

## Spain/France Bikers Trip September 1<sup>st</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> 2006

### Friday 1<sup>st</sup> September:

- Roger arrived at Peter's at 4.30, and panic set in, as Inez was having trouble fitting on his Thunderbird with the loaded panniers though in practice all fitted. well
- Met everyone else, apart from Amanda at Fleet services at 5'o'clock.
- Headed towards Portsmouth. Edward was already taking pictures with his camera. Lost one of his gloves on the way down too.
- Arrived at Portsmouth docks, where Amanda waited on her RIII + side car.
- Inez dropped her helmet twice, much to Peter's annoyance.



- Signed in, and waited in the queue for at least 1.5 hours/2 hours. Whilst waiting we all had a giggle at Giles's attempt to make his BMW into a Triumph, with small stickers saying 'Triumph' which he himself placed on the tank.....
- Men worried that their bikes weren't safe enough tied up to the boat, but were assured by staff.
- Signed in on designated deck to receive key to room. Dropped bags and gear off, and change.
- Nick, Ed, 2mPete, Peter, Bill, Roger, Inez and Amanda all met at deck 7, all starving, had a drink whilst waiting for Mick, Giles, and Graham to arrive. Little did we realise, they were already in the restaurant stuffing their faces. It was about 9.30, 10 o'clock at the time.
- Dinner eaten and we headed to the Silverstone nightclub area, to drink and socialise.
- Shortly after, Amanda, Roger and both Pete's went off to their beds.
- Inez, Nick, Edward and Giles explored the cold, windy top deck to look out to sea. Ed was dared by Giles to climb the boats big funnel & successfully got half way.
- Giles departed to bed and we sat in the Silverstone bar and continued to drink and watch people dance. After a few more drinks, Nick couldn't restrain himself anymore, and got up to dance. Ed and Inez followed. Mick then came by and joined in, only to have a woman try to nick his sandals.
- Mick, Graham and Bill had been gambling all this time. Bill mentioned he had blown about £40!
- At 3.30 we were being kicked out of the club, and headed to bed.

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September:

- Everyone woke up at different times.
- Bill was not seen until after midday. Same with Mick, although he had already got up early for breakfast, and gone back to bed.
- Nick, Ed, Roger, Pete and Giles were sat on Deck 7 around a small table talking. It had been noticed that Giles did not look his usual self. A pale grey, sweaty face he had. Giles then stood up with 2 sick bags, which he managed to puke in, and walked away, swaying everywhere because of the boat, and held the bags as far away from himself as possible. The others laughed and looked on & wondered why Giles was disappearing into the restaurant with his 2 bags.
- Inez, Nick, Edward, Roger and 2m Pete explored the rest of the boat. They travelled down to the sauna, pool and gym area. The pool was not in use due to bad weather conditions. Boat was far too rocky.
- At 11.15 Roger, Nick, Ed and Inez went into the cinema area, to watch a free documentary on dolphins. The room was very stuffy, and being on the top deck floor, the motion of the boat could be felt more on the stomach. The lights went out, and a member of staff stood to the front of the stage, and introduced herself. She explained what we were here for and the animal corporation she worked for. She also told us that she would not keep us listening to her for long, but after an hour of hearing her voice, it was clear that this was not true. We did eventually get to see a video clip, but it was just a brief summary of what she had already told us.
- Nick, Inez and Edward headed into the 'Posh Bar' and queued for a cup of tea. After at least 10 minutes we decided that we might head somewhere else, due to not getting served, and seeing only alcoholic drinks on everyone's tables, we thought we might be in the wrong place for just a cuppa.
- We 3 then found a small, quiet room with 3 massage/vibrating chairs. We sat back and allowed the machine to work itself from our lower back up to the back of our necks. Pure heaven!!
- 1.30 We all meet up at Costa. Had lunch and cup of tea. Here we saw Bill had risen from bed.
- Nick, Peter, 2mPete and Roger went for a nap. (Not sure of what Amanda, Graham and Giles did).
- Inez and Ed showed Bill and Mick the joy of the massage chair room. Silence hit, as Mick and Bill relaxed and enjoyed themselves, while quiet giggles came from Ed and Inez as they watched their stomachs wobble from side to side. 15-20 minutes they spent in that room.
- Mellowed out in the posh bar area, listening to old classics being played on the piano.
- At 6.45 we all met at 'Langhams Restaurant'. Nick, Inez, Ed, and Bill sat on one table, Amanda, Roger, and Peter sat on another, and Giles, 2mPete, Graham and Mick sat on another. (food-bangers and mash, rib eyed steak)
- Edward entertained himself and others with his music making on the crystal wine glasses. Bill looked on embarrassed.
- After dinner, Inez and Ed went on to play in the children's pen briefly, and Nick was caught sniffing glue.
- We all joined in Costa again for a quick coffee.

