



CAPITAL WINGS



I'm please to say that there has been a greater movement of Moles since my last report with many spreading their Wings as far as Reading and some even further, across Europe.

Capital didn't win on the bingo but won the Best Attended Region Award at the Thames Valley & White Horse Wing Ding at the end of June with about 15 Moles attending. Colin Will won the Oldest Rider Award, or as they describe it in Europe, the Most Experienced Rider. At what? You have to ask! It was a great weekend with great weather. Well done to everyone and a big thank you to all the Wonky Donkeys for your hospitality.

Meanwhile, taking a break from their Antipodean adventures, and after attending the Treffens in Holland, Portugal and Spain, Big John and Julie travelled to Bibione, a seaside resort east of Venice in Italy. Johnny and myself met up with them there for the Italian Treffen, along with a hard core group of Brits from many Regions who enjoy Continental motorcycling in the summer. We four met up again at the following Slovenian and Austrian Treffens although our routes and activities in the intervening days were different.

In the past, I have written postcards from Treffens for WingSpan. The following may seem more like a long letter than a cryptic postcard so I hope you enjoy hearing about our adventures.

The Italian Treffen was slightly chaotic in that the accommodation and especially the Awards evening venue were shared with the privately-owned site. Communication between GWCI and the owners was not perfect and led to confusion on many fronts. However, congratulations must go to GWCI for managing to even put on a Treffen this year because they only had three months to organise this event after everything fell apart with their original venue. We don't always get to hear about the stress and problems going on in the background, do we? Pre-inscription was fast and efficient and the gift of a 75cc bottle of beer was very welcome because the weather was hot, hot, hot. Big John managed to secure a special inscription number.

Big John scores 69



As we were to also discover later in Slovenia, there had been a lot of rain and consequent flooding in the area around Bibione and during our Friday's guided tour, an accident resulted in a GoldWing going for a swim.

We understand that the Slovenian rider had a medical incident and had driven off the road into the flooded ditch. Thankfully, and amazingly, I believe he and his passenger were unhurt and after many flushing outs, the GoldWing was driven again a couple of days later.



Submerged GoldWing

The Italian Parade of Nations was a good two hours long, which these days I think is quite unusual. It was noisy and hot as we rode along various beach fronts, us in our proper motorcycle suits waving to near naked people. It was great fun as Johnny and myself flew the British flag, with Big John & Julie and Martyn & Jayne ahead of us and others I did not note behind us — sorry.



At the Awards evening, *GWOCGB* was placed in 4th position with 10 bikes and Wendy Rakestrow collected the trophy.

A pattern that emerged during our three Treffens was that there was no real collective celebration and dancing after the Awards ceremonies. People seemed to disperse either into their own country groups or return to their tents because of an early start the next day. No music groups, just a bit of disco. Is this a sign of the times as we get older or was the hot weather a factor? Roll on the British Treffen for some boogieing.

We stayed in a hotel in Domzale, north of Ljubljana, before riding to the 12th International Treffen of *GoldWing* Slovenia, held at an Eco-resort near Kamnik. The Club was actually celebrating its 25th Anniversary.

In these intervening days, we visited Lake Bled and were rowed in a boat to the island in the middle of it. This was something we were not able to do when we attended the 35th Super Treffen in Slovenia. It was another hot, sunny day. Apparently, Lake Bled is a huge destination point for anglers as we discovered on chatting to a couple on our home return journey in Germany. Big fish in clear fresh water. We also explored the capital city over two days after buying a Ljubljana Card. This allows access to major sights, museums and other attractions as well as boat rides and we certainly got our monies worth. That's the Northerner coming out of me. We would thoroughly recommend a visit to the city and the country if you haven't been there before.

And so on to the Treffen site where we were greeted by tight bends on narrow roads and ballast/gravel on the paths within the site. Not a happy combination when you are on a fully-loaded GoldWing. The site and surrounding roads had suffered flooding from burst river banks. Roads were being repaired and the ballast was the solution for the Eco-resort, so again, we were lucky that the Treffen was able to be held. The guided tours took us firstly, to the bottom of the Velika Planina cable car for a trip up to the high-altitude plateau to walk, see the herdsman huts and have lunch. A ski area in winter, the views were wonderful but hazy because it was another hot, humid day.



