



CAPITAL WINGS



My thanks go to Yetti and Ginny for writing a very full and entertaining report of their summer holiday with Gold Wing friends.

On 3rd June six Moles - Chris and Jo, Al and Kerrie and us, Yetti and Ginny - started our trip to Lake Garda in Italy. What could go wrong?

Day one was the shuttle to Calais, then onward to our first hotel near Mons, Belgium, easy peasy. Up and away next day, no rain - strange? Next stop was a hotel in a very pretty town called Eguisheim in the Alsace region of France. About 30 miles from the hotel (with Chris and Jo leading, Al and Kerrie in the middle and us at the tail end), we came to a roundabout and Al was looking at the tyres on his outfit as best he could whilst sitting on the bike. He then turned off and stopped. "Think I've got a puncture", he said but looking around the bike couldn't see any flat tyres - very odd. Al took it up the road, came back and said the sidecar wheel was making a strange noise.

Out came the tools, sidecar wheel came off, to find the pads on the sidecar had worn away and had slipped down. Luckily enough he had a spare set in the sidecar, so the pads were changed, wheel back on and off we went. Got to the hotel where Chris and Jo were awaiting our arrival. By the way, the town of Eguisheim is definitely worth a visit.



Sidecare Repair

Next day, it was up and away to our next hotel in Reutte, Austria. Another worthwhile visit - a small little place just on the edge of the Austrian Tyrol with a 400-odd meter long pedestrian suspension bridge. Unfortunately, we didn't have time to go up there because the bar was open!

Our next day took us through the Tyrol mountains and the Brenner Pass and an amazing journey down towards Lake Garda. The day was getting very hot and the journey, down the side of the lake through some very narrow tunnels caught us in a bit of traffic as it was a Saturday, all ended up making the bikes and us very hot.

The accommodation for the week was a newly-renovated three-bedroom property in Toscolano-Maderno - all ensuite bedrooms and air-conditioned throughout and just a short walk to the lake and bars/restaurants. Our week there was full of fun. We never used the bikes much as the ferry boats were good value for money and the best way to see all around Lake Garda.



Lunch at Lake Garda

One of our trips out on the bikes was to Strada della Forra. Sir Winston Churchill called this road the eighth wonder of the world and he was right. What a road to ride. It's only been made one way over the last couple of years as it is so, so narrow in places. Al's outfit only just fitted - ask Kerrie who was sitting in the sidecar! It's a must-do road if you are in the area. Have a look at this website <https://www.stradadellaforra.com>.



Strada della Forra

After that, we rode down to another beautiful town called Salo. We walked along to the large square to find lots of things going on - a marquee up and lots of little flags saying '1000 Miglia'. We found out that we had stumbled across a classic car rally which had started back in 1927 and until 1957 was an endurance race but was now a rally starting in Brescia then to Rome and back to Brescia with over 400 classic cars navigating the Italian landscape. Once they started to come in we could not leave as the roads were closed to all but the classic cars. So we had over three hours there watching the old cars - Bugatti, Mercedes Gull Wings, Jaguar, Ferrari, Fiat and many more in the perfect setting of Lake. Search for Mille Miglia for more information.



Mille Miglia 2026

The next afternoon there was a massive storm with high winds near Verona and with hail stones the size of golf balls smashing cars and anything else in the way. We had torrential rain and a few small hail stones but luckily we were not on the bikes.

And before you knew it, we were packing, ready to leave homeward bound. Our first stop on the way was in Switzerland. Another very hot ride, the old 1200 was suffering with the heat and after going through one of the many tunnels, she decided to backfire a couple of times and Al behind me said there were flames coming out the back! My memory jumped back to FUBAR. (I have since found out that the choke on number 2 cylinder was stuck open).

A bit worried as the next tunnel was the Gotthard tunnel which is nearly 11 miles long, we were sweating a bit as we approached it, but the old girl made it to the next hotel. A bit of a strange hotel, we had a great meal and a couple of beers and Al was watching Switzerland play in the World Cup.

Next day we rode to the next hotel which was an Ibis in Nancy - a pretty long day in the saddle so an air con room was very welcome. Then the following day, onward to our last hotel of the holiday, a Best Western near Saint Quentin. But with hot weather, the old 1200 had a different idea just near Saint Dizier. We were overtaking a lorry on the motorway when there was a loud bang and coolant flying everywhere and over us from the bike. Luckily, we weren't burnt and I managed to pull to the side of the motorway safely. Fortunately, we had just passed a sign for Saint Dizier that was only about a mile away so I decided to go for it and get off the road. Not long after we had got off the motorway, the temperature hit the top so I knew it was game over from then on. We told the others to carry on to the last hotel because where we had stopped just happened to be another Ibis hotel - literally just yards away. How lucky was that.

At the hotel we started to get in contact with the AA to see what they could do. They sent out a flatbed trailer to take the Wing to a Honda shop but the shop didn't open until Tuesday. I put our tales of woe on Facebook and Rob a.k.a. Buzz said he could come and pick us up in his van - this was over 300 miles each way from his house. After talking to the AA again, they said if they couldn't get the bike fixed they would have to repatriate but it could take up to eight weeks. That was not an option for us so I took up Buzz's kind offer, and he booked the shuttle for Tuesday morning and he was at our hotel by 4.30pm in the afternoon.



