

Route 66 on Harleys - October 2007

Story - Sue Wood-Roe

Photos- - Richard Wood-Roe, Sue Wood-Roe, Pete Starkey, Alun Morgan
Rob Morgan, Martin Goosey and Peter Goosey.

**Planning &
Composition** - Alun Morgan

The Team



Richard & Sue



Pete



Peter & Martin

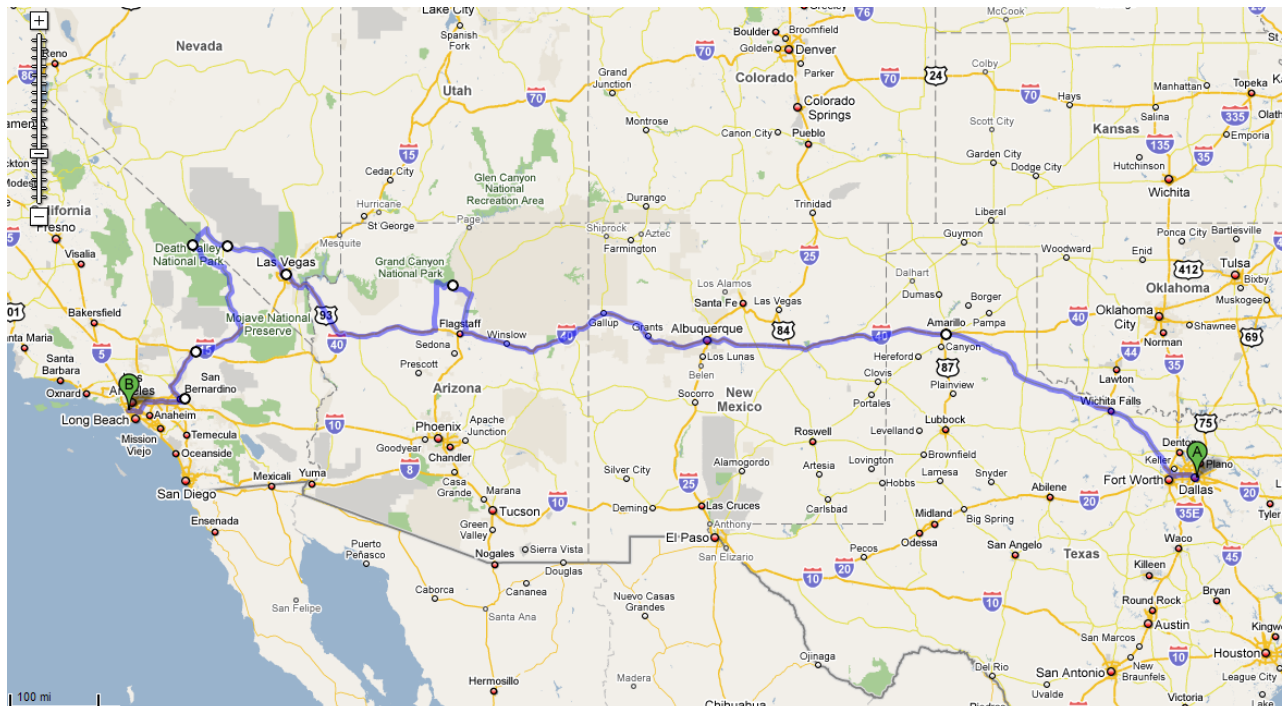


Rob



Alun

The Route



The Journey

The idea for the Route 66 trip was borne out of a drunken evening with Alun, Martin and Pete in Crieff January 2007.

The bikers;

Alun Morgan – MD of Artetch’s major material supplier, known him for about 25 years. Had many good times with him, the most memorable being one in London where we ended up in Stringfellows.

Alun’s son Robert who is 18 – Each year we have an industry Christmas party in Crieff, Scotland. It’s a family affair and we have watched Robert and his brother Russell grow up since they were about two years old. Evenings usually end with Alun playing his guitar and Robert and Russell have been part of the band for the last few years.

Professor Martin Goosey – was the chief scientist at Shipley Chemicals – Rick has known him for about 10 yrs, I sometimes see him at Technical seminar events.

Martin’s son Peter who is 15.