- Everyone except Graham, Amanda and 2mPete, went on to the top deck, and looked through to the captain's bridge. Debates were made as to whether a flashing light could be seen off another boat, and a mysterious white smoke that looked like it was flying past us all, was soon found to be just the reflection of waves.
- Went into the Silverstone bar, bought glass of wine each, and watched the crew members perform Grease. Not bad.
- Bill and Mick went gambling again. Spent £5, won a load of chips, but managed to loose the lot again.

### Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September:

- Early start for everyone. 5.45am call to let us know the boat would be shortly docking, and to be out by 7am. Relief to find the bikes all stood upright.
- All off the boat, the 9 bikers and 2 pillions set off to find a petrol station. Not before taking a wrong turn within the first 5 minutes!
- Peter cursed and cursed at the station, as he had not had time to have a cup of tea on the boat. So he bought himself a self heating coffee, which went straight into the bin after 30 seconds of trying to heat it up.
- Inez paired up with Mick on the next leg. And stayed there for the entire holiday. The RIII's lead the way, Edward taking pictures of us all.
- Went through our first toll station. Nick and Ed didn't pick up the ticket first time round, so Ed had to quickly run back to pick it up. Then turned into a service station. Roger and Amanda did not see this, and had to make a quick stop, and reverse slowly on the motorway, to position themselves correctly to enter the side road leading to the services.



- This station had run out of petrol, but we still stopped for small breakfast. Much to Peter's delight!
- Nick led us off route for a while to find a petrol station. This station was still in the middle of being built I think. Filled up, Nick asked the guy for directions, and the bloke got very enthusiastic and started drawing on the floor, shouting 'HACO'



- Back on the road again, and we soon left the motorway onto a more scenic route. Beautiful scenery of trees, buildings, rocks and rivers.
- Whilst Edward drove Nick on the RIII, through the twisty narrow roads, Nick decided to take off his helmet to feel the wind in his hair. Not long after did he luckily spot a reflection of police bikes off another vehicle heading our way, and put his helmet back on rapidly. He also held his arms out like a bird, as if flying.
- Third petrol stop and comments of sore bums were being made. It had also gotten very hot.
- Back through the scenic route, a quick stop was made by Mick, which resulted in Inez flying into the back of him. We stopped on a small bridge, which looked over a beautiful clean, light blue river.
- After 200 miles (???) we pulled into a McDonalds. Peter and Graham not too impressed, as they would have rather eaten local food & had a pint in a bar. Peter was more angry and disgusted as he hates McDonalds. He felt happy enough to use their toilet services though. In Graham's words: 'some1 should have bought him a Happy Meal'. Nick went off to the loo, and Inez and Ed decided to hide his bike keys. Inez and Ed looked on out of the window as they watched Nick go out to his bike, search every one of his pockets, the ignition of the bike, before coming back searching himself once again before asking if we'd seen his keys.
- Returned to the motorway for a while, and then pulled off onto a long, long stretch of road that went on for ages. Eventually reached a small town, and got all sorts of looks from the Spanish, for being too loud no doubt.
- Last petrol stop of the day. Some bought beers, other ice-lollies.
- For the last leg Ed drove on the back of Bill's purple and grey Harley. Stayed on a motorway for a few miles, and after pulling off at a roundabout, Roger luckily saw the F1 Hotel sign, and took lead before Nick led us the wrong way.
- Throughout the journey, 2mPete lost half of his bike gear. First his small England flag which sat at the back of his bike, and his full five litre petrol tank, and his white scarf. Can't say he would have needed that much though.
- Once we parked up, Nick and Ed bought a much needed can of San Miguel for everyone from the vending machine, while Amanda booked us in the reception.

