



Happily, the Treffen and Wing Ding seasons have now started, and Moles have been out and about enjoying the roads, food, drink and the companionship of other Wingers.

The French Treffen sounded as if it was business as usual in that visitors were placed miles away from where all the action was in Dunkirk. David reported that he was 9km from the main campsite, in a farmer's field, so not very appealing to make the long walk. He did enjoy the goodie stands though - bought quite a few items I hear - and the friendship of others. Even after his experience, he is keen to visit the French Treffen next year which is a fair distance away in Lyon.

Some Moles then travelled on to the Dutch Treffen where Great Britain came out top at the awards. Well done to everyone there. Hope you celebrated with lots of beer, bitterballen and poffertjes.

Closer to home, the Broadlands Wing Ding was well populated with Moles. Capital achieved the top Region place and the ladies celebrated by dancing until the end. Great stamina, unlike the chaps who allegedly had gone to bed early.

Meanwhile, Johnny and myself have been on a trip of a lifetime to motorcycle to and photograph Mount Everest. Called *Sagarmāthā* in Nepal and *Chomolungma* in Tibet, Everest is the Earth's highest mountain above sea level, located in the Mahalangur Himal sub-range of the Himalayas. At a height of 8,849m (29,031 ft), the China-Nepal border runs across its summit point.

Our adventure was on Johnny's bucket list and had been delayed three years because of Covid and its consequences. We feared the holiday would be cancelled completely and only the very recent opening up of the Tibet border with Nepal made the trip possible.

Johnny rode the aptly named Royal Enfield Himalayan, I was pillion.



Our Royal
Enfield ►

A very different motorcycle to our Gold Wing - 411cc vs 1800! We were a group of 12 Himalayan bikes, the other 11 riders came from various places in Australia. Most of them were trail bikers already rather than road riders like ourselves, so they were very familiar with the bad road conditions we experienced in Nepal. Fortunately, the Tibet roads were mainly asphalt so more comfortable. I have to say that Johnny did his homework to achieve his lifelong ambition to see Everest. He enrolled onto one of Mark Jaffe's trail riding courses at Phoenix Motorcycle Training, Foots Cray and under the expert tuition of Adam Augustin learnt how to handle rough terrain, puddles, mud and everything in between. Our thanks go to Mark and Adam for their brilliant teaching.

Our 15 day adventure started and finished in Kathmandu, Nepal, taking in Kyirong, Tingri, Shegar, Shigatse and Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, before heading back towards Sakya and finally Everest Base Camp at 5,200m. We rode over a few 5,000m-plus passes, experiencing snow, rain and strong winds as well as sun, through beautiful yet desolate landscapes and spartan villages, being careful not to run over the goat herds, sheep, dogs and chickens with chicks as they crossed the road.