Pete Starkey – Who was Rick’s predecessor at Dynachem Chemicals and then MD of another circuit company. Great guy - known him for about 30 years.

Saturday 20 October - Arrival in Dallas

We had all booked into the Fairfield Suites Inn where a group of 12 boys around 9 yrs old and their dads arrived to see the Dallas Cowboys vs. Minnesota Vikings as a birthday treat. Tickets for the home games are sold out until 2009. You can just imagine how excited those boys were.



Arrival at Eaglerider Harley-Davidson, Dallas

Martin and Peter arrived conveniently after the rugby world cup final so Rick took them to the Harley shop to save time in the morning. They looked shattered and Martin was a bit worried about the size and weight of the bike. The rest of the gang didn’t arrive until about midnight as they had a punishing schedule Glasgow – Heathrow – Los Angeles – Phoenix – Dallas. We went back to the Irish Pub where it seems it’s more normal to buy wine by the glass.

Sunday 21 October - Dallas to Amarillo, 360 miles

Got the boys sorted out with their Harleys. Pete and Martin were really nervous, mainly because each one weighs about 350kgs. Using the wonderful Tom Tom we lead them out of Dallas and onto the Freeway. We were on our way to Amarillo and we have ourselves a convoy!!!

I periodically checked the phone internet to see how Lewis Hamilton was doing in the Grand Prix – can't believe I am operating all these electronic gadgets. What a shame he didn't make it, but what an achievement to come 2nd in the championship in his first year. After we had been going for about 100 miles we stopped at a Subway Service Station to fill up with gas and have lunch.



Pete looking chuffed after completing his first 100 miles on a Harley

The bikers were exhilarated. Pete said it was great when they were going along but the bike was hard to control when slowing down or stopping. He had been attacked by a huge flying tumbleweed as it whipped his leg. Apart from selling gas, the place we stopped did food, toys, and clothes and even had a case of dangerous looking knives and a chain with a spiky ball on the end. It was about 100 degrees with a hot wind so Robert and Alun replaced their helmets with bandanas and shed some clothes. The next stop to stretch our legs was at Quanah – city of legends, where we were told to watch out for snow and black ice in Amarillo. We thought they must be mad we had just left 100 degrees. We passed lots of freight trains, some of them double stacked with containers; it seems the standard length is approximately 1.3 miles.



Alun fills up the Electra Glide



Alun & Rob

Northern Texas was pretty barren and there were long stretches of the journey when we couldn't get any phone reception and lots of small towns with a garage and a few motels. Some of the motels looked run down and were as cheap as 30 dollars a night.

It started to get dark and we even began to feel the force of the wind in the car. When we arrived at the motel in Amarillo the bikers were absolutely frozen. It was 4 degrees and with the wind chill factor it was about minus 4 – haven't been that cold for ages.



Pete



Martin and Peter

The bikers liked the trains as they protected them from the wind. They said it was great until there was a gap in the containers and then the wind would whip through and send them sideways. We passed a few cattle ranches and fields and fields of cotton.

Now and again we came across an Adult Video Store in the middle of nowhere with a few trucks outside. This seemed a bit strange as there are also churches of all denominations everywhere.

The wind was so cold, it just went right through you. Off came the flip flops and on came the fur lined boots. There is a place advertised everywhere that does a 72 oz steak that you get free if you can eat it all. However we were all too tired and cold to bother so we fought our way through the wind to a



Rob, freezing cold but happy!

Mexican just behind the motel. Apart from being nearly frozen to death the two young lads were enjoying themselves and there followed a lot of boy bike talk about pistons etc. I think I will wait until we reach California where it is warmer and they have a few hundred miles under their belt before I have a go on the back of a Harley.



Pete's arms get frozen in Harley riding position

Monday 22 October – Amarillo to Santa Fe, 360 miles

We were woken up at 6 a.m. by an almighty crashing sound that shook the building. – it was the garbage lorry. Rick said this happened about 2 a.m. when we were staying at Motel Carolyn. Rick



Tripp's Harley-Davidson in Amarillo

nearly reversed over Robert as he was videoing behind our car when we set off for the Amarillo Harley Davidson shop.

