



## THE ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER OF OUGS MAINLAND EUROPE

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### **A word from the Treasurer.**

By now, you will already have noticed the 'Heath Robinson' character of this newsletter and its late publication. The reason behind this is some bad news about Annette's health. Following a stressful period of work on her house during May, Annette needed treatment for 'sinusitis' which at first seemed to be successful, but at the end of June she suffered what appeared to be a relapse. In fact it was much worse. Annette has been in a clinic in Bern since 13<sup>th</sup> July and she is currently undergoing a further session of combined chemo- and radio-therapy, to treat the metastases that have been diagnosed in the clinic.

I guess it doesn't happen too often that a Branch Organizer is told by her Treasurer that she is a 'tough bitch'. Hans Kimmich found a more appropriate phrase when he described Annette as 'eine starke Frau', we were both expressing the same sentiment about the incredible outward calm that Annette is displaying, although she is under no illusions as to the current state of her health. I think the best way we can support her is to make sure that OUGSME is still functioning, albeit in a 'Heath Robinson' fashion, as and when she is back in the saddle. Hence this delayed May or early August version of the newsletter.

### **Lower Inn Valley by bike.**

Christian, Sigi and I were rejoined by Rolf on this year's bike trip, some 330 km along the Inn Valley from Innsbruck to Passau. Rolf was now 'armed' with a 'Swiss Flyer' which assists his muscle power with a small but very effective electric motor. Our journey started at Munich's main station about 08:00 on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June. It was as well that we arrived early, because it appeared that half of Munich had decided to take advantage of the brilliant weather and spend a day walking in the Bavarian Alps. By the time the train had reached Lake Starnberg, you could understand why. Upper Bavaria was at its very early-summer best, with the 'Foehn' wind making the Alps appear to be within touching distance.

The masses had thinned by the time we reached Garmisch-Partenkirchen, where the train continued to climb to Klais, which is Germany's highest railway station at some 960 m above sea-level. The rail track follows the old Roman route 'via Raetia' along the upper Isar Valley, between the 'Wetterstein' and 'Estergebirge' alpine ranges. I don't know if there is a

recognised collective noun for drumlins, but on each side of the railway, the gentle slopes were covered in 'nests' of them, each resplendent with alpine flora. The magnificent scenery was augmented by a second breakfast of Regensburger sausages, 'butter-brezel' and canned beer.

At Scharnitz, the train crosses the Austrian-German border and continues to climb up to around 1,185 m at Seefeld, before descending rapidly into the Inn Valley to Innsbruck, which lies at about 580 m above sea-level. Our route from the main station to the bike-track took us automatically through the 'old town' and past 'das goldene Dachl', a late gothic bay window built as a covered balcony in the palace which now houses the 'Maximilianeum' museum. The track took us eastwards along the river bank towards our first overnight stop in Schwaz, some 31 km from Innsbruck. Unfortunately, much of the original Tirolian architecture along this stretch has been replaced by less appealing buildings, but these can be easily ignored by looking slightly higher along slopes of the quartz phyllite and orthogneiss 'Zillertal' and 'Kitzbuehl' ranges to the south, which form part of the main Alpine ridge, and the limestone ridge of the 'Wetterstein' range to the north.

Just before Schwaz, we reached Vomp and called in briefly at 'Schloss Mitterhart', a small palace built in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century by 'Hieronymus von Stauber', a financial expert of the 'Fugger' family, on the banks of the Inn and which is now a restaurant and hotel. Unfortunately, I had discovered this too late to change our hotel booking in Schwaz, but we secured a table for dinner there that evening. The 'Chefin' of 'Schloss Mitterhart' not only produced an excellent meal in the kitchen she is also responsible for the garden, both of which compensated for the somewhat less than optimal accommodation in Schwaz.

Our philosophy when on tour is basically very simple, we tend to look for reasonable accommodation, suitable for a Trapist monk, but to dine in a manner suitable for an archbishop. The logic is that after covering 60-80 km or so by bike and going to bed more or less under anaesthetic, the accommodation is secondary as long as it is clean, quiet and that the bed is reasonably hard. Not all of these criteria were met in Schwaz and we were happy to get away the next morning, not least because house sanitary system audibly suffered some kind of convulsion in the morning, but thankfully after 'business' had been completed.

During the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries, Schwaz was by far the main source of silver production in Europe, its dominant position ended when open cast mining in the New World broke its near-monopoly in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century. Silver production in Schwaz was a main financial source for the 'Habsburg' dynasty and it also attracted some of the most influential families engaged in commerce, such as the 'Fugger' family, to invest in the town. This investment can still be seen today with 'Schloss Freundberg', 'Schloss Tratzberg' and in the church of 'Our Lady'.

