



**Scooter journey across the British Isles  
13 May to 30 July 2011  
by Peet Lenel**

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Version: 11 August 2011



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## Getting there

*13.05.11 Thal-Strasbourg* Already at 07:30h I have made the cottage ready to leave, locked the shutters and removed the fuses. I leave. The weather is cold and overcast, but it does not rain. In Rorschach I suddenly remember, that I left all my membership cards in my purse, which I did not take along. I have to turn back. The railway crossing is closed and it takes a long time, until eventually a train passes. Thus I lose a lot of time with this unnecessary round trip and proceed by freeway in direction Kreuzlingen. At Kreuzlingen railway station I buy some English Pounds. At nine I arrive at Tägerwilten at Otto Egloffs offices, where I chat for half an hour with him, until I say goodbye to him, not without him taking a photo of me on my scooter. The ride from Konstanz to Villingen-Schwenningen is monotonous, it is freeway all along, the weather stays cool and dry. In villingen-Schwenningen, the freeway ends and I ride on pretty, well maintained roads to St. Georgen and Triberg in the Black Forest. there I meet a cyclist, who has been cycling all the way from Belgium and is heading for Thal! At a Lidl supermarket I buy herring and bread for lunch. I continue driving and arrive already at 14:30h in Strassburg, but I take a wrong turn and have to search for the youth hostel quite some time. I check in and ride back to the city centre, where I park the scooter at Austerlitz square. I visit the cathedral with its huge astronomic clock and the impressive facade, which surprises you when peeping through the narrow alleys. In front of the cathedral, there are many africans hawking sunglasses and market stalls where one can buy curios made in China. the historic city centre still consists of many medieval houses, but they appear kind of unreal. I walk to Petite France, a picturesque historic area, which is streaked with channels. Tired from all this walking, I return to the scooter, which has in the meantime been blocked on every side by other vehicles and I have great difficulty getting it out again. I ride to the European Institutions. The first to appear is the European Council, then the European Court of Human Rights in an impractical postmodern building and the European Parliament, which is unfortunately in the contralight. I ride back to the youth hostel, where I find out to my dismay, that there is no internet. I walk over the pedestrian bridge into Kehl, where I visit the city centre and walk back to the youth hostel, where I meet my roommate, Xavier from Spain, who is on his way to Basle. We chat a long time in Spanish.

*14.05.11 Strasbourg-Reims* I eat breakfast with Xavier, then he has to run for the bus and I have to pack my scooter. Today the petrol station is not so crowded and so I can fill up before I drive on. A few miles I drive on the highway to get out of the city, then I get back to the regular road. Via Wasselonne, Saverne and Sarrebourg I cross the Vosges. Then I have to turn right towards Metz. After the Vosges, the landscape is flat and quite monotonous, sometimes a typical French village appears with a few houses. About 30 km before Metz my fuel gauge is down to zero and I haven't seen a petrol station since Wasselonne. I ride into a village and ask a few locals. They advise me to take the road towards Metz, I would then get to a gas station. In Silly-en-Saline I actually find two unattended gas stations. Unfortunately, they do not accept my international credit card. A friendly motorist behind me offers to fill up on his card, and pay him. I do that and he even forfeits the cents, as he is in such a hurry. So I go on to Metz, where I ride a few miles on the highway to the exit for the overland road Verdun. The ride is very slow and I arrive in Verdun much later than expected. Since I use E10, my moped has become weaker, but uses about one deciliter more per 100km. Maybe I should change back to Super. In Jarny I buy in a supermarket something to eat and consume it right on the roadside. In Verdun, I turn to the "Champs de Bataille" and do a sightseeing tour: Casemate Pamard 1918, I walk in the former trenches and drive to the Fort de Vaux, which I visit from the inside. It has sleeping rooms, dining rooms, ammunition depots, guns, etc. I return and visit the Battery du Tunnel, the ammunition depots in the trenches, the battery de'l Hopital (of which only very little is left), the fortress Souville (not to be entered), the Casemates Pamard 1917, the Memorial de Verdun, which I visit only from outside, because I lack the time to visit the museum, the gigantic military cemetery, the fortress Douaumont, which I do not see from the inside, but has impressive turrets. My last stop is the trench, which was buried so quickly that the bayonets of the soldiers were still sticking out. Then it began to rain heavily. I put on my rain gear and go into the town of Verdun. There I find only another gas station which does not accept my credit cards, but then I find a served gas station. I fill up and drive in the direction of Reims. The ride is slow because I keep passing pretty villages where the speed is limited to 50. Soon, I take the rain clothes off again, because there is no more rain clouds in the sky. With the last drop of gas I get into Reims, where the wonderfully illuminated by the evening light Pommard champagne factory attracts me. I chat with an employee who tells me where I can find a gas station. I go there, fill up and turn on the Navi. By using the Navi I find reliably the right place (not without turning a small round around the cathedral) but I can not see the hostel far and wide. After I asking a passersby and having confirmed that I'm in the right road, I leave the scooter and look for the hostel on foot. Finally I find a building that looks like it. It is in fact the hostel, which is not at all signposted. I can put the moped in the bicycle cellar, have to check in and walk back to the cathedral. Because just today the "Nuit of the Cathedrals" is taking place, the museum is still open and free. In the cathedral plays an organ concert and I can explore it in detail. But outside in the evening light, it looks the most impressive. I walk back to the hostel, where I meet Florent, my roommate.