◀ *Kungthang La*

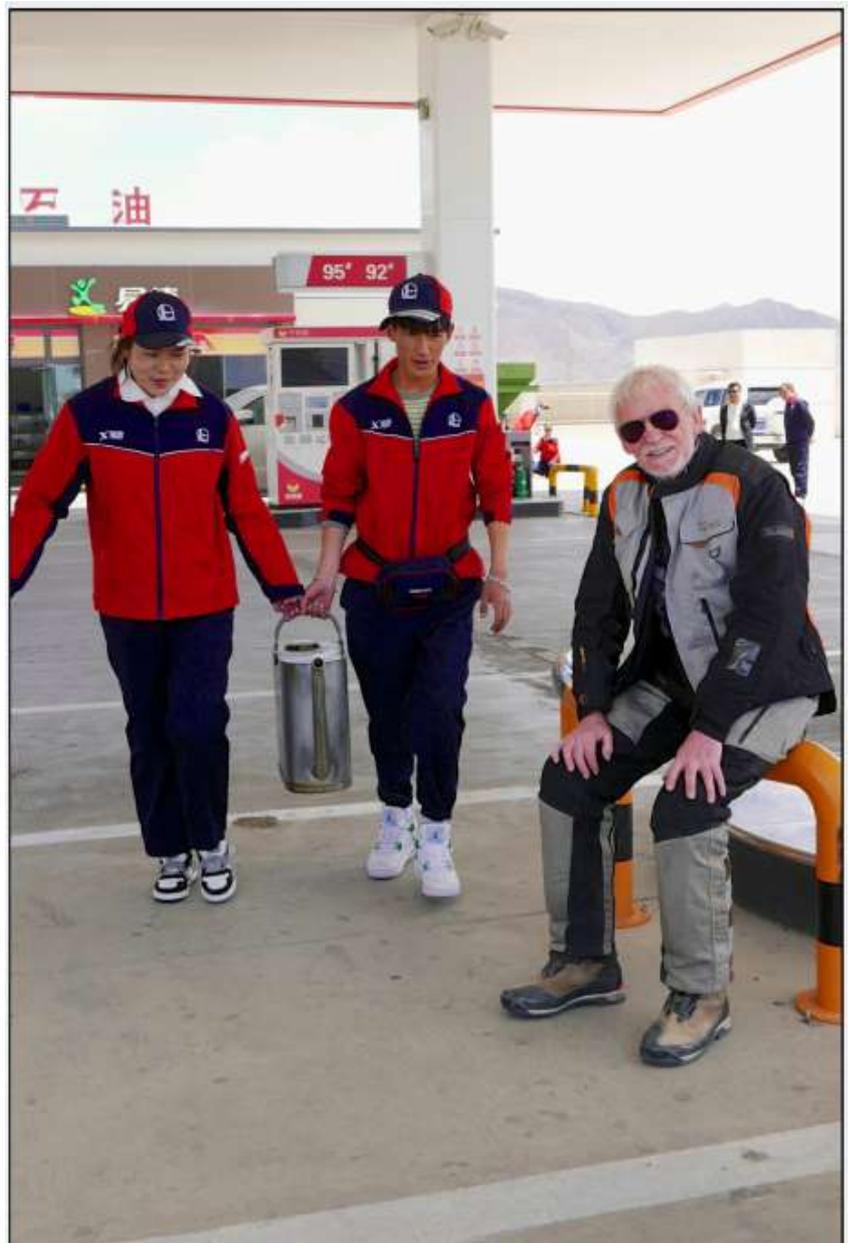
Gyatso La ▶



The yaks and another animal that was a cross between a yak and a cow, fortunately, stayed in the fields or grazed beside the rivers. We also had the occasional cultural break and visited monasteries and climbed stupa (a dome-shaped building erected as a Buddhist shrine) in places including the Potala Palace and Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, the Sakya monastery (built in 1073) and the Pekor Chode monastery in Gyantse. One busy beauty spot was Yamdrok Lake. Here we were waylaid by Chinese ladies eager to practice their English and tell us how 'cool' we were ie. two oldies riding around on an adventure touring motorcycle. Our total mileage for the trip was around 1,500 miles.

We obviously had to fill up with petrol at relevant stops along our journey. There was no self-service for us. Instead, we parked the bikes in a row and while we ate snacks and drank lemon tea, the attendants walked to each bike in turn with what looked like a watering can filled with petrol.

Chinese Petrol Station ►



We discovered that the approach to Everest Base Camp in Tibet has changed since Covid. No vehicles other than eco-buses are now allowed up to the Camp so after we had left our motorcycles in the care of our support team and taken the photo, we hopped aboard the bus for a 40km journey.

Everest - Here We Come ▶

Our bed for the night was in a permanent hut which had rooms off a central stove area heated by dried yak dung. We needed the electric blankets and thick duvets because it was very cold in the morning.



Inside Everest Base Camp Hut

We photographed a glorious Mount Everest in the late afternoon, surrounded by local men who were amazed to see the mountain's features through my binoculars. Johnny returned at sunset and set an early alarm call for the sunrise photos. His ambition thus achieved. We all returned to our bikes on the 8.30am eco-bus and headed back towards Kathmandu.



Photographer at the ready ▲

► *Locals join Johnny and Miss Whiplash*





Everest Afternoon ▲ and Everest Sunrise ▼



It was a tough but unforgettable trip. Certainly, action packed with a few spills on the way but we all came home unscathed except for high-altitude coughs and colds. Not a brilliant culinary experience - potato soup for breakfast for example - but the support we received from our travel company representatives (Parikrama Treks & Expeditions) who travelled with us, our Chinese guide, the bike mechanics, support drivers and the helpers with our luggage - our own Sherpas - was just fantastic. Nothing was too much trouble and everyone was so happy and friendly.

It is an amazing coincidence of timing but as Johnny and myself returned to London on 26th May, three days later and 70 years ago, the New Zealander Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, a Nepali Sherpa climber, reached the summit of Everest at 11.30am local time on 29th May 1953 via the South Col route. At the time, both acknowledged it as a team effort by the whole expedition but Tenzing revealed a few years later that Hillary had put his foot on the summit first. Johnny had already celebrated with a dish called the *Sir Edmund Hillary* in a Lhasa restaurant - it was a huge yak steak in a delicious sauce with chips.

If you are interested in seeing more of the Himalaya, the Michael Palin series has recently been repeated on the BBC. The programmes show the beauty of the countries, people and places.

Now it's time to get onto our comfortable armchair and head for smaller, snowy mountains in the Dolomites and Alps.

Miss (Helen) Whiplash