- Went off to designated rooms, unloaded our stuff, after showering most went out to sit out the front of the hotel and reflected back on the journey. Giles and Ed dared each other to jump over a small stream. Edward practised his wheeling moves in Amanda's wheelchair, and caused fright to local people by suddenly jumping out of the chair and walking off.
- At 8pm we head off to the nearest restaurant, which was not even 5 minutes away. The staff was not very polite at all, especially our waitress. Poor Bill tried his best shot at speaking Spanish, with his little book, and in the middle of asking for butter for his bread, he received a stern 'no!' We did wonder as to whether he was asking the correct question. Red wine was not very popular, and the food was satisfactory.
- Paid the bill, left, and spotted a bar 2 minutes away. Inez ordered a white wine very well 'una vino Blanco', but the waiter had trouble understanding that she was only asking for a glass, but instead was given a whole bottle! All sat outside the bar, and Inez, Ed and Nick were being bombarded with tiny flies. Debates of where the next trip should be held were being discussed; Rome, Scotland, Denmark again. I think Nick suggested Ireland and an argument fired up with Roger and Graham about which end of Ireland was better – South or North? Men!
- Sometime in the early hours of the morning we strolled back to the hotel and headed for bed.

#### Monday 4<sup>th</sup> September:

- 2mPete woke up very early, due to air conditioning disturbing him. Early enough to see the croissants arrive and the sun rise.
- 7.30/8.00 everyone was up. Sweet sugary croissants or French bread slices were available for breakfast, with a variety of toppings to choose from. Butter, jam, honey, marmalade or chocolate spread. And tea, coffee, hot chocolate, milk, fruit juices were available.
- About 10.00 the gang packed sandals, shorts and towels and headed for Barcelona. Long motorways drive down. Peter showed his frustration to one lorry driver who deliberately cut him up, by motioning images of something I can't possibly repeat.
- Bill's Harley roared up the motorway toward Nick who was leading, and let him know he was low on petrol, so we detoured off the motorway to the nearest garage. After filling up we asked for directions to the city centre of Barcelona and the bloke drew us 2 roundabouts and explained his best as to when to turn off the roundabout.
- Entering central Barcelona, the roads were very busy and the traffic lights were awful. They would turn green, but the next set would still be red, and it was a repeat each time. Everyone became very hot, from the rising heat from the engines when stationary.
- We came to a massive, busy roundabout and parked up in a taxi bay. Nick went to a police officer to ask directions. It was difficult trying to pull out again. We reached our destination within 5 minutes.

- All parked up on the pavement, surrounded with scooters! Nick and Ed managed to attach 5 or 6 crash helmets onto their bike lock. Near where we were parked was a statue of a nude woman with large breasts, Nick couldn't resist having his photo taken with them.



- We set off in search of the Gaudi's Cathedral photos of the streets & houses were taken on the way.



- Giles asked every pedestrian or motorist for directions to the cathedral, all of which gave different instructions.
- We finally were on the correct route and before entering the cathedral we stopped for refreshments. Group photos were taken of us all standing in view of the cathedral before climbing the stairs to the top. The fee to get in was about £8.00. A gate was available for Amanda to get through easily, so whilst she entered, Nick made small chat with some staff, so Amanda got in for free. The cathedral started being built well over 100 years ago? And was still being built, with scaffolding inside and outside. The stained glass windows were colourful and glowed in the sunshine.
- Edward, Peter, Nick and Inez waited 45 minutes to queue for a lift, which lead us near enough right to the top of the building. Over 90metres high. Cost £2 for the lift ride. On top, looking out over the city of Barcelona was a beautiful view. In one place where we stood and looked down, we could see Giles and Amanda. Ed bellowed at the very top of his voice 'GILES' and managed to attract his attention & half the City. Nick got a bit of a shock, and was surprised that no-one standing behind us had fallen off the side from the volume of Ed's voice. Giles got his camera out to take a photo of us, but he



took too long so we just moved. We clambered up a very narrow staircase to the highest part of the building that we could go. Going down was a lot harder as more people were coming up, so it was tight squeeze, and in some cases, had to turn round to go back up to let the people coming up past. Going further down the staircase it became steeper, and made you very dizzy looking down. Nick managed to get stuck behind 2 old people, and so we had to wait a little longer till he was able to get past.

- Met up with everyone else, and bought refreshments. We all headed back towards the bikes. A bit of friction between Graham and Giles came about as they argued about which way was quicker to the bikes. Quick change back into bike gear before heading off for 20 minute ride toward the sea.
- We all parked up, and changed back to comfortable wear again, while Bill crossed the road to take a kip.