*15.05.11 Reims-Paris* Because yesterday I got so late to sleep - I had to write the tags of all the photos - I leave only at nine. At the reception they explain how can I find the road to Paris, then I drive off. Somewhere I take a wrong turn and land on the university campus, all one-way streets, from where I battle to get out. Through side streets I reach a major

road taking me back again. I now easily find the route that leads me across the Champagne (via Chateau Thierry), and there is no orientation problems up to Dammartin where I can not find the town of Mitry. I turn on the navigation system, which steers me to the highway and I quickly arrive at the city center, passing through eternal traffic jams. I urgently have to refuel, but fortunately there is a gas station next to the highway, otherwise it would have become tight. The navigation system steers me in spite of construction sites and detours precisely to my destination. Thank goodness it works now, I was not sure about my repairs until now ... I check in at the Paris Cite des Sciences hostel. The scooter I can put on a locked parking lot. I walk down the Avenue Jean Lolive. In a small Vietnamese restaurant I eat something. Then I continue walking because there was a sign to a car museum. But the museum does not materialize and no one knows where it is. So I go into the nearest metro station and ride the Metro to Cité station. I visit the cathedral of Notre Dame. They just hold a religious service. The colored windows are very impressive. On the left bank of the river Seine, I walk to the Musée d'Orsay, where I switch via the Pont Solferino to the other bank. I walk to the Place de la Concorde, where the stretch limousines of the Chinese wedding couples are lining up to take a photo in front of the obelisk, before heading to the Eiffel Tower. I walk back to the left bank, cross the Esplanade des Invalides and walk through the Rue de l'Université to the Eiffel Tower. I climb the stairs to the first platform, then up to the second platform. It's amazing how many restaurants and shops have been built into the platforms. The views, despite the overcast, windy and cold weather are quite well. One notices, however, how the wind is shaking the tower. I spend a lot of time above, do the obligatory photos and then walk back down. At the Metro station Bir-Hakeim I want to buy a ticket, but I have no coins and my credit cards do not work in France. In the surrounding shops, they cannot break my 20-euro note. I am assured, however, that the machines would give change. So I insert it into the machine and in fact I get EUR 18.30 change - in coins! By Metro I go back to the metro station Hoche, which is closest to the hostel. I have my ready to eat pasta which I have brought with me, and a few cookies with it.