Velika Planina Huts

The tour on our second day took us to another ski resort - Krvavec - in the Kamnik-Savinja Alps. This was a very jolly affair in the sun with food, drink, music and dancing.

The Awards ceremony on Saturday placed GWOCGB in 7th position with nine bikes. There was no collective partying again because annoyed neighbours living in houses above the site had called the police to complain about the noise. The police wanted the music turned off at 10pm and it was but not before a touching and innovative idea to celebrate with those people who had had birthdays during the Treffen. Peter and Wendy Rakestrow were called onto the stage along with quite a few others and they generously shared their gifts with many around the campsite.



If you are looking for some interior lighting design ideas, here's one from the Slovenian Treffen.

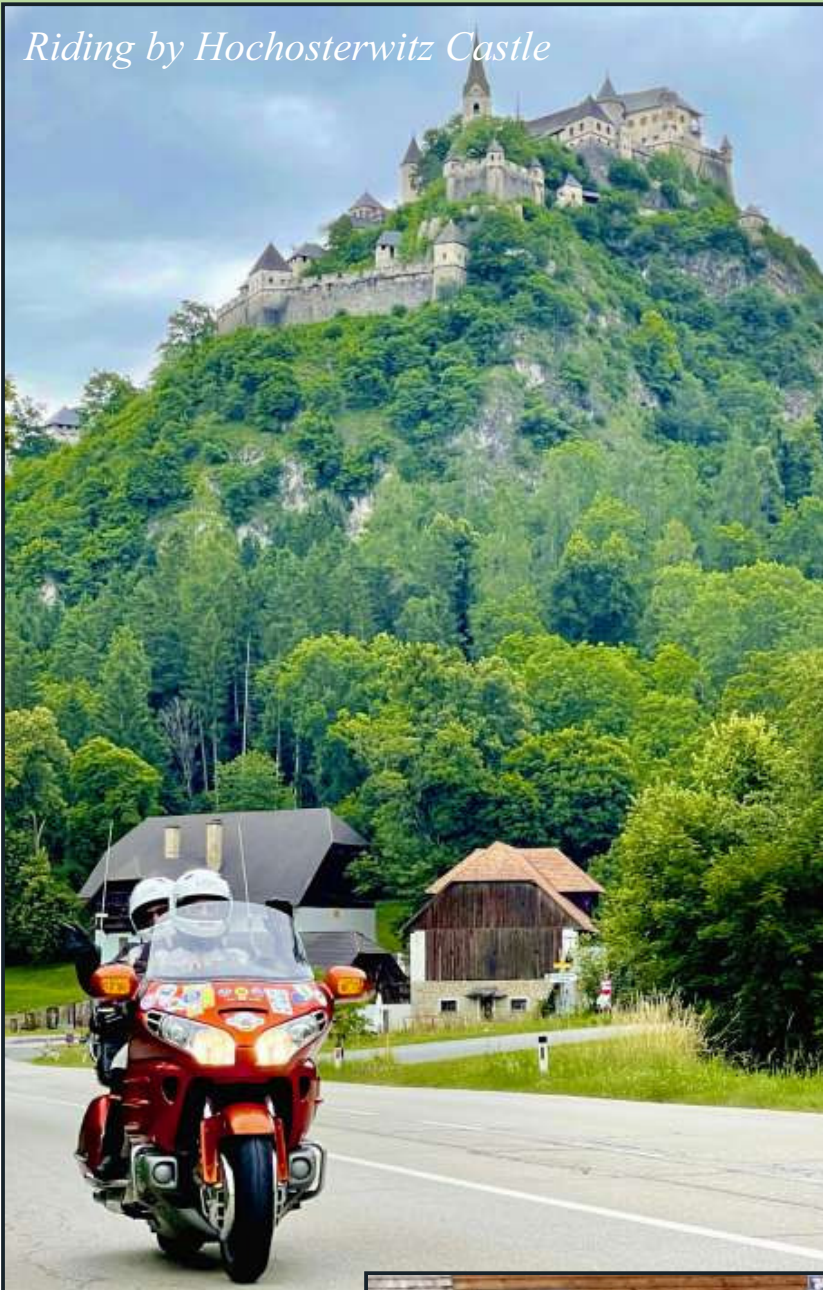
◀ *Birthday Congratulations*

▼ *Grate Shades*



The next day Johnny and myself headed northwards out of Slovenia for a mini-break at a hotel in Katschberg for some relaxation time before attending the Austrian Treffen in Ramsau am Dachstein. Yoga, swimming, water gymnastics and walking were on offer and we ate five-course evening meals. I happened to see a Mountain & Valley Card Guide that listed free or discounted entry to sports activities, museums and other attractions. Lo and behold, a guided motorbike tour was advertised for the very next morning. We signed up and joined *Harry's Bike Tours* in Gmund along with six German riders. We were the back markers, probably because Harry could see our orange bike in the distance and we eventually covered over 200 miles on paved roads. I had checked first that we would not be on unpaved surfaces. It was a terrific and well-organised day with a coffee stop in a chocolate-making shop, lunch, photo opportunities and a souvenir at the end. The actual tour

Riding by Hochosterwitz Castle



Our cultural activities included visiting a Marc Chagall exhibition and the Porsche Museum, both in Gmund.

And so we headed northwards again, travelling through Obertauern towards Radstadt, Schladming and then Ramsau. We had to stop to photograph four statues, or as the Austrians describe it, a monument, to the Beatles in Obertauern. The group filmed *Help!* here almost 60 years ago, staying in the hotel behind the statues. It is hard to recognise who is who but photographs taken from the film reveal from left to right that it's: George, Paul, John, and Ringo.





Entertainment in Austria included a local oompah band on Thursday and dancing and singing Austrian-style to another group on Friday evening but nothing after the Awards ceremony on Saturday. Friday saw a self-guided tour called a 'Dice Tour'. There were four stops — one for a photograph, two to play a game of dice and the final one, a timed completion of a jigsaw of Austria back at the campsite. It was another hot day riding to Fortshau, Jagersee and Filzmoos, admiring the scenery and mountains all around us. After all the dancing, it had been a very lively day.