- Gave Amanda a quick lift up some stairs, and then a table was found to sit. Graham, Giles, Ed, Inez and Nick went to find the direction to the beach. Unfortunately we were going in the wrong direction, as there were just boats moored in the water. We asked a guy for directions and headed back to the table. The people at the table had already ordered massive litres of beer for themselves. They then headed for the central area of town.
- Edward, Nick, Graham, Giles and Inez drank up and headed in the direction the man gave us for the beach. Luckily in the distance there were 2 people with towels and swimming outfits, who looked like they were going to the beach, so we just followed them. The walk took about 20 minutes. We kept getting hassle to buy crappy sunglasses and headbands from people on stalls, who insisted that they were 'great prices'.
- The beach was clean and packed full of people – mainly topless woman much to the boys delight. The boys stripped from their tops and headed out for a swim in the sea, while Inez sat back and sunbathed, whilst looking after valuables. Within 30 minutes Giles and Edward came back from the sea and dried them selves in the sun. Giles decided to get his camcorder out, but Edward insisted he put it away before he got arrested for being a 'peeping tom'. Many Indians came past with cool boxes trying to sell anything from drinks, to coconuts.
- At 6.00 we left the beach to meet the others in the city centre for 6.30. Once altogether again, we walked through the busy street to find a restaurant to eat. Many attractions were going on down the street. Artists painting fine pictures, some even very cleverly with spray paints designed very nice pictures. People performed clever shows too, standing statues and break dancers.
- By 7.00 we found a place to eat. Peter, Roger, Mick and Amanda had paella, whilst Nick had steak and the rest had pizzas. 2 jugs of sangria were shared. The food was nice. By 8.00 we headed back for the bikes for the long ride home.
- Giles decided he would like to lead us out of Barcelona. This did not go down too well, as engines were heating up due to constant change of traffic lights, and seeing Giles knock on car windows asking for directions from nearly

every motorist. We eventually pulled over and Nick and Giles debated about which was the right or wrong way. Maps came out, but still there was no agreement. Amanda tried to use her GPS whilst tempers rose with the engines heat. Anyhow we eventually set off again, Nick leading this time. Finally back onto the motorway, Inez started needing to go to the toilet. Seeing signs go by saying 157km.....155km..... And service signs, she couldn't hold much longer, and asked Mick to pull over. Mick signalled to Nick, who completely misunderstood, as he sped off, and also Amanda was not far behind. Eventually Mick was able to pull over and Inez was able to head for a bush.

- Graham, Amanda, Nick, Ed, Pete and Giles were nowhere to be seen, and made it back to the hotel at least 45 minutes before the other lot. They were still on their journey home and struggling to find the correct route whilst trying to find a petrol station too. Finally got back after midnight, where the others were all sat round with drinks.
- Inez and Ed ran over to the bar, and got a bottle of wine, 5 beers, and 3 glasses, and took them back to the hotel. Within about 10-15 minutes the drinks had already been consumed. So Inez, Mick, Ed, Nick, Graham, Amanda, Bill and Peter decided to stroll over to the bar and continue drinking. At least another 3 bottles were bought and many beers too. Bill purchased a plate of doughnuts and others bought 2 platefuls of sausages and meaty tomato things. Amanda soon went off to bed. After a few more drinks we headed back to the hotel. Inez realised when she returned that she hadn't got her purse with her, and she and Edward ran back and luckily found it on the floor of the petrol station. It was 3.30 and we all managed to wake up the corridor I think, as Ed disappeared and Nick called out for him.



Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September:

- Giles made complaints about being woken up in the early hours of the morning by Eddie. Everyone's head seemed to be alright.
- Couple of the men tried to move Amanda's bike, but it was still in gear or something, and her brake fluid started to pour out but she got it all under control within a few minutes.
- At about 10.00 we said goodbye to that F1, and Spain altogether, as we head toward France, following signs to Andorra. Found our tracks on the scenic route of hills, and beautiful rivers. Within an hour we stopped for a top up of petrol. Bums already hurting.... Eddie showed us pictures and video clips whilst there, very good indeed. Continued on, through tunnels, all you could hear were the Rockets exhausts.