*16.05.11 Paris* In the morning, I take the Metro to Anvers. There I climb the hill to the Sacré-Coeur-Church. The stairs are besieged by blacks and gypsies, the former want to sell straps which they assure are absolutely necessary to visit the church; the latter carry signature pads for "contributions". I wobble myself through and enjoy the view from the hill. A violinist plays for some rich Americans. Inside, the church is nothing out of the ordinary, but its neoclassicist outside is quite remarkable. I walk across the Montmartre in direction Arc de Triomphe. I visit the Cimetiere de Montmartre, the famous graveyard. A busy bridge crosses it at a low altitude, almost scratching the roofs of the sepulchres. Nearby is the Moulin Rouge, the famous cabaret. I have to cross the Parc de Monceau, which is crowded by hordes of wild pupils. Eventually I arrive at the Arc de Triomphe. Instead of climbing on top, I read the inscriptions. There is "Dietikon" und "Mutta Thal" noted amongst the Swiss places, whereby the latter does not mean Thal/SG, but most probably Muotatal. From here I descend the Champs-Élysées. At Peugeot, there are a few hybrid vehicles and a Peugeot 404 Diesel record vehicle back from 1955. At a supermarket I buy something to eat for lunch. On the roof of a building, students are celebrating frenetically something. Upon following the sign "WC", I end up at a museum. They only let me in if I walk through the metal detector. My Swiss Army Knife is detected and I have to leave it there, but can reclaim it upon leaving. I continue to the Place de la Concorde and through the Tuileries gardens to the Louvre. There I find out that the Louvre is closed on Tuesdays - and tomorrow I wanted to visit it. It is only 13h, so I join the long queue of those willing to enter. When they check the bags, I am lucky as the machine is obviously not working properly. I buy my entrance ticket at a vending machine and hurry into the gigantic museum. After the sculptures and the rooms of Napoleon III on the first floor I follow the gradually denser streams of tourists to Mona Lisa, which I visit every time I am in Paris. I am surprised that taking photos is everywhere allowed. This is very unusual for a museum. After finishing the section of the Italian and Spanish painters, I am already pretty exhausted. I have walked many kilometres within the museum, despite only glancing quickly at the paintings. On the second floor, I look at the paintings of the French painters. Then I visit the department for Egyptian, Greek and Roman art, whereby I see for the first time in life such well-preserved Roman artefacts. Some are like new, but more than 2000 years old. In the underground there are the foundations and the moat of the former castle, which stood in this place, to be seen. I am pretty relieved when they close at 17:30h, without pressurizing anybody. I think I could easily have stayed 20 minutes longer. By underground I ride to the Bastille, where I should have changed trains. But this is impossible, as the stop has been cancelled at short notice. I manage with great difficulty to find access to line 8, which takes me to a station where I can change to line 5. Back in Hoche, I buy at a supermarket for little money a box with two large meatballs. In the meantime, despite the cold and wind all day long, the sun has come out and it is a lot warmer now. Around midnight, the hostel is shaken by the arrival of a load of schoolchildren. We also get an additional roommate, an Indian from Simla.

*17.05.11 Paris* The sky is of a dark grey colour. I take the underground into town up to the Centre Pompidou. I only view it from the outside; the spring of Jean Tinguely and Niki de St. Phalle is dry and appears battered. I walk to the nearby Memorial de la Shoah. There is a Bronze cylinder with the names of the extermination camps and large marble slabs with the names of the perished. My great-aunt is not amongst them, although she perished in Gurs. Inside the building there is a shrine for Auschwitz and a large and detailed exhibition, where one could easily pass several days. Somehow I must have got some bug at breakfast in the youth hostel, which anyway did not appear too trustworthy, thus I have to repeatedly go to the loo. When I get out of the museum, the sun is shining. I walk to the island of Cite, where the Notre Dame is now illuminated by the sun (but from the wrong side), back to Chatelet, past the aerospace authority

