moles it will turn into an adventure. This trip was no different. Here are some highlights from our week. Never a dull moment that's for sure.

Myself, Kerrie and Chloe with our 1500 sidecar outfit, Wayne, Ingrid and Dani with their 1500 sidecar outfit, Chris and Jo with their 1800 solo and Ray and Ginny with their 1200. Hang on..1500...no, I mean 1200... Ray had bike problems a week before we were due to travel. 1200 was booked onto the ferry but it started overheating, no problem, dig out the old 1500, give it a wipe over and change the details with the ferry company. All set. NO! 1500 throws a wobbly, sounds serious. Gonna be an engine out job to fix. Will have to fix the 1200 then. Thermostat seems to be the culprit, take the bike to pieces to get to it, fix it and do some other jobs while it's all apart, all fixed, Yay. Phone the ferry company and change the booking back to the 1200. Phew, and we haven't even set off for Dover yet.

It was an early ferry on Saturday morning so we booked into a Travelodge for Friday night. We feared the worst having seen all the delays the week before at the ports. Fingers crossed. Got to the Travelodge in record time, no hold ups at all. All good so far. Meet up with the others and find a brilliant Turkish restaurant.

Start as we mean to go on - over order, eat too much and guarantee heartburn in the middle of the night. Was superb food though.

The bikes were parked around the corner from the hotel in a proper bike bay. We came out in the morning and there was a 125cc scooter parked among our Wings. Ray took a perfectly innocent picture of Chloe standing next to the scooter and posted it on the 'Moles' WhatsApp group. We were amazed by how many people thought that Chloe was on her own bike and following us on her 125. I know time flies by but she is still only 15. It did give us all a good laugh though. Someone (who I won't embarrass here) even posted her a T-shirt by way of congratulations for riding her own bike.

It was only a 40-minute wait to get through French border control, so not too bad. Nice big brekkie on the boat and an uneventful ride down to our gîte in a little village called Leffincourt in the Ardennes region of France, 300km from Calais, down near Reims. The gîte was lovely with six double bedrooms, all en-suite and in a very rural area but next to a wind farm. By the end of the week one of the windmills had been christened Roxanne and another Kylie. The weather was HOT, very very HOT! It averaged about 35°C every day.



*Leffincourt
Gite*

First job was to find the nearest supermarket and stock up with supplies. We must have doubled their takings that day. Also discovered a new beer, Leffe Ruby - Mmmmm how nice was that. A good few crates would be consumed by the end of the week.



L'Heure de la Biere

We thought we would have a bit of a quieter day on the Sunday and Wayne knew of a US memorial from WW1 that wasn't too far away. We had a little ride out. It was in the middle of nowhere down wiggly, windy roads. The memorial was massive and we paid our respects. From there, I think Wayne had a kind of plan to take us on a round trip of the area using some of the smaller roads. They were bumpy, really bumpy, with grass growing in the middle of the road and just wide enough for the outfit in some places. Some beautiful scenery though.

All good fun but we were well shaken up after all that. The slightly bigger 'D' roads were fantastic with a speed limit of 50mph and you could go miles and miles without seeing another car. Lots of twisties and just perfect for the bikes.

I think that ride killed my bike. I could feel a horrible vibration through the pegs and as it got worse, you could feel it through the seat. A little panic set in as on one of our previous adventures to the Pyrenees, my drive shaft sheared all the teeth but that's another story. I thought and just hoped it might be wheel bearings this time.

When we got back to the house, Ray and Wayne then took the bike up the road. After much deliberation and discussion, it was decided

that it would have to come apart so we could have a look at it. I think Chris was secretly quite pleased about this, never happier than when he is taking something dirty and oily apart and fixing it. First problem though, how are we going to get the bike up in the air sufficient to get the rear wheel out?

Monday morning, bright and early as the shops were opening, I set off on my mission to buy a car jack. Shouldn't be too difficult with a town up the road about six miles away. After visiting four big stores, I was struggling. In the fourth, I was trying to explain to the shop assistant in my best French and using Google translate on my phone. He appeared with a pair of axle stands. In desperation I was going to take them, better than nothing. While all this was going on, one of the other customers overheard and asked if it was my sidecar outfit outside. He also had a sidecar outfit. I explained my problem using Google translate again and it all got a little lost in translation. He was insistent that I go to his house to fix my bike. I was trying to explain that we were down the road and could fix the bike but just needed a jack to do the job. Did he have one I could borrow and take away and bring back later?

