



CAPITAL WINGS



As our hot summer draws to a close, it's great to hear about the adventures our Moles have had particularly at Treffens across Europe.

I'm delighted that our roving Mole from Suffolk, Hilary Whitehouse, has written about her experience of travelling to, and participating at, the Polish Treffen. Here's her report:

Some time ago a group of us decided to do a road trip which would include several Treffens, the first being the Polish Treffen, followed by the Slovenian, Austrian and German. This year's event would be held at Gdow, Danki Kurter Port - a distance of about 941 miles (1,514km) from Calais - so clearly, we needed some overnight stops to break up the journey. The group comprised of myself & Nigel, Tony & Helen, Bob & Dawn, Colin and Rob & Shaz. We met at the Channel Tunnel terminal having already travelled from our respective homes.

Tanks filled and coffees grabbed, our first stop would be Aalter in Belgium, just a short run of 79 miles (127km). A lovely meal and a few beers finished the day off nicely.

The next day we headed for Hannover, Germany around 324 miles (521km). An uneventful journey until demolition Dawn took it upon herself to attack the toilet barrier when it didn't accept her money. Alarms blaring, shouty shop assistants got very animated and the area was promptly taped off and put out of bounds. Meanwhile, Bob tried everything to avoid paying for a wee at service stations but was unsuccessful. Gone are the days of spending a penny!

We arrived at our hotel only to find there was no food available on a Sunday. Maccy D's to the rescue. We were that hungry even the dead flattened rat nearby didn't put us off eating there!

Our journey continued to Boleslawiec around 303 miles (488km) just over the border into Poland and a change of currency.

The Polish zloty is now the official currency, but touristy areas would accept the Euro. £10 equates to about 50.84 Polish zloty.

We ended up in a quirky hotel which interestingly was next to the asylum (who picked this place?). The traditional menu caused a little tummy disturbance for some.



Quirky Polish Hotel

Finally, a steady run to our destination Kurter Port 251 miles (404km) away. This new purpose-built campsite was a great surprise with new showers, toilets, restaurants and bars. The focal point was a large, impressive lake attracting wildlife - gorgeous.



Polish Treffen Site

Unfortunately, the dirt track around the site was disappointingly gravelly, lumpy and precarious on a bike. This didn't go down well as we were all battling with the hot weather.

So tents were pitched, and it was then time to chill out and orientate ourselves around the site. Which bar or restaurant to go to first? As the night fell, strangely you could hear all the frogs croaking in the lake or was that the Polish vodka making me think that?!!

This is when Nigel noticed his first tiny yellow rubber duck planted in the pocket of his bike jeans, but he said nothing although his suspicions were raised. The ducks were starting to appear everywhere but who was doing this prank? To be continued.....

The party was underway in the Polish Party tent with some 80's classics and the girls enjoyed some groovy dance moves. You can never get enough of Boney M! Meanwhile, the guys watched the England versus Croatia football game in the World Cup and some of them even stayed conscious.

After exhausting the goody stalls and ladies' embroidery shops (a bonus), we had a ride out to the historic city of Krakow. What a stunning city with its beautiful buildings, enormous medieval town square and market. Horse cart rides were available for those who didn't want to negotiate the cobbled streets.



Krakow Town Square



Krakow Ride

In spite of the gorgeous hot weather all week, by Saturday we had rain, so the Parade of Nations had to be cancelled but the Awards ceremony still went ahead as planned. We are proud to announce that GB came first in the Awards for furthest travelled bikes, followed by Ukraine and Italy. Our own Bob Simpson won the prize for the most experienced rider (oldest) and best combo.

Once the Treffen was over, sadly Bob and Dawn had to make their way home due to work commitments whilst the rest of the group travelled to Vienna for a few days prior to joining the Slovenian Treffen.



Happy GB Friends in Poland

Meanwhile Johnny and I have skipped the southern and eastern Europe Treffens this year and have headed north instead to participate in the Scandinavian Tour. At the time of writing this report, we have just crossed the border from Norway into Sweden having completed the Polar Nordkapp section of the Tour and with GB coming in third place at the Finnish Treffen in Muonio and second at the Norwegian in Namsos. The intrepid explorers who made it all the way to Finland were Graham, Stuart, Colin, Trike John, Chris & Carole, Bob & Sonya and Johnny & me.

We have already covered well over 2,000 miles from London to Gäddede in Sweden. We have crossed the Arctic Circle into Lapland and reindeer country. Fortunately we didn't hit any on the road although it was odd to see them on the fjord beaches in Norway.

We were on the road every day either as part of getting to the Treffens or on the organised Tour, so photo opportunities have been few. Finding flat, non-gravelly stops on the road are difficult but everyone's 360 cameras have been flat out.

Santa handed out the Awards in Finland and Helen didn't get to sit on his knee but got a cuddle from him instead.



Helen meets Santa

He really does exist! Some people were even heard to tell Santa what they wanted for Christmas.

It was very strange to have a ceremony in brilliant sunshine outside at 9pm at night but then it didn't get dark. We didn't need our eye masks to get to sleep though.

It's been good to catch up with old friends and meet new ones too both from the UK and Europe. The Finns and Norwegians were very hospitable and generous.



View from Alta, Norway

We've skied in Alta, Utah so were pleasantly surprised to find another Alta in Europe. Here's the view. More European stories to follow at another time

Miss (Helen) Whiplash