to the Pont des Arts, a pedestrian bridge across the Seine, where there are hundreds of padlocks on the wiremesh, with the names of the couples which have them deposited here. I walk back to cite, where I sit for two hours on the Seine island near Pont Neuf in the sun and watch the ships cruise past me. Now it is too late and the weather too good, thus I discard the planned visit to the Musee d'Orsay. I walk to the huge subterrestrial shopping mall Chatelet-Les Halles, with some 20 moviehouses, hundreds of shops and a swimming pool. Past the stock exchange I walk to the Eglise Saint-Eustache, then through the red light district to the Porte St. Martin. From here I walk to the Gare de l'Est. I get to the Rotonde de la Villette, which looks disused and is boarded off. At the Bassin de la Villette there is a two-stage-waterlock, which is just about to lower a cargo ship. In plain sunshine I walk along the Bassin de la Villette to the Parc de la Villette. There I am almost back to the youth hostel again. In a supermarket I buy some trifle to eat. Food is inexpensive and I hardly ever have to spend more than two Euros for some ready-made food from the supermarket.

*18.05.11 Paris-Boulogne-sur-Mer* I eat my breakfast and leave early in the morning. Although I had taken down direction from Google maps last night, I do not trust them and switch on the GPS system, which leads me dead-on out of town, despite the numerous construction sites blocking my route or making it look all different to what is recorded. As soon as I find the first signs to Calais, I switch the GPS off. The sky is covered by dark clouds but it does not start raining hard. In Beauvais and in Abbeville I have to look for petrol stations, because in between there are hardly any. In Abbeville I buy at a large supermarket something for lunch. I have to leave the backpack at the parcel counter. As the phone rings, the lady just walks away to answer it, while my backpack (with my netbook computer inside) falls off the table. I just manage to hold it. She doesn't even understand why I get so excited. I should have shopped somewhere else. I arrive in Boulogne-sur-Mer shortly before 14h. It is drizzling. I park the scooter. The youth hostel is alot better than the one in Paris. I put the luggage into my room (almost like a Hotel: With bath and an electric socket in the room) and walk into town. There I visit the pretty plain city center, then the old city which is still completely surrounded by a city wall and is very well preserved. I surround the city on the city wall. Then I visit the Square Mariette-Pacha, which is dedicated to the egyptologist Marietta. There is not only a statue of Marietta, but also a replica of a pharaonic Nile vessel. I return to the youth hostel and buy on my way there something for supper at Carrefour. After eating this, I leave again, walk along the La Liane river and the "Port de Plaisance" to the Quai des Paquebots and the Nausikaa-centre. Then I return to the youth hostel. The internet does not work as the wifi transmitter is not configured right and fails to allocate IP addresses.

## London

*19.05.11 Boulogne-sur-Mer-London* I rise at 05:30h, take a shower, pack my things and go to the breakfast room, where the helpful staff of the youth hostel has deposited a breakfast for me. I quickly eat it, pack the scooter and leave. Because I am in a hurry, I take the freeway. It is raining, but not too hard. I get well on time to the ferry terminal in Calais, where I line up in line 84. There I meet Jean-Luc Foulon from Calais with his 1200cc Honda. We quickly get to chat. He is a college professor from Calais and his English is virtually accent-free. He tells me that he is on a shopping tour to England and that his dayticket including the return trip is cheaper than my single trip. On board he invites me to a coke and we chat for a long time, although he is supposed to correct exam papers. The sea is very quiet during the crossing. Upon arrival in Dover, I ride to Canterbury, where I visit the cathedral extensively. It is interesting that the cathedral is built in two consecutive parts. Many famous people are buried here, among others Thomas Becket, who was murdered by the king's henchmen. I continue to London, where the navigation system lets me find my hostel so smoothly so that I wonder why I kept embarking on search expeditions before. I am stationed on the Isle of Dogs, where in Dickens' *Oliver Twist* Bill Sykes is killed while running from the police after murdering his fiancée Nancy. In a supermarket I buy a large container of drinking water. Then I walk through the pedestrian tunnel to Greenwich, where I go to the (already closed) observatory with the prime meridian (which is also valid after opening hours). There are enormous problems with the internet in the hostel, my computer type is known not to connect to the network. Today I can use my cable, though.