After much confusion he readily agreed. I was to follow him to his house which he said was just 2km away. Off we went, uphill, down dale, left and right several times. How was I ever going to find this place again to return his jack? When we got to his house, I discovered that he had several bikes as well as his sidecar outfit. I was given the tour, we chatted bikes and he dug out his jack. I got him to write down his address so I could put it in the sat nav when returning the jack later. Off I went with his jack, saying I would be back in a couple of hours. How fantastic that he trusted me to just take it. A legend in his own lunchtime, thanks Fabio, you saved the day.

Back at the gîte, we set to. Well, Ray and Chris did most of the work, shouldn't take too long...ha, ha, famous last words! The splines just

wouldn't separate from the drive. That was worrying. What on earth were we going to find? The whole drive and shaft along with the wheel was going to have to come out in one, so we had to take more stuff off the bike to facilitate this. It was hot, remember it was 35°C. Finally, everything all came out, managed to prise the splines apart, no wear that we could see, just all a bit dry. Good job Wayne happened to have some moly grease with him. Turned the bearings and they were very 'notchy', not smooth at all. Just bang them out then... hang on, three bearings on the back wheel??? It's not a standard Wing wheel, it's an EZS wheel for sidecar use. One of the bearings had almost completely disintegrated. Wayne just happened to have two spare bearings of the right size with him. Just one odd size to find now.

Wayne and Kerrie set off in his outfit on the hunt for a bearing. After about an hour and a half, they came back with two the right size. Hoorah! They had found a car spares-type shop in the town, a bit old and dingy, with everything covered in dust. You get the picture. This wouldn't be our last visit to this little spares shop.

With new bearings fitted and the bike put back together, a couple of hours work had turned into a whole day job. But the bike was fixed - spinning that wheel was soooo smooth. The bearing must have been going for a while and gradually so that it wasn't noticed.



Busman's Holiday for Yetti



Siesta Time

As far as bike repairs go, you couldn't break down with three better people close by - Ray, Chris and Wayne. You were all brilliant, thank you so much. It did cost me beer though. Lots of it. It was now early evening, I must get the trolley jack back to Fabio. I'd had it so long he must have thought he would never see it again. As we were going out to eat, we decided that we would all return the jack. The sat nav took us a much more direct route and we all rolled up at Fabio's house. He was happy to get his jack back but even happier with the crate of beer I gave him to say thank you.

Next up, a visit to a French market. A quick Google showed there was one every Tuesday in Charleville-Mézières, the capital city of the Ardennes. That'll do. What a beautiful place, the Square was stunning but if you want a market you have to get there early. By the time we arrived, it was pretty much all over. Never mind, it was still a lovely place to visit.

Our breakfast was traditional French. The nearest bakers was about five miles away, a pretty ride first thing in the morning. Wayne and I between us took care of the shopping as we were always first up. Fresh baguettes, croissants and a variety of cakes on each visit did the job. The bakers must have been delighted because we were spending about €60 every morning. But I digress. On Wednesday, we decided to go and have a look at the old chateau in Sedan. You think when you've seen one old empty chateau you've seen them all. Well, this was different. It was magnificent, one of the largest in France dating back to the 15th century. We spent a good few hours going round this one. Very impressive and the surrounding town was lovely too.