Old Girl Recovered

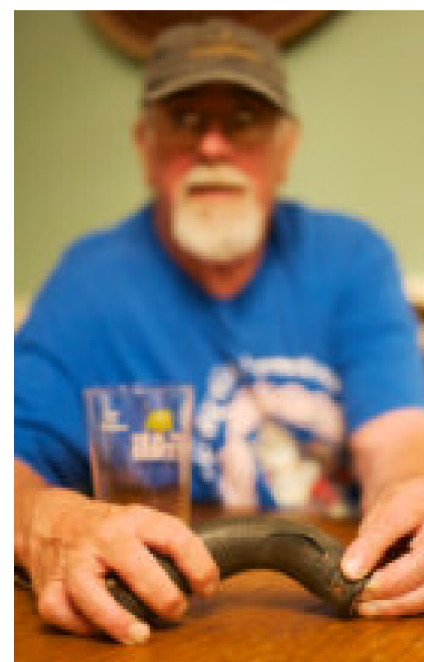
We loaded up the bike in the van and retired to the restaurant for a well-earned feast for him and a couple of Cokes as he doesn't drink alcohol. Next morning after breakfast we started the trip back to the shuttle and home. Yet another hot day but Buzz's 'Recovery van' had air con so it was very comfortable. Arriving at the shuttle, we booked in and they never even bothered to look inside the van. We arrived home late evening and unloaded the bike into my garage and said our farewells to our Mole in shining armour. At the end of the day Buzz had driven 638 miles to pick us up.



Buzz Lightyear to the Rescue

We cannot thank Buzz enough as we believe the 1200 would still be sitting somewhere now in France. This is what our great club GWOCGB is all about: friendship and people who go the extra mile to help other Wingers out.

I pulled the 1200 apart the next day to find a split top hose on the radiator. I searched online and found an original top hose at HGB, so jumped on the CX 500 and went to pick it up. The 1200 was back together again by the weekend ready for the Essex Wing Ding the next weekend. After another very hot ride to the Wing Ding, the 1200 started getting hot again so I knew there was something else wrong. It was a slow ride home stopping every now and then to let the bike cool down. On the following Monday, I pulled the cylinder heads off to find a head gasket had gone as well. I'm not a stranger to doing head gaskets - I have done one in a field in Switzerland many years ago!



Yetti with is Split Hose

It's what the Wings are made of - for travelling - so get out there and do it. You will not regret it. Even if you have a few small problems, it is all part of the big adventure. Now to get the 1200 finally fixed as we have got the British Treffen coming up and 12 days away on holiday in Switzerland in September.

You can imagine that when Yetti first announced his 1200 breakdown on Facebook and also the Moles WhatsApp group he received much sympathy but also some wisecracks to make everyone laugh. Yetti was suggesting that he might complain to Honda because the bike was only 42 years old, but others said: "Well done Buzz, call to duty above and beyond", "Buzz Lightyear to the rescue", "Buzz Rescue is definitely a 10-star service: International Rescue", and "Only goes to prove not all heroes wear capes". Whilst some joker said: "I blame the shoddy mechanic that looks after it", everyone praised Buzz: "You have done the Club and your friends proud", "Our Mole in shining armour", and "Goldwing friends are just the best". Buzz responded with a cool: "Can't see a Mole stranded" and "It was a pleasure to help".



Welcome

Johnny and myself were day visitors, and other Capital members were weekenders, at the Essex Wing Ding in Witham on 25-28 June.

With temperatures nearly hitting 40°C, it was a steamy and energy-sapping place to be but the organisation was brilliant and Dave (Essex Rep), Bev, Colin, Phil, Liz, Rocky and the other Essex members are to be congratulated for a very successful weekend. All the usual elements were there - run outs, a quiz night, food, the bar and a live band on Saturday evening and not forgetting, the ice cream van. He was welcomed with open arms when a rush of people queued up on Saturday afternoon for a '99' or 'Bunny Ears' or 'Oyster' or something more exotic in a cup dripping with chocolate and nuts.



Mr Softee

Dave introduced the Awards presentation with the fact that the last Essex Wing Ding was nine years ago so well done to everyone for resurrecting what hopefully will become a regular event. The other facts were: 13 Regions represented, 62 inscriptions and 10 day visitors. There was a tie for the biggest Regional turnout with six inscriptions apiece. The deciding factor, quite rightly, was number of bikes vs. number of motorhomes and with this, Norfolk was the winner and Capital the runner-up. The award for Furthest Travelled went to John from Avon, Best Bike was Del and Linda's and Joe from Norfolk won Best Trike. Here are the winners, with Trevor collecting the Region prize.



Essex Wing Ding Winners

The evening finished with more music and a beautiful sunset. Very apt for a terrific Wing Ding.



Essex Sunset

Some more good news saw Dani graduate from Middlesex University in June. She achieved a BA in Primary Education and we wish her every success in her career as she goes on to teach three to 11 year olds.

Diary date: Saturday 26 September - Margaret's Tea Party in aid of Macmillan in Witham from 2pm. Fun, games and lots of delicious food.

Enjoy the rest of the summer and see you in Abingdon.

Miss (Helen) Whiplash