The Parade of Nations was a hot and sunny event and as it turned out, was only a short ride around neighbouring hamlets. I think there may have been a hiccup somewhere. Johnny and I flew the flag again and Helen & Mick and Dave & Jenny joined us. We then decided to ride a few hair-pin bends up the road to the Dachsteinbahn. This was a toll road in very bad condition and we told the lady so when we paid our €6. We got the full whys and wherefores from our B&B host later. We didn't take the cable car ride to the very top but enjoyed a beer and apple strudel with cream under the shade of a restaurant's umbrella.

Saturday's Awards evening was another lively event containing some innovative items. It started with a video of the *1st International GoldWing Morning Exercise* in which 24 people from seven nations walked up the 600 steps of the nearby ski jump at 7am that morning. It was great fun to watch and a

well done goes to Big John for participating. As the awards were presented, the often dreary country national anthems were replaced with rock and pop music. It made for an enthusiastic atmosphere. GWOCGB were placed 8th with nine bikes. There had been great rivalry over the three Treffens between Italy and France but it was to be Turkish delight in Austria when the country came out top. The actual Award was an innovation too – a 2025 calendar with photos of GoldWings against a backdrop of winter and summer views of mountains.

We talked to Martin Reitstatter and his wife Katherine who are both good friends with Capital members. Martin is the longest-serving Inter-rep in GWEF having notched up a brilliant 28 years in the role. The couple now have different priorities in their lives and it is said that Martin is stepping down. We wish them both well for the future.

And so after three Treffens, it was time for us to head home. No German Treffen because that weekend clashed with something else in London. As we headed north towards Salzburg and Munich with an overnight stop in Stuttgart, the skies turned cloudy and thundery. The heat had dissipated and a strong storm was coming. It also happened to be England playing in the Euros that night. The team scraped through to win and I hope the weather wasn't a metaphor for their final performance.

We travelled through France in similar bad weather conditions but at least the ferry was on time and all was well when we arrived home. We had covered almost 3,000 miles in 22 days and the good, old bike had ticked over 111,111 miles on her clock, not bad for a 20 year old.

Happy and safe travels wherever they may take you but remember that Yetti is the Real Ale Bar Manager and Big John with Helen Perkins the Main Bar Manager at the British Treffen in Oakham so we all look forward to seeing you and imbibing then.

Miss (Helen) Whiplash