Chateau Fort de Sedan



Blue Sky Day in Sedan

When we got back to the house, Wayne wasn't happy with his rear suspension. It had gone a bit saggy (his bike that is). He is running Fournales shock absorbers on the back, great for sidecar use because you can put stupid amounts of air in them. I think Wayne runs his at about 65bar. To get air into the shocks, you need a Fournales stirrup pump which Wayne has. The problem was that the little seal had gone and was letting more air out than he was putting in. You could get the air in okay but couldn't unscrew from the valve quick enough. It was in a real awkward place to get to. With no air in the shocks, the bike is unrideable. It just so happened that Wayne had a spare right-angle valve extension. We fitted this to the shock and it made life a bit easier. Ray also had a spare right-angle valve extension, so this was fitted to the other shock. The seal on the pump was replaced with dental floss and this held just long enough to get air into the shocks. To get them set up properly and not let the air out so quickly, the rear wheel needs to be off the ground. We managed to get enough air in to ride but it still wasn't right. The answer: we need a jack! The next morning Wayne set off early. I know what you're thinking. No, not to Fabio's place but to the little car spares shop where he was able to buy a small trolley jack. Just the job. Back at the house, the bike was jacked up with the dental floss holding just long enough to set things up correctly. Job's a goodun.

It was still fairly early in the day so plenty of time left to do something. Not too far away on private land but open to the public were some trenches from WW1. We took a ride up there. Wow, what a place. A time for reflection. I got quite emotional a couple of times walking the trenches. We were there a good couple of hours. A sobering couple of hours but also fascinating at the same time.



Parking at the WW1 Trenches

*Frontline Trench at
La Main de Massiges'*

It was still hot, very hot. We had Googled a lake that had a man-made beach on the side of it. Anyone fancy a dip? Not everyone was up for a swim - only myself, Chloe, Kerrie, Chris and Jo went for a dip while the others went off to the bar. The water was lovely, not as cold as I was expecting. Facilities were superb, showers, changing rooms, loos all immaculate and all for free.

We still hadn't done a French market so it was decided that we would visit the market in Verdun on the Friday. We now knew that we had to be there early so skipped breakfast and were on the road by 8am. Just short of a 100km ride on little roads saw us get to Verdun at about 9.30am. We made it. A great street market and plenty of stalls to choose what you wanted for breakfast. Chloe and I had a full spit-roast chicken between us with a portion of potatoes that

were cooked at the bottom of the spit roast with all the juices from the chickens dripping on them... yum yum. Don't know what all the others had to eat. We were too busy devouring ours. It was so good.

Verdun is famous for the longest battle of WW1. 300 days and nights. Two million shells were fired by the Germans in the first eight hours. Masses of WW1 history to explore in the area.