Our goal for Monday 15<sup>th</sup> was to reach Oberaudorf in Bavaria. The bike track was frequently sandwiched between the river and either the railway or the Inn Valley Autobahn. Although the latter looked as if it might spoil this stretch, landscaping and acoustic dampening reduced this threat to a minimum. The route took us via Jenbach, with its two narrow-gauge railways into the Ziller Valley and Achen Valley, respectively, to Brixlegg and on to Rattenberg where we took a short break to look at the still mostly unspoilt village centre. The settlement was built under the 'Rattenberg', literally 'Rat Mountain', for protection and is well known for its crystal-glass production. However, regular flooding during the spring and lack of sunshine during the winter are also characteristic, it is alledgedly one of the few places a significant distance from the arctic circle which experience periods of permanent darkness during the mid-winter!



**Photo: Wikipedia Rattenberg**

We continued the trip along the valley to Woergl and on to the border town of Kufstein. The latter is something of a tourist attraction due its massive fortifications, built on an outcrop of Wetterstein limestone around which the river is forced to curve. With the help of a local citizen, we eventually found a reasonable restaurant for lunch, not infested by tourists. We reached Oberaudorf by late afternoon and booked into the ‘Ochsenwirt’, which proved to be a good choice. The accommodation and food were excellent and the deer antlers which decorated the bedrooms were ideal for drying trousers which had become wet during a sharp shower on the way.

At Kufstein, the river changes course and flows almost due north to Wasserburg, our next planned stop. We chose the right-hand bank and cycled in good weather on a good track as far as Neubeuern where we left the track to do some bike-pushing up to the central market square. Unfortunately, I could not get a close-up view of the outcrop upon which the old part of Neubeuern and the palace above it are built. The latter dominates the town and the local surroundings.



**Photo: Wikipedia Neubeuern**

According to the geological map of Bavaria, this outcrop consists of mergel, sandstone and red algae-sandstone including iron ore, laid down the late Cretaceous. It is the only outcrop of this kind that I could find on the whole map of Bavaria! I'm not too sure what the English language term for mergel is, possibly it's the same, in any event it is a mixture of about 35% limestone and 65% clay.

We continued the trip on the right-hand bank to Rosenheim where we stopped for lunch. Since recent rain had made the non-tarmac sections of the track rather soft, we took the optional route for the next 30 km or so to Wasserburg, which followed almost completely empty roads for most of the way.

The approach to Wasserburg through the newer developed parts, particularly at rush-hour, is not very inspiring, but the unspoilt old town more than compensates for this. The Inn forms a tight loop around the old town, making it an ideal location for the castle or 'burg'. The town played an important part in the mediaeval salt trade for both Berchtesgaden and Bad Reichenhall, from where the salt was transported overland and loaded on to ships travelling on the river. We were very lucky when we booked into our hotel, we took the last two rooms available in the old town.



**Photo: Wikipedia Wasserburg**

If a curse descends on a tour, it usually happens on Day 3. Maybe this is why we were unprepared when it descended on us on Day 4. The InnValley bike track had been joined by at least two other tracks, including one named after Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. I'm pretty sure he never cycled along the Inn. After Wasserburg two or three local trips were also present at any point, making the marking rather confusing and together with our own incompetence we managed to take the wrong route. Our nagging doubts were confirmed when we reappeared at a spot we had passed about an hour earlier. We eventually found the way back to the Inn and somehow to an excellent beer garden, where we reviewed our options over beer and lunch. We decided to continue by bike to Muehldorf and then take a train to Altoetting, our next planned stop-over. This worked well and arrived in Altoetting at about 17:00 and booked into a hotel in the town centre, still having completed the 70 km that day, even if 20 km or so were in a loop not even covered by our map.

Part of Day 4's curse was when a bearing in one of Sigi's pedals gave up the ghost and getting this repaired was the first priority for Thursday morning. Following this, we briefly

visited the 'Chapel of the Miraculous Image' in Altoetting which I believe is the second most important shrine for pilgrims in Germany. The chapel contains not only a venerated statue of the Virgin Mary, the 'Schwarze Madonna', but also urns containing the hearts of King Ludwig II and those of his father and grandfather.

Our route took us from Altoetting to Neuoetting and back to the Inn, which we crossed on to the north bank and continued towards Marktl, the birth place of Pope Benedict XVI. Just before Marktl, a ridge of higher land forces the river to curve southwards before it can continue to flow in a broadly west to east direction. This ridge is known as the Landshut-Neuoetting Ridge which is the remnant of a range of foothills folded during the Variscan Orogeny, together with the Bavarian and Bohemian Forests. The ridge divides two areas of lower-lying land, the Wasserburger Graben to the west and the Braunauer Graben to the east. The sand and gravel molasse deposits are up to 3,500 m thick in the former and up to 1,500 m thick in the latter.

