

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION LONDON to BERLIN CYCLE RIDE 22nd-30th MAY NEWSLETTER No1



Day 1 May 22

London to Calais 82.6 Miles

Arrived Hyde Park Corner, we laid a wreath at the war memorial. Set off at 8.15 traffic heavy, a lot of stopping at junctions to get out of London. Stopped in Chatham for sandwiches. Roads good through to Canterbury, A2 down to Dover, tough slog, hot and fast traffic. Arrived in Dover 3.30 motorbike escort had problems starting, got the 4.45 ferry very heavy sea mist in Calais rode to hotel, arrived at 8.30

Day 2 May 23

Calais to Leper 57.7 Miles

Set off at 8.45 quiet country roads & sunny ride to Wormhout, we met the local cycle club then visited the memorial site of a barn where over 100 British troops were taken prisoner then massacred by SS troops. We laid a wreath.



Rode on to meet the mayor and had lunch. On to Leper, arrived at 3.30 got cleaned up then went on a battle field tour, we saw where the front lines were and an advanced dressing station, the first gas attack area, a British and a German cemetery where we laid a wreath. We saw the memorial stone of where Harry Patch was stationed at a machine gun post when he was shelled and wounded and the rest of his gun crew all killed. I laid a remembrance cross on the stone.



Returned Leper and at 8pm took part in the daily ceremony at the Menin Gate Paul our standard bearer paraded the standard and we laid a wreath. The last post was played then a piper played, then reveille. The day had an intense poignancy about it and left me feeling very moved by the events.



Day 3 May 24

Leper to Mechelen 86.7 Miles

Left Leper at 8.15 sunny & good roads to Oudenaarde had lunch beside a cycle museum. A member of the local cycle club took us on a canal side route out of the town. Lots of road works, lost touch with support van. We accidentally rode through a cycle competition and across the finish line to much amusement from the locals. In the next village was a classic street fair and stalls. Arrived at Mechelen at 5. Supper by the canal very warm evening.



Day 4 May 25

Mechelen to Rheindahlen 90 Miles

Set out at 7.45 Continued through Belgium. Cycle paths plentiful but concrete and ridges every 10ft so rather bumpy after many miles. Rode through Holland and into Germany. Had a lot of navigation problems, road works, roads that either bikes or support van were not allowed on! Stopped at a Café for Spaghetti lunch.



Rode on to The Army base at Rheindahlen, the accommodation was good but basic! During the afternoon my left Achilles tendon was aching and

rather painful. Chris has not got used to unclipping from his pedals, he keeps falling off when he stops!



Day 5 May 26

Rheindahlen to Gutersloh 133.4 Miles

Set off at 7.45 overcast cooler, good cycling but after an hour my ankle pain has spread to my whole foot so I took the decision to rest it for the day and help navigate from the support van. It started raining on and off, also this was the longest day, arrived at Gutersloh at 7.45 a very long and tough day for the cyclists.

Day 6 May 27

Gutersloh to Peine 102.1 Miles

Started at 7.45 I decided to give my ankle another try, I took lots of pain killers, Ibuprofen etc. It went well and although it was aching most of the day it went ok. Today there were the 2 steepest hills of the ride. The roads were good but still many detours because of access problems. All adds to the fun!

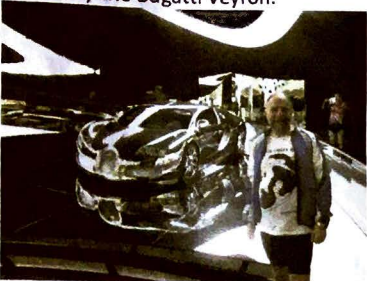
Day 7 May 28

Peine to Tangermunde 91.8 Miles

Some of the bikes needed some repairs so by the time we were ready we set off at 8.30 good ride through the morning. At lunch time we came into Wolfsburg. We visited the Volkswagen Autostade by the factory.



It is the most amazing centre, a vast exhibition hall and other exhibits. Especially the Bugatti Veyron.



The rest of the day was a good ride, we passed from west to east Germany, we noticed the change in the type of buildings at once. Newer buildings though are more like any German style. Had a well needed break for coffee and cake in the afternoon then on to Tangermunde.



This is a beautiful place there is much restoration being done, also many classic old buildings. We saw 4 storks nesting on top of chimneys in the town, the town is

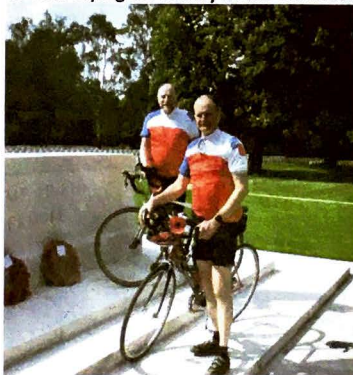
on the edge of the Elbe river, a large fast flowing river.



Day 8 May 29

Tangermunde to Berlin 80.5 Miles

We have been going 1 week! A nice sunny morning and the roads were good but still several sudden no cycles allowed and no cycle path! So diversions aplenty. One puncture this morning but not too long a delay. Lunch time we started to come through the suburbs of Berlin. We cycled through an old East German military base that is now standing derelict. Had lunch at a Pizza restaurant. Cycled on to the Spandau/Heer Stasse Cemetery, we met local members of the British Legion and held a service and wreath laying ceremony in the Cemetery.



Then on to the Brandenburg Gate, just before the Gate we were in the middle again of a cycle finish, this time it was the finish line for the velothon being held the next day.



Next stop the actual finish line at the Brandenburg Gate



One final ceremony to complete our trip and we rode on to Neue Wache the site of the memorial to Victims of War and Tyranny in Berlin. Here we laid another wreath.



Well what a ride a total of 725 miles over 8 day. A trip I will remember forever. Great cycling and a challenge to accomplish. The company was fantastic we all shared our ups and downs encouraged each other and had a good laugh, so much so that my sides actually ached from the laughter when we finished.

May 30 The Final day Sight seeing! We visited a remaining part of the Berlin Wall, the Reichstag and of course Check Point Charlie!

Total Mileage 725 Miles.

Next instalment, the 300 miles to Paris in September.

Thank you to all who have kindly supported the Royal British Legion by sponsoring me. So far I have just reached £2000 and still going.

If you haven't and would like to do so, go to www.bmycharity.com/richardbarsley or send your donation to: Poppy ride, 16 Commercial Road, Paddock Wood, TN12 6EJ.