- Once we entered Andorra's busy town we parked up the street. A parking meter attendant was on scene, and people did wonder as to whether to pay or not. Only a few people did. Locked the helmets and jackets up, and browsed through some shops. We soon came to a restaurant, and sat outside for a drink. We were going to eat, but there was only one member of staff who was very busy, so we gave up in the end. Graham and Bill managed to order their food and ate though. Eddie managed to pinch 2 nice glasses from the restaurant though. After we went for a small stroll which took us in a circle and lead us back to the bikes.
- Amanda took the lead this time and headed us toward the Pyrenees. Felt the temperature drop slightly but very rapidly. Horses obstructed our way at one point as we rode up the very tight and narrow bends. Could hear Mick's foot peg scraping the floor and Nick's had also scraped on the floor. We then begun to head downwards round the tight bends..
- We stopped off at a restaurant near the bottom. The shop keeper cut slices of bread sticks and we purchased cheese, ham and drinks. Very cheap but filling meal. Because Bill and Graham had already eaten, they sat outside on a roundabout, reading and kipping in the shade by a nice small pond that inhabited the roundabout Bill's arms had really caught the sun they were red raw.



- Set off again down the long and narrow roads, Giles in lead. Looking back at the Pyrenees, cloud and mist surrounded them. Ed managed to get nice pictures of it. We soon joined a motorway, which was about a 30 minute journey, and then pulled off to another petrol station. 'Netto' supermarket was just opposite, and Graham was kind enough to bring back a massive box full of bottled water for everyone. More still needed to be bought though. It was about 6.15 and thought it was best to contact the F1 just to let them know we would be slightly late, but no answer.
- Continued for the last leg of today's journey on the motorway towards Toulouse. Once we pulled off, we unfortunately missed the correct turning into the F1, so we had to go back onto the motorway, and try and find our route again. That took an extra 15-20 minutes.
- Once parked up, Amanda sorted out the details again. There was no beer in this F1 vending machine, so soft drinks were only available. This F1 was not as nice as the other one. The rooms stank of cigarette smoke, even the corridors, and the air conditioning did not work. Rooms were slightly smaller too. Everyone unpacked, showered and relaxed.
- At about 8.30 we went into the restaurant, which was about 1 minute away from the hotel. Roger, Giles, 2mPete, Edward, Nick and Inez, sat together, on one table, and the others on another. 2 bottles of Rose were first bought! We also had money off tickets for the restaurant. Starters were Quiche, or tomato pie. Main was: macaroni cheese, dessert: apple pie. Food was okay. Drink was enjoyed more than the food. Bill was £20 each. Forgot we were in France, and so didn't expect the restaurant to close so early. 11.00/11.30 we left. Headed back to hotel, but the benches were full of people, so Nick got some wood, and made that as a table/seating area. Nick, Ed and Inez soon returned to the restaurant, and luckily managed to get in through the gate, as a member of staff was leaving. We asked for more drink, but they said they had run out. But one member luckily got a pint sized bottle of white wine for us. We discreetly drank it before we left. We returned to the hotel bench, and sat talking for about an hour before departing to bed.

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September

- Everyone was pretty much up about 8.30/9.00. People had plans of their own today. Some were going to stay and look around the market nearby, whilst others were going to visit then Millau Bridge.



- At 10.00 Inez, Roger, Mick, Giles, Nick, Edward & Peter headed out to the bridge. Got lost, or took a wrong turning within the first 5 minutes of the journey, and Roger got us all flashed by a Gatso gun for going too fast.
- Within an hour of the journey we arrived in a small town, and stopped off for a drink. Nick and Ed stayed behind and roared up the street, not to the amusement of the locals. These French restaurants had the old toilets a hole with 2 footpads..... So Inez did not take to well to that, and decided she would rather stop in a field to go to the loo.



- Carried on the ride to Millau. On a country road with scenery. In the far distance we could eventually see the bridge. Got stuck behind a massive truck carrying wood logs. Once past the lorry we continued, and Eddie took pictures of the bridge on his phone. We then stopped at a complex centre for lunch. Ed debated as to whether to eat horse, but he opted for the steak instead. Ate and drank we then went searching for postcards of the bridge. About 10 were purchased. They had a few selections of different angles and distances of the bridge. And also pictures of when the bridge was in construction.
- Outside, back to the bikes, we decided that we would ride across and back over the bridge. I think the fee was about £4.50 each way. Before we reached the entry to the bridge, we pulled off at a tourist point which looked newly made. All took photos of the bridge and group photos with us standing in front of it. Quite a few other people were also taking photos. This tourist spot was good, as you get fined for stopping and taking pictures on the bridge.