*20.05.11 London* I walk to the DLR (Docklands Light Railway) station, where I inquire for a weekly card. The responsible gentleman has no idea whether there were any and sent me to a newspaper shop. I do exactly that and indeed I can buy a weekly pass for the enormous amount of 32 pounds. By train I ride to Banks, where I get off. I visit the "Monument" (a victory pillar) and walk to the Tower, which is just about to open. I am taking a walk on the wall, then I visit the White Tower, the Crown Jewels, the exhibition on Torture at the Tower, as I run to the first guided tour (by a Beefeater, or Yeoman) which I join. One learns not much worth knowing, but the explanations are funny and humorous. It ends at the Chapel Royal of St. Peter ad Vincula. I still visit the Bloody Tower (where the two boys were allegedly murdered, at least according to William Shakespeare). Then I walk to London Bridge. From here you have a beautiful view of the city. Along the Thames I walk to St. Peter's Cathedral. There are mounted policemen. By underground I go to Oxford Circus, walk through Soho to Piccadilly Circus, then to Trafalgar Square, where the South Africa House is located. There I take the underground to Victoria Station, from where I walk to Buckingham Palace. From here to the Hyde Park Corner and along the side of Hyde Park up to the Speaker's Corner, which is now occupied by an event for the UEFA Championship. I visit Marble Arch with a strange gummy bear monument and a horse's head

as well as the actual Marble, actually a former entrance to Hyde Park. By underground to Canary Wharf where I get off. I visit the huge shopping centers and walk through the Docklands in between highrise buildings, past lovely restaurants along the canals to the ASDA supermarket, where I quickly get something for dinner. With the DLR, I ride back to Island Gardens, where I eat my dinner on a park bench before returning to the hostel.

*21.05.11 London* By underground to the Portobello Street Market. This is not all that easy, as large sections are under construction today and I have to make a vast detour. I walk through the streetmarket, which is interesting to see, but mainly geared at the tourists. At least I can buy some curios. From there I take the underground to Tottenham Court Road, where I buy an external Wifi USB Stick, as so far I have not been able to log my computer into a BT net. Apparently it is known not to function with their hardware. I ride to Kensington South, where I first get a sandwich, before I go to the science Museum. They have a huge steam engine under steam. It was built around the turn of the century, much more advanced than the ones I have seen in Tampere. Apparently the boiler is modern. I visit their not so fantastic space section, some other sections and get so fascinated at the steam engine models of the maritime section, that the staff has to kick me out when they close. I don't go home yet, but decide to walk in the tracks of Charles Dickens. I visit Gray's Inn, the Saracen's head area and the inner and middle temple. I do not realize that I am the last visitor and all has been closed, but I just follow someone and use the same exit as this person does.