They all seemed to be coping so well with the jet lag; Alun was full of beans as he is used to travelling. Robert was trying to encourage me to buy a sexy Harley top (one with cut outs down the side) but I settled for a conventional black tee-shirt. Got some money out from the drive-in ATM. We left Amarillo at 10.05 riding west.



Group shot outside Tripp's

I am so pleased that we decided to do it by car and I am sure the others are finding it useful to have a support car for their luggage and the wonderful TomTom for destinations. We drove past loads of flat, windy plains with the occasional cattle ranch and windmill farm.

The scenery was more like the typical Texas countryside that I had imagined, not so built up as Dallas. I have also now got used to operating the GPS. We stopped at the Midpoint Café in Adrian where we had a warm welcome. Fran, the owner, was still excited about a previous visit from Ewan McGregor who had stopped there with a film crew whilst making a Route 66 documentary.

Fran said he sat and chatted with her and asked her lots of relevant questions and he was so, so handsome and lovely. It was warming up a little but there was still that icy wind coming down from Canada.



Rob & Peter enjoying a break



Midpoint Café sign at Adrian, Dallas



Midpoint Café, Adrian, Dallas

When we set out to do Route 66 I didn't really understand what it was all about but it is becoming clearer each day. Route 66 opened in 1926 to link Chicago with Los Angeles and as a result gas stations, diners, motels and other services sprung up along the way. Over the years the road has been replaced but some of the original features are still to be seen.

It's strange that there isn't a temperature gauge in the car especially as the temperature can change as dramatically as it did yesterday. The bikes have them! Next stop was Glenrio – a Ghost Town and the “First & Last Motel in Texas”.



The Glenrio Motel, the First and Last Motel in Texas.

Glenrio was a great hit with Martin and Peter who eagerly investigated the abandoned motel rooms. There was a broken 1960's record player in one of the rooms. We rode on to New Mexico and 7 hours behind GMT.



View through the window of The Glenrio Motel

As we approached Tucumcari the sky became a deeper, more translucent cobalt blue. There were many signs along the road requesting you report drunk drivers. Pink soil again. We stopped to refuel and an old lady with a shopping trolley asked me if I had any empty guns and seemed quite upset when I said no.



Rob takes a shine to Starkey's Softail

Tucumcari is the town of 2000 motel rooms, the cheapest of which I saw was the Palamino Motel at 19.99 dollars a night. The Main Street in Tucumcari with the Royal Pallacio, Cactus, Palomino and Blue Swallow Motels was the highlight of the day for Rick and I

as there was a sense of the atmosphere of the 50 and 60's. We also visited the local museum and the thing made the biggest impression on me was the iron lung. I am feeling really old now as I seem to remember it was something to do with people who had polio. Alun played “Green Onions” on an old pump organ.



Alun playing the organ in Tucumcari Museum

Haven't seen a train today but the railway lines appear to run parallel to the Highway – it struck me also that we haven't seen any passenger trains, only freight. We passed miles and miles of plains and I wondered what would happen if you broke down as there was no mobile phone signal for hours on end.



The wonderful El Rey Inn in Santa Fe

We could see snow in the distance. We stopped at Joseph's Diner in Santa Rosa for lunch. There wasn't much that was gluten free so I had a Margarita and pinched a few of Rick's chips and then slept for quite a while afterwards.



We stayed at a fantastic, quaint motel in Santa Fe called the El Rey Inn. It was really cosy and pretty with a strong Mexican influence. We all made for the outdoor spa followed by G & T's at the Wood-



Hot Spa at the El Rey Inn

The bikers were relaxed, the scenery was now hilly and green and there was a long stretch of road in front.

Roe's super room (3 beds) and sorted out the next day's itinerary. We went to a Mexican restaurant for our evening meal, where they had the hottest Jalapeno peppers which burnt Alun & Rob's lips. Highlight of the day for Robert was the mid way café as this was the first real Route 66 stop. For Pete, Alun, Peter and Martin the highlight was the ride into Santa Fe.



Rob and Peter ready to ride

Tuesday 23 October 2007 - Santa Fe to Holbrook, 313 miles

It was a cold but bright sunny morning. We set off for the Harley Shop at 8.38 a.m. They sent us to a downtown shopping mall as Alun wanted some leather trousers. It's difficult to find somewhere specific without the address for the sat nav. The roads were very busy and we had to keep stopping at lights.