- Hopped back on the bikes and set off across the bridge. Eddie managed to take pictures of us travelling and the bridges stunning architecture. Beautiful scene looking out over the bridge. We soon reached the end of the bridge, and carried on along a motorway stretch, until we found a roundabout, to turnaround on, and go back the way we came. Along this stretch of motorway, everyone went to great speeds on their bike. Mick shot past everyone with Inez Eddie has footage of this. Got to the poll booth, paid up, and Roger took lead to take us the scenic route back to the hotel. We just pulled off a mini roundabout and turned left at a T-Junction. Roger and Giles were ahead, whilst Mick, Inez and Peter were a fair way behind. Mick stopped shortly as he realised Nick & Ed were nowhere to be seen. Peter decided to go back and see where he was, and Mick sped of to reach Giles and Roger, who had stopped to wait for us. After waiting a while, Giles decided to go and see what was going on. He found Peter with Nick & Ed attempting to talk to a French doctor on a mobile. Giles returned within 10 minutes and broke the news that Nick and Ed had a head on crash. Total shock. We all drove back to where this had taken place, and parked up and went to greet Ed, who was sitting in shock and pain on the grass. Police and ambulance were already there. Nick was lying on the floor whilst paramedics tried to place him on a stretcher. Both were escorted to the local hospital in separate ambulances. We all waited another 1hour and 30mins while the police asked questions, and assess the crash. Council workers cleaned up the debris. A pick-up truck collected both the Rocket, and the damaged van. It was great difficulty moving the Rocket onto the truck, as it was jammed in gear. We followed the truck to the drop off, where he unloaded the van. He then led us to another yard where the bike was going to stay. Giles managed to get shouted at by a very loud French man. Bike recovery details were being sorted out by Mick. It was a dead cert the Rocket was write off.
- We soon left and headed towards the hospital where Nick and Ed were being taken care of. At the hospital we heard news that Nick had head injuries & was being kept in a coma A Work mate of Nicks was already holidaying in France and was already at the hospital. We were only allowed to go in and see Ed. He had a torn leg muscle and internal bleeding in his right thigh. He explained his experience of the crash
- It was at least 7.00 and we needed to be heading back to the hotel. It was turning dark rapidly; the temperature had dropped a fair bit too. Petrol was also running low for everyone. Roger lead us up a twisty turning mountain, but we soon turned round and went back as the GPS said that the petrol

stations were a long way off. Going down the view of the bridge with the setting sun was breathtaking. We returned to the complex where we had lunch, and went to fill up with petrol, slight problem... we needed a French credit card. Luckily a nice couple were happy enough to take cash from us, and use their credit card instead. Roger took the lead again and kept at a constant speed throughout. When we found a town, we stopped off for a quick coffee. Back on the road, it was a long twisty nighttime's ride before reaching the motorway.

- We eventually made it back to the others about midnight. Graham had prepared crisps, sandwiches, fruit and cheeses for us to eat.

#### Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> September:

- Late wake from everyone this morning. Packed all of Nick and Ed's belongings together and Amanda kindly stored them in her side car.
- 11'o'clock we headed off. Graham led us today. Went on and off motorways throughout. Whilst on one quiet road, Mick managed to get a wasp in his helmet, and had to speed up to Graham to stop. The wasp had stung him just above his right cheek. 2mPete had a large selection of ointments & supplied the sting soother. Back on the bikes again, Mick caught Inez laughing her head off in the wing mirror. Carried on through a small town, and stopped off for a drink and a bite to eat. Unfortunately we were a little late to be served food, as this restaurant stopped for lunch, and re-opened again at dinnertime. So ate ice cream instead, bickering begun, as some were hungry and annoyed they didn't serve food. Spent an hour there.
- Carried on to the first petrol station we saw. However Graham carried on riding. Confusion reigned as to why we stopped, as everyone was actually okay for petrol. Anyhow, we carried on and stopped off at a McDonalds. Peter did eat in here, and managed to confuse himself and the staff by ordering 2 burgers and an unwanted drink. Contacted Graham, who was parked a few miles ahead in a local bar.
- Drove on to meet Graham. Amanda parked up, and a load of kids ran over to the bike, fascinated by the model they had never seen before. Many comments were made us to how uncomfortable the journey was today, due to hot weather and sore bums. We carried on, but soon stopped off at a garage to get a drink. Amanda then led the last route of the journey. We luckily had just missed a rainfall, as the roads were wet, and the sky ahead was grey. Amanda managed to miss the F1 entrance; and we had to go round in a big circle. She then missed the entrance a second time, but everyone beeped to get her attention. Graham still had to drive up to get her back, as she didn't realise we were beeping at her like mad!
- Parked the bikes up, and then a member of staff told us it would be safer to park them around the other side of the building for security reasons. This F1 was better than the last one, as it didn't stink of smoke. Everyone had a room of their own this time. Some showers were out of use though, so it was a long wait for everyone to get ready.