*22.05.11 London* It is Sunday morning. My roommates have just come in, when I get up. I take a DLR train to Bank (where I can sit in front, as there is no driver) and try to reach Farringdon by underground. They are doing repair works to the underground all over and there are not many trains running today. At Liverpool Station I have to abandon the venture as the train obviously doesn't go any further. The station has a Victorian character. There is a sculpture in remembrance of the "Kindertransport" of 10'000 Jewish Children from Germany during WW2 in front of the railway station. I walk in direction Farringdon, through the Barbican Centre. When I get to the London Museum, it is almost 10am, so I wait until it opens. The exhibition shows the history of London since pre-Roman times. It is interesting to know that in the interregnum between the Romans and the Norman kings, London was all deserted and the buildings crumbled away. Upon completion of this museum, I buy something to eat and munch it in Postman's Park. A little bird eats the breadcrumbs right out of my hand. Then I start the "Lonely Planet City Walk": Church of St. Bartholomew-the-Great (which I do not enter because of the offensive entrance fee of 4 GBP), St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Postman's Park, City Walls (Barbican towers), the remaining tower of St. Alban's church (destroyed in WW2), St. Mary Aldermansbury Garden (church destroyed in WW2), Guildhall (city hall) where I visit the paintings exhibition, St. Mary-le-Bow church, St. Mary Aldermary church, St. Stephen's Walbrook church, Mansion House, Royal Exchange, St. Michael's Church, Leadenhall Market, the ultra-modern Lloyd's Building made of stainless steel, the weird 30 St. Mary Axe Building (called the Ghurkin, because it looks like one). I then have one more of these urgent needs which cannot be satisfied on a Sunday. Just in time I find an open loo at St. Mary-le-Bow church. I then walk across Millennium Bridge to the Tate Gallery, where I visit the Burke + Norfolk, Photographs from the war in Afghanistan exhibition and the Poetry and Dream collection. I get a big fright at the hostel, when my power supply suddenly stops working, but it is only the plug which fails to make contact.

*23.05.11 London* I take an underground to Willesden Green, where I visit Kingsley Court in St. Paul's Avenue. The block of flats still looks the same as 30 years ago, terribly dilapidated. My Uncle Victor who passed away some 15 years ago used to live here. I just wanted to see the place again. I return to Chancery Lane, from where I walk to No. 48 Doughty Street, the Charles Dickens Museum which is located in his former residence. The entrance fee is 7 GBP - extremely steep for that there are no exhibits worth mentioning. It is just for having been in his tiny little townhouse, which he later substituted for a grander venue. In then continue to the British Museum, which has a grand new mall. I managed to see a small part of its exhibition, some Egyptian, Assyrian and other ethnic exhibitions, as well as the Enlightenment Gallery which is set in the oldest part of the museum. In the Assyrian exhibition I eavesdrop on a guided tour, which I follow until I lose sight of them again (About the Elgin Marbles: Ever since Lord Elgin left Greece, the Greeks have lost their marbles AND now they want their statues back :-):-). At five they announce they are closing and I leave, as I can hardly keep on my feet anymore. At ASDA superstore I buy something for supper.

*24.05.11 London* Today I am not leaving as early as I usually do. I first make some bookings for my onward travel via the internet. When I arrive at the DLR station, there is a signal failure at Canary Wharf, thus no trains. I take one of the double decker buses to Canary Wharf, where I visit the Museum of London Docklands. The exhibition is very interesting, but too large to be completed. At 13h I leave and buy some mussels and bread at Tesco for lunch. As I am sitting on Cabot Square and munching away my lunch, an Australian approaches me and tells me that he saw me yesterday on the underground. He then tries to start a conversation about Jesus and I try to block it off. So we politely part again. I then take the underground to Queensway, from where I explore Kensington Palace (which I only view from outside) and Kensington Gardens. I visit the Prince Albert Memorial, the Serpentine Gallery with its strange avant-garde art exhibition and the Princess Diana Memorial Fountain and walk to Hyde Park Corner. From there I take the underground to Kensington South, where I visit the remaining exhibitions at the Science Museum, which I could not complete last time.

*25.05.11 London* I take the train to Bank and walk along the Thames River, as the weather is superb. At the House of