We crossed the Inn at Marktl and cycled across-country through the Daxentaler Forest to Burghausen, which is situated on the River Salzach. Burghausen is a major location for the chemical industry, where amongst other products vinyl polymers, industrial gases and wafers for the semi-conductor industry are produced. The chemical industry was not the reason for our detour, it was the castle.



**Photo: Wikipedia Burghausen Castle from the south.**

The castle was constructed in phases, mainly during the 14th and 15th Centuries, across sections of Pleistocene glacial-moraine deposits which rise to some 40-50 m above the river, it is the longest castle in Europe extending for a length of 1,043 m. Most of the buildings are constructed from blocks of conglomerate, deposited by glacial wash-out.

After lunch and after visiting the castle, we continued our trip along the south bank of the River Salzach, some 14 km to the point where the Salzach flows into the Inn. Both rivers were very different in colour and it took a further 10 km or so to Braunau, our goal for the day, before the two currents had mixed to unified colour. Braunau has the dubious fame of being the place of birth of one, A. Hitler; he moved to Linz with his family at the age of five. Braunau has in fact one of the nicest, well preserved old-town centres along the Inn and is well worth a visit.

On Friday 19th June, we selected the southern, Austrian bank, to bike the remaining 71 km to Passau. The main reasons for this choice were concerned with lunch plans in the town of Schaerding and the hope of seeing an outcrop of a granitic dyke with porphyroblast-like nodules of mainly sulphur-rich compounds up to 10 m across, which is cut by both the bike track and the railway, some 6 km from Passau. On the way to Passau, we passed numerous trees declared natural monuments by the Upper Austrian Regional Government. The oldest of these was a 1,000 year old Linden or Lime Tree. An excellent lunch was taken as planned in Schaerding, however, in order to avoid getting into trouble trying to translate the name of the 'Wirtshaus' I will leave it at that.

The part of Upper Austria where Schaerding is situated belongs geologically to the same region as the Bavarian and Bohemian Forests and it is dominated by paragneiss with large granitic intrusions. There are also zones of metamorphosed magmatite and strips of mylonite. Before our trip started, I was interested to see what the geology was like immediately around Passau, but it was simply too complex to be shown clearly on my 1:500,000 geological map of Bavaria. As such, I purchased a geological DVD of the Passau Region at 1:200,000 resolution. This is where I discovered the dyke. I had a hard copy of the relevant part of the map with me, so I am fairly sure I knew where to look, but to no avail. There may have been something visible across the railway at one point, but it was most likely simply an outcrop of the paragneiss bedrock. I had also checked this area out using 'Google Earth'. It is just possible that the dyke is exposed for a 100 m or so, in the forest south of the river. The position is about right, as is the width of the pale coloured strip which can be seen in the only area not covered by trees.

It is at Passau that the Inn and a smaller river, the Ilz, flow into the Danube. The old-town centre is well preserved and with its Cathedral, University and wide range of cultural activities, Passau is a touristic magnet. During the summer, anything up to 20-30 large passenger boats from all over Europe, are tied-up along the quays. We broke with our accommodation policy for the last night of the trip and slept and dined in a manner suitable for an archbishop, in a hotel very close to the junction of the Inn and Danube.

Our cultural activities were limited to visiting St. Stephan's Cathedral. We were lucky, because the organist was warming up for a concert later that evening, so we became an impression of what the world's largest ecclesiastical organ is acoustically capable of, when 17,000 pipes are in action. On Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June, we returned to Munich by train, held a short debriefing in the Augustiner Beer Garden and then headed home.



**Photo: Wikipedia Passau and the Inn, as seen from Mariahilf.**

P.S. If we had delayed our trip by one week, everything would literally have fallen into the water. Torrential rainfall over a period of 5 days in south-eastern Germany and north-western Austria, with up to 100 litres per square metre falling within 24 hours, caused the Inn, the Salzach and the Danube to flood the surrounding lower lying areas. Passau, as usual, got the worst of it, however not up to the first-floor windows as in 2002.

P.P.S. The outcrop of Cretaceous sandstone and mergel at Neubeuron is, of course, not unique in Bavaria. Closer inspection of the geological map of Bavaria on my laptop at 400% magnification enabled me to see things without a magnifying glass and freed up the paper map for reading the rock-type key only. A series of minor thrust faults along the northern fringe of the Alps in this area encompass a highly complex series of outcrops, including the Cretaceous sandstone and mergel, albeit in very small amounts.

Mike Molloy.

Last, but not least, many thanks to **Sylvie Lebon**, **Hans Kimmich** and **Ole Nielsen** for their help in getting anything in a sendable format and the correct e-mail addresses.