- Graham decided to stay back and read his book, while the rest went on over to the restaurant a few minutes away. It was a small restaurant, but the staff were nice. Some had salmon for starters, which was highly approved. Massive pizzas were on the menu for everyone. Inez had a lasagne. The Waitress took pictures of us all. At about 9.45 we finished up, and went to leave, and Graham just entered. We went to sit back on the benches outside of the F1. Graham returned shortly, not too happy as the restaurant had stopped serving food. Shortly after, we all went off to our separate rooms to sleep.

#### Friday 8<sup>th</sup> September:

- 2mPete woke us all saying ‘there’s only 15 minutes left for breakfast’. It was a late start for us all, but it didn’t matter as we were not travelling too many miles today. This was farewell to the F1’s for our trip now, as we were going to stay with a friend of Roger’s, & some were going to stay with Nick’s sister in law.
- Packed up, and Graham was in lead once again. The majority of the journey was on the motorway. We stopped off at a busy service station, and had a bite to eat and a hot drink. The weather was very windy and a lot colder. 2mPete was having trouble with his wind shield too, as it kept moving around.



- Soon arrived in a small French town, and so knew we were near our destination about 3.00 we arrived at Roger’s friends Andrew & Liz. It was a beautiful large house, with a lovely big garden, which had a big pond too. They had a small field with sheep, and 4 hammocks hanging from trees. Andrew and Liz were very welcoming. Both South African. Liz’s mum was also visiting. Andrew took us all to what he calls the ‘cave’. This is where he produces his own red wines. A number of barrels were in this ‘cave’ loaded with booze. We were able to taste a number of his wines, all varied in taste, as



to their age & differing processes. Liz bought some very nice sweet bread too, that went well with the red wine. Some dipped the bread in the wine too. The first wine we tasted was in progress of being pressed. It was surrounded by fruit flies. It tasted very sweet, nice. Andrew explained the process of how to make your own wine, to picking the grapes, & pressing them in his ancient press. One of Andrew's friend, called Michelle, was supposed to drop by and tell us more about wines, but we were told that he saw all the bikes parked outside, and returned back home. Mick had heard from Ed at this time, who was fine thankfully, but Nick had been put into a coma.

- All those wine tasting was making people very drowsy and so many went for a nap on the hammocks, whilst others had a cup of tea with Liz and Andrew. Andrew had been chatting to Giles for quite a while, and all the while he was calling him 'Charles', not realising it was 'Giles'. Giles never seemed to notice either.
- At about 7.00 dinner was served. Wine also poured. A starter of rocket leaves, with two bread rolls with peppers and tomatoes on top. For our main, it was one of Liz's home made curries. Very nice. Tasted very mild. Meat was chicken I think. Selections of cheeses were then handed out, brie etc..... Dessert was then served, walnut cake with cream. Andrew and Liz were perfect hosts.
- It was past 9.00 and Graham, Amanda, Bill, and Mick had to be making a move to the campsite, which was still a fair distance a way.



#### Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September:

- Around 9.00 the gang went down for breakfast. Fresh sliced bread was served, with croissants and a selection of toppings. Tea and coffee also served. Later on in the morning Andrew took us on a small walk to his friend Michelle's house. Raspberries and corn on the cobs were in season. Nice quiet road and lane. About 20 minutes later we arrived at Michelle's. He was a short elderly man, & wore glasses, but you could still see a lot of muscle in his arms. He took us into his cave which was a short distance from his house. He also had a large area of land. He handed us small glasses and at midday the wine tasting begun again. Michelle could only speak French, so Andrew translated for us. Some work friends of Michelle's arrived, and also met his wife. We stayed there for about an hour, and then returned to Andrew's. The walk home we saw a few houses being built and some for sale.