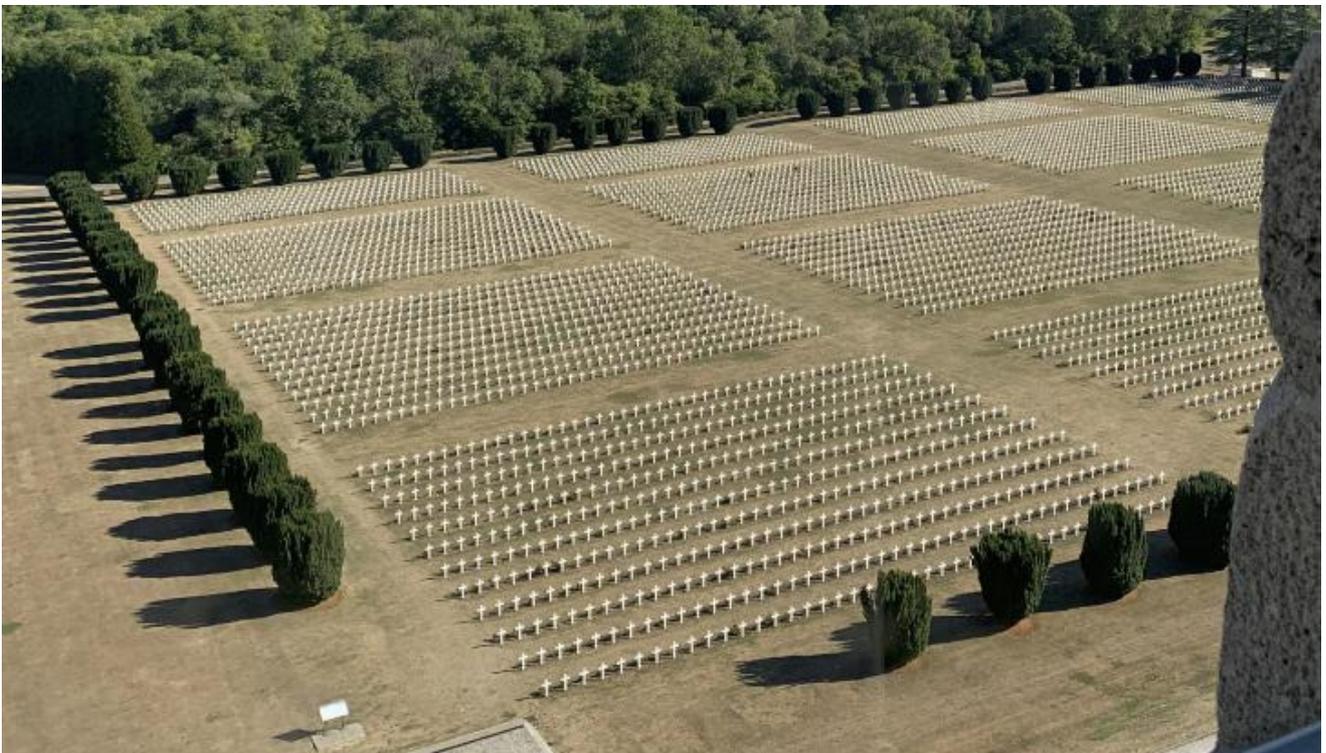


Monument to Fallen Soldiers of Verdun

We chose to visit the underground citadel where we learnt all about the battle and how the underground tunnels were used. I love all that kind of information. There were some great memorials to view and a lovely town on the river with lots of bars and restaurants overlooking the water, so another place I can highly recommend for a visit if you're ever down that way.



*Douaumont
Ossuary
Memorial'*



Cemetery from Top of Douaumont Ossuary

Come Saturday, it was time to leave. It had been a fantastic gîte although we didn't spend that much time in it. With it being so hot, there was a sheltered area outside that seated 12 at a table. We ate and drank lots there in the mornings and evenings.



Where are the Drinks'

Our ferry wasn't until Sunday, so we had a hotel booked in Ypres in Belgium for Saturday night. The hotel was right in the Square, a fantastic position. The afternoon was spent mostly outside in a bar drinking. Not a bad way to watch the world go by. A restaurant was booked for the evening after we had attended the last post at the Menin Gate. Very moving. A 'must do' if you are in that area and never been before. The final meal of the holiday was fantastic, a great way to finish off a great week with great friends. Until next time.....

Many thanks from me to the Peskett family for this contribution.

Other small bits of news to round off the report include get well wishes to Joe, Steve H. and Richard who are due various operations during the month and to Colin who had operations on his toes and looked as if he was then auditioning for a scary part on Halloween Night.

Look out too for an animation series called *Moley* that should be appearing on the BBC in December. Apparently he lives under Windsor Castle and goes out on many adventures with friends including Dotty. How appropriate.

Finally, on behalf of us all at Capital, we wish you a happy and peaceful time with your families and friends during the Christmas and New Year holidays. We look forward to socialising more with you in 2023.

Miss (Helen) Whiplash

What model have you got?

There have been five different major models of GoldWings since it was launched in October 1974 (along with the occasional 'specials') – and as the years roll by it's good to know that there are quite a few older Classic Wings still on the road and being well cared for by Club members.

The GWDCCB Classic Section is growing and is becoming more relevant as these older machines get rarer – so it would be good for the membership (especially those who weren't around in the early days) to see photos and read about the stories of Classic Wings in the Club. If you have a Classic, send in your photos with articles about how it came into your possession and why it is so special to you.



KEEP YOUR REGIONAL CONTACT DETAILS UP TO DATE

It is very important for Regions to keep the Committee (GenSec, Events Secretary, Membership Secretary) as well as the WingSpan Editor up to date with any contact changes.

It is one of the duties of Regional Reps to inform us about any changes – whether they are new regional committee members, changes to phone numbers or email addresses, etc. – so we can keep our national records current as well as publish the correct details in the *WingSpan*.

Please bear this in mind as we are getting close to the time when Regions are organising their Annual General Meetings.