

THE BEECH LEAF

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF
CTC SOUTH BUCKS



Croce Domini Pass, en route to Venice

Passo Baremore
1450 m

NOVEMBER 2016

THE BEECH LEAF - NOVEMBER 2016

FROM THE LONDON EYE TO VENICE WITH GLOBAL BIKE ADVENTURES REPORTS EDWIN WHITAKER

On the 22nd September I joined another supported cycling holiday at the London Eye. There were 23 in our group, including Barbara and Jamie, who coincidentally live in Highfield Way, Rickmansworth, where I lived until 1982. Also present was Willemyn de Haan, who I met in Italy in May 2015. The first day's ride took us through South London to the market town of Lewes.

On the following morning we left early to get to Newhaven, in order to catch the 9.00 am ferry to Dieppe. (We had to be at the terminal at 7.30 am.) However, some of our group had found that some lights and tools had been stolen at the White Hart. Leaving Dieppe behind, we headed to the Avenue Verte, which is based on the former railway line that ran from Dieppe to Paris. Created in 2012, it gradually climbs towards Gournay-en Bray, with some of the signalling infrastructure still in place.

On the next day we rode through rural France to Poissy, a western suburb of Paris. We followed the valley of the Seine for some of the way, which rather strangely has chalk cliffs overlooking the river in places. There are a number of

medieval donjons in the region, such as the one above La Roche canyon, and the one in the centre of Chateau Gaillard at Les Andelys (see picture, from t'Interweb).



Unfortunately Angela Adam's holiday came to a premature end when she fell off her cycle, bruising her ribs and breaking one of the bones in her forearm.

Sunday was spent cycling through Paris en route to Provins, our first wet day. We passed through St Germain-en-Laye, which was where Parmentier introduced to the French what would eventually become French Fries. Due to the rain, we had a number of falls; fortunately without major injuries. Provins has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2001, due to its medieval fairs and its architecture.

On the next morning we moved on again, initially with some mist; eventually ending up at two hotels at Dolancourt and Jaucourt, some five miles apart. The hotel at Dolancourt was a converted watermill with its wheel lit up for our stay. Again we crossed the Seine, at Nogent-sur-Seine, which has a nuclear power station (opened in 1981) run by EDF, and the exhaust is visible for many miles as its twin cooling towers are 165 metres high. Later, we passed through Troyes, the departmental capital of the Aube, which has many beautiful half-timbered buildings. Fairly close to Dolancourt is the village of Spoy, which has a two-arched Roman bridge.

On September 27th our group left the hotels, to ride to Bourbonne-les-Bains, which is a thermal spa near the source of the river Meuse. South east of Jaucourt is Clairvaux Abbey, which Victor Hugo visited in 1834. It was the inspiration for 'Les Miserables', published in 1862. Some of the building is still used as a high-security prison. The Romans were aware of Bourbonne's hot springs, which reach 62°C. The spa has over 11,000 visitors each year. During the day we had to gain some height as we crossed the Triassic limestone Langres plateau. We passed through Colombey-les-Deux Eglises, which has a 145 foot tall Cross of Lorraine on the western edge, commemorating that Charles de Gaulle lived and died in the village.

The 28th September was spent cycling to Belfort, passing through Le Corbusier's chapel at Ronchamp. It was a peaceful day apart from the low flying military jets near Breuches.

The following day was dry, clear and cool as we headed to Rheinfelden, following the course of the Rhone-Rhine canal to where it joins the Rhine near Basle, and much of it was tranquil riding. The canal was first planned in 1784, but opened 50 years later. There were changes made in 1960 with the opening of the enlarged Kembs-Niffer section, and the closure of the section from Boofzheim to Mulhouse. This was also the day that Deborah Saville's bottom bracket failed, but luckily the next day was a rest day at Rheinfelden, and she was able to get a new one fitted.

On the rest day, Sharon and Tony Yaxley went on a boat cruise to Basle. Rheinfelden has two parts, on opposite sides of the Rhine, connected by a 19th century covered wooden bridge.



The bridge was painted by Turner in 1802 and John Ruskin in 1848 (they painted pictures of it, rather than painting the bridge itself?). It was destroyed by fire in 1897 (see photo), and the modern replacement dates from 1912.