Route 66 Diner, Albuquerque

Albuquerque was much bigger than we had envisaged but we managed to find our way to the 66 Diner on Central Drive. It is housed in a genuine 1940's Phillips gas station.

There were old photos on the walls, old tunes on the jukebox, classic dishes on the menu and great uniforms, although they only looked cool on the girls.



Phillips 66 gas station sign

We finally gave up after about an hour – good job as tempers were frayed. Pete and Martin find manoeuvring the bikes in the town difficult and it's also hard to keep together if someone gets left at the lights. However, Alun was not perturbed and he and Rick stopped to refuel with liquor supplies. Left Santa Fe at 10.30 a.m. and after passing through the soft hilly plains we stopped at Bernalillo (5084 ft) to refuel the bikes.

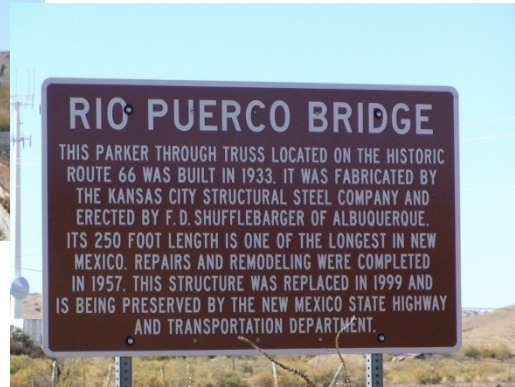


Our waitress, Iggy

Conversation was back on carburetors, pistons and technical bike stuff. As we left Albuquerque a dude in a soft top Chevrolet put on a good show for us, he jacked it up at each red light and turned left on only two wheels – quite exciting! We drove out of Albuquerque up the nine mile hill and stopped at the site of an historic iron girder bridge built in 1933 and remodelled in the 1950's and is the longest bridge of its type. The rocks had turned to a soft pink and the soil to sand.



Alun and Rob riding over the Rio Puerco Bridge



Rio Puerco bridge sign



Large diameter uranium mine drill bit, Grants

We appeared to be in a huge volcanic crater. We passed a Casino village. Next stop to stretch our legs was at Grants an old mining town where uranium was discovered nearby in 1950.

Next stop for coffee was a Route 66 diner in Gallup.





The Wigwam Motel in Holbrook

staying in a concrete wigwam in Holbrook, it seems that ours is the only one that hasn't been renovated.

However, it didn't stop everyone coming in for pre dinner drinks to arrange the itinerary for tomorrow. It's all about the Petrified Forest here which is a nearby National Park. Had a meal at the local Steakhouse and there was a lot of talk about how much we resented Gordon Brown's raids on our pension schemes and how much everyone dislikes Cherie Blair. We also chatted about Viz and cult films such as The Life of Brian. I am a bit fed up of all the boy talk but I don't mind politics. Not sure what Robert and Peter are making of me having a Margareta for lunch yesterday, I think Robert thinks I am a lush – whatever that is. 7 a.m. start tomorrow.

You know men are so weird as each time a train goes by they say "Oh look it's a train". Apparently 128 trains go through Gallup each day. Didn't have time to go into the restored El Rancho Hotel in Gallup that was the on-location home to stars like Tracy, Hepburn, Bogard and Hayward. As we entered the State of Arizona we were greeted by majestic red mountains and the scenery became more rugged. The last leg of the journey today was difficult for the bikers as they had to battle with the low, strong sun shining into their eyes. Tonight we are



Pete outside his concrete Wigwam



1940's Concrete Wigwams at Holbrook

Wednesday 24 October - Holbrook to Kingman via the Grand Canyon, 327 miles



Alun on the edge of the Little Canyon

Today we are taking a detour off Route 66 to visit the Grand Canyon. Set off at 7.40 a.m. and it was a bright, sunny morning but cold; about minus 2. Most of the hoardings on the way were advertising Indian handicrafts. The landscape on the way to Winona was mainly uninhabited, flat, sandy and desert-like with green shrubs and trees around the almost dried up riverbed.