- We spotted outside Andrews's house, a hidden stuffed fox, which held a plate in his arms with money on it.



- Andrew attached a trailer to his old Mercedes Car, on which he put 3 big empty bins. Roger stayed behind with Liz. Andrew took the rest of us to another friend of his called Daniel. It was about a 15 minute drive. When we arrived we had to wait another 15 minutes or so, as Daniel was nowhere to be found. When he did arrive I noticed he had a large red nose, and his face was very red too. His ginger, grey hair was covered by a scruffy worn out old hat with the words 'Hewlett Packard'. we wondered if he ever took it off..
- Another wine taste of his selection. We then filled the 3 empty bins full of his excess grapes, and placed them on Andrew's trailer. Inez and Peter tried to secretly take pictures of Daniels face. 2mPete hands got covered in red from the grapes.
- Loaded up, and headed back to Andrews house. Had a spot of lunch



- Inez went to sleep & missed the two families in their horse drawn caravans who stopped by for a chat & water for the horses. Michelle turned up & loaded up the press with the grapes & helped demonstrate the process.



- Early evening Ed phoned. He is in pain with a cast on his leg, with crutches. Nick still in a coma.
- Dinner was served, and Andrew joined us this time due to more space at the table. Very delicious dinner followed by a fantastic dessert & more cheeses. Listened to stories that Andrew and Roger told of when they were out to sea, when they dressed as woman, and were kissed by men!!!

#### Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September:

- Last day for all on the trip!
- Woke up and all were ready for breakfast by 8.30. Tea, coffee, croissants and toast were served. Quick wash and change, and time to load the bikes up. Before leaving we went into Andrew's cave and had several photos taken as a group.



- 9.30/9.45 we said our goodbyes to the house, Liz and her mother, and followed Andrew in his car as he took us to a petrol station that would be open. Filled up, and left Andrew to go back on home. We headed off in search of a meeting point to meet Mick etc. Giles began to run out of petrol again, so we needed to divert off from the route in search of a garage. Being a Sunday everywhere was shut. Up and down in circles we went, until we eventually found a station. But once again, it was only going to accept a French credit card. So we waited for someone to come by and kindly accept cash in exchange for the use of their credit card. One after the other using the same pump.



- Continued our journey on the motorway, but we soon had to pull over as it was starting to rain, so for the first time on the journey the waterproofs came out. Within minutes of climbing back on the bikes the rain had stopped. This was the only rain we encountered over the holiday.



- When there was another lay by, we stopped to take off the waterproofs again. at least another hours drive, and we stopped off in a sort of lay-by that supplied toilets, and waited for Mick and the others to arrive. Roger's indicator was becoming loose so he fixed that. We waited about 30 mins - 45mins and still no word from the others. Then we received a call saying they had passed us as the leader had forgotten the instructions. They had stopped at a service station where everything was available, so we went to meet up with them.
- Stopped for about 30 minutes there to buy some lunch and have a drink and to catch up with everyone. Inez joined back up with buddy Mick and set off for the port for the boat ride home. 180 miles or so North with the temperature dropping. Inez and Peter had taken Ed & Nick's tickets. Amanda and Giles were hoping that the boat would allow them home a day earlier as well. They were in luck Giles had to pay an extra £8 and Amanda an extra £5. Arrived at the dock about 6.00. An orange RIII was also there
- Pete dropped his gel seat when driving onto the boat, Giles picked it up for him. People felt safer about their bikes with this boat company.
- The Boat was very empty so we all had plenty of room for ourselves. We all dined at the restaurant, and then sat back and relaxed and watched a crappy film they had on as entertainment. Went out on the deck for a while. Beautiful sunset.
- 10. Pm we finally got off the boat/ passport checks. Inez had to take her helmet off fully as the man 'didn't recognise me'. It was very windy. We were in Poole.
- Amanda took the lead and led us home. Her GPS unfortunately took us a long way through narrow winding country lanes as we searched for petrol, so it added a bit to the journey home. Found a petrol station and topped up. On the cold motorway, Giles sped off first and said his goodbyes. Amanda, Bill, Mick, Inez and Roger stopped at the Fleet services, whilst Graham and 2mPete hooted goodbyes. Peter managed to miss the entrance so came in by the exit to the Fleet service. We all said our goodbyes, and Inez hopped on with Roger and followed by Dad was soon back home.

Report by: Inez Sutton.