Next morning, we crossed the Rhine to head upstream to Neuhausen. There was a T junction at 10.4 miles, and nearby was one of Giles Gilbert Scott's K2 telephone boxes. Some 6 miles to the south-west of Neuhausen is the municipality of Rheinau. Nearby was Rheinau Abbey, used by Global Bike Adventures to illustrate the introductory page on their website of the Rhine tour. The abbey dates from 778AD and grew until the Protestant reformation in 1529. It was restarted in 1532 and became a centre for the counter-reformation. It closed in 1862, and the buildings were later used as a cantonal hospital, a nursing home, and in 2000, a psychiatric clinic. It is now empty.

On Sunday we cycled from Switzerland into Germany, ending up in Bregenz. Once more I passed through Meersburg. When Graham passed through, he turned left and ended up 12 miles from Neuhausen, and had to phone Steve to be picked up. Steve did wonder if Graham's Garmin was at fault, as it gave no warning that he was off course.

Monday was spent following the Rhine's upper valley and nearly all of a tributary valley (the river Landquart) to Davos. The last 12 miles were the hardest. Despite the presence of busy main roads, much of the cycling was on minor roads and cycle paths.

Next morning dawned bright and cold, with snow in close proximity to the Fluela Pass (2383 m/7818 feet). I chose not to cycle as I was fighting off a cold and was now finding the cycling very hard. Having descended from the pass, David Hatcham was not wearing trousers and ended up getting very cold. Sharon saw him like this and told him to put his hands in hot water in a cafe in Zernez. We continued south-east, via the Munt la Schera tunnel into Italy, to the small settlement of Livigno, which has special tax-free status (note that income tax is still paid here). The final part was to cross the Forcola di Livigno (2315 m/7595 feet) to end up at Le Prese.



Tuesday was spent riding to Breno, which meant crossing the Aprica Pass (about 1200 m), linking the Valtellina (which leads to Lake Como) to the Val Camonica. A little later, we rode through Corteno Golgi, birthplace of Camillo Golgi (1843 to 1926), a notable Italian who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1906. He was so famous; his birthplace was renamed in his honour.

Next day, we continued to Torbole on Lake Garda. It started with a very hard, unrelenting ascent to the

top of the Croce Domini Pass (4000 feet of ascent in 12 miles; 1892 m/6207 feet), which is also used by the Giro d'Italia. Near the summit was a dusting of snow. There were also shepherds getting sheep into vehicles to move them to lower slopes. Tony Digson and I had to walk for about two miles until the tarmac was clear of snow, although there were occasional clear patches in the sun. Sharon's husband Tony found that he had cold hands, so, stopping to talk to a motorcyclist, he put his hands on the engine to warm them. To complete the ride, Global Bike Adventures had to put all the cycles into the support vehicles as there was a long tunnel where cycling was not permitted (having a lot of motor vehicles going through it).

On the final Thursday was a ride from Torbole to Vicenza, via some of the middle valley of the Adige. We had to pass through Rovereto, followed by a 16 mile climb, which passed the Hermitage of St. Columban. This is a monastery built into the side of a cliff face. Construction started in AD 753 and finished in 1319. The only access is by a staircase of 102 steps, carved into the dolomite.



The last day's cycling was to ride from Vicenza to Mestre, a few miles from Venice. Vicenza is a thriving cosmopolitan city with a rich history and many places of interest. It has been on the UNESCO World Heritage site list since 1994, due to the Palladian villas Olympic Theater (see picture) in the area. There are 23 buildings dating from the 16th century that were designed by Andrea

Palladio in Vicenza. He was born in Padova in 1508 and died at Maser, near Treviso, in 1580. Mestre is the centre and most populated area of the mainland of Venice.

Thank you to everyone involved in making the holiday so enjoyable.

GOLDEN BEECHES 2016

REPORTS JOHN CAPPELL

South Bucks CTC organized its annual Golden Beeches Rally on the weekend of 21st to 23rd October at St Leonards Parish Hall. About 50 folk attended, 40 of whom were visitors from other CTC groups. As usual we had a sizeable contingent from the Midlands, (Derby, Notts and Leicestershire CTC and from South West London CTC. The furthest travelled was from Carlisle and Holland! The weather was excellent, a bit foggy at first on the Saturday morning, but brightening up during the course of the weekend and superb on the Sunday,