We drove through Two Guns, Twin Arrows and a meteor crater. There wasn't anywhere to eat in Winona so we stopped at Mary's Café a few miles before Flagstaff, what a great breakfast we had. Rick had steak, eggs and

Not a good start. The railway line went directly behind our wigwam and the trains ran all night. Rick was awake most of the night having trouble breathing; there must have been a pet in the room previously. He was a bit uncomfortable in the motel in Santa Fe so he is tired and grumpy. To make matters worse we had decided to have an early start and get breakfast on the way. I got him up at 6.30 a.m. as I thought we were to meet in the car park at 7 a.m. but he said he was sure we settled on 7.30 a.m. He reluctantly got ready and then went mad as I had got the time wrong and had got him up at 5.30 a.m. I wondered why it was so dark!



The Grand Canyon



hash browns the others had ham, eggs, omelettes, pancakes the lot. Everytime you order something it is followed by a number of choices i.e. toast – white, wheat, rye, sour dough; eggs -fried, sunny side up, easy over, scrambled, omelette – do you want biscuit and gravy with it?; salad dressings – French, Ranch, Thousand Island, Blue Cheese, Italian, Honey Mustard and so on.



Rob and Pete on the Grand Canyon South Rim

We have developed a sort of sign language to communicate with the Harley's – I hold up the number of fingers to represent the number of miles before we make a turn. We decided to take the scenic route to the Grand Canyon and complete the loop by taking the fast route back.

It had started to warm up and by the end of the day it had reached the 80's. The scenery was amazing, grass burnt to a corn colour so much so that it looked like sand in the distance. We saw some cowboys herding up a load of cattle, what a surreal sight. The scorched grass turned to red soil. We saw an Indian hitching a lift, a few

settlements of trailers and prefabs, signs that said "Nice Indians Behind You", "Turn and Shop". We love the Starkey wave that he gives us when passing on his Harley. You pay 25 dollars to enter the Grand Canyon National Park and the first stop was at the Little Colorado Canyon where we bought some Indian jewellery.

It was a fantastic sight and the boys kept throwing stones into it to hear the echo. The next stop was the South Rim where you can see the Colorado River winding its way through the canyon. What a magnificent and majestic sight - awesome. I first visited the Grand Canyon in 1976 and again about 6 years ago when we took a helicopter flight but I don't remember it having such an effect on me or having felt so close to nature.



Group pose at the Grand Canyon

We also viewed it from the top of a tower but the best view was outside. It was warming up so the bikers took off their helmets for the 25 mile ride to the Grand Canyon Village that was through pine forests all the way.



Grand Canyon Road South

Once again we travelled through miles and miles of pine forests that were managed by controlled fires. We passed Bedrock City, home to the Flintstones, and left the Kaibab National Forest to join the Route 66 trail once again at Williams.

What a disappointment Grand Canyon Village was, it has become really touristy with hotels, lodges, buses, horses and even its own railway. We could see that it was going to take ages to get through all that so thought we would stop for lunch somewhere on the way back.



View from the pillion of Alun's Harley

We stopped at Ashfork to refuel and took a great picture of an old barber's shop that had a car parked on its roof. Saw a sign to Los Angeles 441 miles but our stop for the night was Kingman 164 miles away. The bikers had to stop to let the sun go down about 40 miles from Kingman but that meant they

had to ride in the dark which was challenging for some of them. We booked into the Great Western and unwound by having a swim and spa followed by pre-dinner drinks at the Wood-Roe's. Alun showed us a Harley internet site that was advertising machine gun style exhausts to Hendrix music – whatever next, I couldn't believe I was actually watching it. No chance of me becoming a biker.



DeSoto's Barber Shop in Ashfork

One of the highlights of the day was Starkey discovering the friction controller on his throttle.

Apart from the Grand Canyon the highlight for the bikers was riding with hills that looked purple and indigo on both sides with a full moon in the middle which they drove through – quite sci-fi. Fun meal at an American restaurant lots of talk once more about how much we all dislike Gordon Brown.

