

Ulysses club International meet at Saarland 2014. Pillion Prattle.

My memory of last year's trip was the pouring rain. This year there was barely a shower and lots and lots of sunshine, almost too hot at times. Last year a group of 9 left GB, this year there were 17 of us. We met again at the Pier hotel in Harwich for fish and chips and the overnight ferry. It was impressive in that we had representatives from Cornwall, the North West, the Midlands and Norfolk as well as North and South of London and Hampshire.



The first problem was waiting for Eric and Jean, whom we have not yet met, who said they had booked but did not appear. We texted them and learned that a recent op meant that sadly they had to cry off. The next problem was that Bob's bike did not start at the entrance to the ferry. He waited for the AA and learned that it was alternator problems. He cut his losses and went to relatives overnight and then got a transporter home. The overnight ferry was delayed and the next day we set out later than we would have hoped and had to make our way past Rotterdam traffic, and then past the glass

houses and dykes of Holland. Belgium looked lovely in the sunshine and Germany continued to shine for us. Fourteen of us on 9 bikes crossed Europe. However it's a long slog across the European plain on motorways.



We arrived in late afternoon to be greeted by friends from Germany and Switzerland and France and then introduced to many new friends. These included members from Australia and Norway. It was difficult to gauge numbers as some German members came one night and others the next night. This time the German Ulysses club hosted some GB members for which we were very grateful. It was lovely to see friendships emerge from this which I am sure will

continue. Others stayed nearby at a hotel and John was able to join us from France. My particular memory of this year's gathering was that we were on the club's home territory and this provided a very relaxed and welcoming atmosphere that we all enjoyed.

In the evenings we met up at the Ulysses Club DE Stammtisch spot at Eppelborn. More like a hunting lodge with food and bar. We enjoyed good food and drink once we worked out how to buy a ticket for so many Euros, and cross off what we drank. It worked! However I encountered a problem when I asked a young blonde girl with a pony tail for a white wine. She came back a few minutes later to check out exactly what sort of wine I wanted. Then two blonde young ladies with ponytails appeared, with two glasses of wine. I had not realised that they were different people!



The first night we were welcomed by Club President Gernot and he asked people to sign up in 6 different groups and they wanted us to mix up the nationalities. We had different coloured ribbons to denote which group and we stayed in those groups the next day. They provided a leader and back marker. In view of the numbers we could not go as a group altogether. We were asked to bring/ make picnics. Again it is difficult for many places to cater for such a large number of people without delays. Picnics worked well especially as our leaders had large kuchen boxes stashed in their top boxes to add to the picnic. Excellent cake making and many thanks.



The next day we met up at a local church car park, some where large enough to hold such a large number of bikes, a guesstimate of at least 50 plus, and many pillion riders.

The 6 groups were sent off at intervals, again to avoid congestion and risk of collision. Basically the first day went from Saarland to the Moselle and did a round trip back.

We stopped at various other places en route including Berncastel and Wildaburg castle and Piersport and Neumagen.

The trip was varied, winding up and down the sides of the valleys with lovely hairpins and then flat stretches of vineyards and rivers. It was a long day but nonetheless very successful. We had a picnic lunch and a stroll in Berncastel and it was hot! Going to the toilet set in a cave was a cool relief.

I learned new words in German to the gist of 'numb arse', which was a common problem. I think the translation was a little vulgar!

Sadly there was an unpredicted collision at temporary road works causing some very tender ribs and an injured bike.



In the evening we were treated to Ulysses member Christophe's group Ipress, which played 60s blues and rock. I thought they did a brilliant job including a great rendition of Tales of brave Ulysses by Cream. Well done.

We also had a series of speeches from the presidents of Germany, Switzerland and Great Britain to mark the occasion and to thank the Germans for acting as hosts once again.

Another special occasion was that we signed up two Scottish members so they are now on the GB map and naturally they paid in Scottish pound notes!



On the second day many of the pillion passengers decided to have a break, after several long days rides, and this left the drivers to enjoy the freedom of their bike. This second day's circuit went towards St Wendel and the upland area towards Pfalz. Pillion passengers enjoyed the chance to stay in their host's home, in the sunshine and some had a lie in, sketched, sunbathed, picked and ate cherries, walked through forests and hugged trees and went dog walking through the trees! Some of us enjoyed Wally's pizza restaurant and the chance to chat and recover. Great ways to recover from the journey and the heat!

Again in the evening we were back at the club house but this time starting our farewells and thanks.



It was sad to say goodbye but we know that this will not be the end and look forward to several Germans and Australians coming to the GB AGM shortly. The Swiss are tentatively suggesting a meeting in Switzerland in two years and who knows what next year will bring? Club members came to see us off and the usual biker envy and playtime came out.

Many thanks to all those involved in organising the events for us which were excellent and a very enjoyable meet. We parted company and the GB Ulysses lead by John drove towards France via the Vosges and onwards to the French High Alps near Chatel. See next instalment.

Mrs Vanamonde