Thursday 25 October - Kingman to Furnace Creek, Death Valley, 297 miles

We left the hotel at 8.45 a.m. to make our way to the Harley Shop. Having a Harley is a real cult thing, you have to have all the gear and sometimes your bike is so cool that you don't even ride it, maybe only on a dry day so you don't get the chrome dirty. I bought a belt with orange stones and Rick



The bikers refuel at Dolan Springs

bought a sweatshirt. Exiting Kingman we saw litter for the first time, it seems that we are driving through a valley. It may seem that I have it easy as I am not driving but I have to keep reading the guide book to Rick, checking the sat nav, taking photos with my camera and Alun's and also intermittently taking the video. We were hoping to make it to the Grand Canyon Sky Walk and after consulting the internet it said you could take a coach from Dolan Springs.

Not sure about their marketing but Dolan Springs is a dead end place in the middle of the desert. We couldn't see any life so I had a ride on the back of Pete's bike

with Alun driving to a nearby café where an Indian or maybe a Mexican man said we had to go 30 miles up the road and then take the dirt track for 20 miles which he wouldn't recommend for the bikes nor would he take the bus.



Sue has her first ride on a Harley

included Oatman, Topock, Needle, Gaffe, Amboy, Bagdad and Newberry Springs but hopefully we will pick it up again tomorrow at Barstow.



Pete's Softail

This was my first ride on the Harley and it was great but we didn't go more than 45 mph or very far – still not going to be a biker despite the ride, tee-shirt and belt. Because we had detoured to do the Sky Walk we missed out on a part of the Route 66 which



Rob with the Hoover Dam in the background

The water level of the dam was extremely low. On the way to Vegas we saw our first passenger train. It's amazing how much residential development and motorways have been created since my last visit about six years ago. We decided to go through the main strip in Vegas as the boys hadn't been there before.

Ten miles before the Hoover Dam we had to go through a security check. Stopped for coffee at a viewing point and tried to stop further down to get a better view but it was difficult to park and luckily we found an excellent viewing point for Lake Mead on the way out.



Peter and Martin at Lake Mead



Las Vegas Strip





Las Vegas Harley-Davidson

Nevada and they would pick up a 500 dollar fine if caught. After lunch we stopped at the Harley Shop in Las Vegas which was huge. Rick and I went to the store to get some gear and supplies. There was a machine there where you could convert all your winning tokens into cash and someone was converting small tokens to the value of about 380 dollars. Refuelled at Indian Springs where you could get a breakfast of Steak and Eggs at the adjacent Casino for 3.99 dollars. We then made our way to Death Valley.



Harley-Davidson café, Las Vegas



Sunset over Death Valley

The Tom Tom lead us to Death Valley junction, by then after a wonderful sunset, it was dark and we found that it was another 25 miles to reach the Furnace Creek Ranch Resort. There was absolutely nothing on the way, we were getting worried, no lights, no signs – nothing but a winding road edged by ghostly, mysterious looming mountains - really worrying, what about our fuel? A very worried team eventually found our ranch which is a bit like Center Parcs. Went for a swim in the natural spring pool which was the warmest and biggest pool I have ever swum in. Death Valley is the largest national park in the US and comprises of 3.3 million acres – what if we had run out of gas which was getting quite likely? The Badwater Basin salt pan is 282 feet below sea level. This is amazing as yesterday we were 7000 feet above sea level. In 1913 Furnace Creek recorded a temperature of 134°F the second highest temperature ever recorded in the

world only second to the Sahara. Furnace Ranch Creek Golf Course is the lowest grass course in the world – 214 feet below sea level and is par 70. After drinks at the Wood-Roe's we went for a meal at Wrangler Steakhouse. As we arrived in the dark it will be interesting in the morning to see what the scenery is like. Alun is still not prepared to drink anything other than Italian wine – we rebelled and ordered some Californian plonk.

Friday 26 October - Death Valley to Barstow, 176 miles



Furnace Creek ranch, Death Valley

The first stop was Zabriskie Point, it was amazing as on one side there was the Badlands fine grained mudstones and siltstones that look like splodges of ice cream in the container after it has been left out of the freezer for too long. On the other side you can see the salt flats through a different formation of rocks. It is all so huge, it also looks a bit like a sand picture that's shaken up every now and again to form a new picture.



Richard and Sue at Zabriskie Point

Woke up at 7.40 a.m. – that's the latest I have slept in and too late for a swim in that lovely hot pool before breakfast. I forgot to mention that as we got to the start of Death Valley yesterday we had crossed into California. We left the ranch at 11.13 a.m. after having a look at the golf course, Borax Museum and General Store. What stunning scenery we missed last night, jagged and smooth mountains ranging from cream, green, black and brown.



"Old Dinah" Steam tractor and ore wagon, Furnace Creek



Alun, Peter, Pete and Martin at Zabriskie Point

Peter retorted that she would probably be fat and tattooed as you have to be strong to manage a bike. Robert makes me laugh and Peter is not so shy now. We haven't seen much wild life, just the odd bird. We drove for 56 miles without seeing any civilisation. As we turned each corner a new picture opened up. Stopped at Shoshone and had lunch at the Crowbar Café. Just next to the café was the "Death Valley Health Center", which amused us.

A good looking girl sat on Alun's bike to have her picture taken. Alun was all puffed up and I said to young Robert (18) and Peter (15) that the Harley's are good for attracting girls and I wonder if it also worked if a girl had one. Robert got very excited and said just imagine a girl all dressed in tight, white leather with a pink helmet – she would be so popular!



Group pose with borax salt flats in the background



Crowbar café and saloon at Shoshone

We had climbed 3000 feet and the temperature had gone from 110 degrees to 80 degrees. Death Valley is the loneliest, hottest, most deadly and dangerous spot in the U.S with zero humidity. However, I could easily come back and spend a week on the ranch. I couldn't say that for Las Vegas, as yesterday was the third time I have been there and each time I say never again – hate it. The waitress was stressed but the lunch was great. Californian people don't seem as nice as other Americans we have met.

All morning there had been a haze across the landscape. At lunchtime we were told this was from the fires in Los Angeles and tonight the full moon has a red glow. We hit slow moving traffic 17 miles outside Barstow as they were stopping every car for an agricultural inspection. We stayed at the Best Western in Barstow, pool was too cold to swim so didn't bother. We are now back on the Route 66 and it feels like home especially as there is a railway line opposite so we will be able to hear



The Mojave Desert reflected in Alun's chrome Harley-Davidson helmet

the rumbling of trains throughout the night. We went to Wal-Mart and bought a suitcase – I've never been to Wal-Mart before. After drinks at ours, Pete brought his penknife to cut the lemon, we set off to a restaurant about a mile up the road – very average. The waitress was not at all friendly and didn't make any effort to make us welcome.

Tomorrow is our last full day and there is talk of another trip next year, perhaps the Pacific Coast Highway. It's been a great experience, not sure that we could repeat it but we have bonded well as a group. We're off to Santa Monica tomorrow and that's the end of the Route 66. I expect Robert has gone to bed dreaming of all the girls in bikini's he is going to see on the beach tomorrow – actually I expect his dad, Alun is doing the same thing!

Saturday 27 October - Barstow to Woodland Hills, Los Angeles, 198 miles

Rick went to the Shopping Mall that we had visited about 6 years ago but it had closed since Wal-Mart had come to Barstow. There was a general haze everywhere and Alun's bike was covered in ash. At breakfast time some Italian girls were having trouble operating a machine so Alun went to help them out and did so in Italian – very impressive, thought he might start polishing his bike next. The Californian people are not that friendly, they seem to have a take it or leave it attitude. Left at 10 a.m. There was a surprising amount of litter on the Freeway.



Alun and Rob on Route 66 near San Bernardino

The visibility was very poor and about 57 miles outside San Bernardino we started to smell the smoke from the wildfires in Los Angeles. The old Route 66 crossed the highway at Victorville and we then drove on a 5 mile section of the old road that followed the Mojave river wash and the Santa Fe railway track through the Cajon Mountains.



The bikers pose by the Historic Route 66 road marker

Next stop for coffee and to stretch our legs was Molly's Café which was full of Route 66 memorabilia. Despite not long having finished breakfast we all felt a burger coming on. The majority had Molly's Route 66 Burgers and just right they were too.



Molly's Café in San Bernardino

Just before we joined the Freeway again we all had our photograph taken by the Route 66 marker on the road. In San Bernardino we went past the restored California Theatre where Will Rogers gave his last performance.



Richard and Sue on Route 66

The Tom Tom had a funny turn as we left San Bernardino and we had a bit of trouble trying to find a gas station. The forecourt of the one we found was littered with dirty disposable nappies and felt generally threatening. The sky was all hazy again and we could hardly see the mountains but it started to clear as we got to Pasadena.



Rob and Peter tuck in to Route 66 burgers

We drove through Sunset Boulevard and then through the Topanga Canyon to our hotel in Woodlands Hills. The long and winding road, about 12 miles of it, proved a real challenge for the bikes. It was a scenic route though with lots of arty looking restaurants and shops and fantastic views of Los Angeles. General consensus is that Alun loves his Harley but Martin and Pete think it's OK for the wide roads in the States but not so good in the UK.

It was a great relief when we got to the Best Western but unfortunately it was a bit too early to open the Wood-Roe bar so we had to have a spa and think about a swim – the water was freezing cold. The Highlight today was

finding Molly's Café and bad part was the grim ride from San Bernardino to Santa Monica but it was worth it when we finally reached the plaque. Went to a Jewish Restaurant called Jerry's Deli and as we were all burgered out it was salads all round apart from Peter who had a pizza.



Richard and Sue in Santa Monica

It was about 18 degrees and now and again there were a few spots of rain. We weren't looking forward to the drive through Los Angeles and it wasn't enjoyable especially as the Californian drivers are quite fast and aggressive and weave in and out of the traffic. This makes it hard to keep all altogether but the boys did really well and were quite relieved when we eventually made it to Santa Monica. We had made it but where do we mark the spot? The kind staff at the Travelodge in Ocean Avenue let us park up for a short time while we walked to a plaque memorializing Route 66 as Will Rogers Highway. There then followed a big photo session – we had really made it, Rick and I all the way from Chicago and the others from Dallas. It was a shame it was such a crap day because yesterday we all had visions of swimming in the sea and lots of lovely girls in bikinis.



Will Rogers Highway Plaque in Santa Monica



Alun and Rob at the end of Route 66

Sunday 28 October - Woodland Hills to Hawthorne via Malibu beach, 54 miles

About 1 a.m. there was a commotion outside our room which I initially thought included Alun and Robert but they assured me they were tucked up in bed. It went on for ages and resumed again about 4 a.m., there was a lot of arguing and it sounded as if there was going to be a fight. I had my first bit of girl talk for 2 weeks at breakfast when I met someone from Surrey who was there with her 15 and 16



year old daughters. They had done all the Hollywood bit, been to a premier of a film where they saw loads of film stars including Paris who was shopping on Rodeo Road with her little dog in her bag – they actually closed the store for 45 minutes while she shopped. She and her girls were all off to have their nails done before flying back today. Sheer bliss, no talk of pistons and carburettors!

Pete tackles the bends in Virgenes Canyon

We took the road through Virgenes Canyon passing through Santa Monica Mountains National Park, Malibu Creek State Park and Topia Park.

There was a dead deer in the road but the scenery was really lovely with soft green rolling mountains. As we entered Malibu there were signs of recent fires with workmen and women fixing the electric cables. We stopped for coffee at a private beach called Paradise Cove in Malibu.



Breakfast at Paradise Beach, Malibu



Rob on the beach in Malibu

Some of them dipped their toes into the Pacific just to say they had done it – it was cold. We drove 12 miles along the Pacific Highway toward Santa Monica and back up the Highway to return the bikes.

It was a really pleasant drive apart from the Highway although it was nowhere as busy as yesterday.

With the bikes and car returned we were off to the airport. What a great experience. Richard and I have travelled about 3,200 miles through Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and California and the others have done over 2,000 miles from Texas onwards. The Grand Canyon and Death Valley were highlights for all of us.



Bike return at Eaglerider Los Angeles



High fashion, L.A. style!

The Route 66 highlights were, for the boys, just riding on wide open roads with little traffic and for us all the warm welcome we found at the Mid Point Café and the one street towns like Tucumcari and of course the great El Rey Inn in Santa Fe. Not really too many low points – hated going into the big cities with spaghetti freeways and it was a shame we didn't get to go over the Grand Canyon Skywalk. Loved it all.