Parliament I turn right to Westminster Abbey, which I visit. The huge church, which is not a cathedral, is burial site for a multitude of prominent English, such as most English kings and queens, writers and playwrights (Chaucer, Dickens, Shakespeare in the "Poets Corner") and scientists (Darwin). The choir is like in many English churches completely offset from the sight of the audience. There is a cloister and a chapter house with photos of the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton. In the Abbey Museum they show wax figures of deceased royalty, which were used in the funeral proceedings. There is a little cloister, St. Catherine's Gardens behind and the large and quiet College Gardens. Last but not least, the tomb of the unknown soldier in the main nave. The church was built in the 13th century. From here I take an underground to Kensington South, where I visit the Natural History Museum. I can only see small parts of the huge Museum: Mammals, Dinosaurs, the Darwin Centre, Fish of the Deep Seas. I proceed to the magnificent Victoria & Albert Museum, where I see small parts of their statues collection, Japanese and Chinese art collection and Medieval collection. I was very surprised indeed to find the very column of Trajan here, which I have already seen in Rome, this here being the original! On completely overcrowded underground trains I ride back to the hostel. Apparently there was a problem on Jubilee line. At ASDA supermarket I buy a lot of foodstuffs for supper and have a feast on a park bench in Island Gardens, while some Staffordshire Terriers are begging for my dessert cakes.

*26.05.11 London* I leave the house late, as I want to visit the Maritime Museum in Greenwich, which opens at 10am. The museum is disappointing, exclusively addressed to schoolchildren, with little nautical contents. I proceed to the Royal Observatory, where I purchase a ticket and visit the museum. There are old clocks and telescopes, as well as the history of navigating longitude which was apparently only possible when sufficiently accurate clocks were available in the middle of the 18th century. And of course there is the zero meridian. The weather has changed dramatically, it is raining cats and dogs now. I proceed to the National Gallery on Trafalgar Square. The collection is overwhelming, thousands of first-rate paintings. I follow the recommendations of the travel guide and visit the rooms 43-46 intensively, where the impressionists are exhibited. There are some of the best Van Goghs I have seen and a multitude of Monets, Manets and Cezannes (who was kind of a forerunner of Pablo Picasso). At 18:00 they close. I have to wait only a short time (in the still pouring rain) until my cousin in the 2nd degree Ed Pirie meets me there. We go to a Chinese Restaurant. His charming wife Diana meets us there too. Ed is an accountant and Diana is a drug adviser working for Pentonville prison. We have a merry evening, which we conclude in the "Sherlock Holmes Pub".

## **Travelling upcountry**

*27.05.11 London-Cambridge* I leave a little later than usual, using the GPS. It takes me reliably to the vicinity of Canary Wharf, where it suddenly stops. When I look at the screen, it says "Unable to find target". For about half an hour I have no signal anymore. Maybe it's the dark black clouds hovering over me. I ride wildly in circles and land again in Canary Wharf. When I switch the GPS again off and on, it suddenly starts working again. Now I follow its instructions, sometimes with great difficulty because of all the construction work, for example, a roundabout does not exist or I should go straight ahead and can only turn. Finally I reach the city limits, which are actually not recognizable as such. The sky is dark and overcast, sometimes it rains. In Royston I ride on the main road towards Cambridge, until I have the bright idea of checking in my travel guide where exactly the aircraft museum is. When I realize that there are no connecting roads to Duxford I have to return to Royston for branching off to Duxford. In Duxford I visit the Imperial War Museum. The airport played a central role in the air combat against Germany in the second World War and is now a museum. Historic aircraft are taking off and landing, inter alia I see a Spitfire. In Hall 1, the most beautiful exhibits are on display. Needless to say that the English are perfectionists and each aircraft is in a fully functional state. In Hall 2, the ready-to-fly aircraft are positioned so that they can easily be moved out and used. In Hall 3, there are planes for aircraft carriers. In Hall 4 the Battle of Britain, i.e. the British fighter planes of World War II. There are numerous Spitfires of all types. In Hall 5 the new items are being restored. In Building 6 situated was the RAF command post during the Second World War. In hall 7, there are U.S. military aircraft, including a B52 Flying Fortress. In Hall 8, vehicles and tanks are on display, among others there is a VW Schwimmk bel (amphibious vehicle) and almost every British armored car, and the "caravans" of Field Marshal Montgomery. When they close at six o'clock, I drive to Cambridge. Upon arriving at Alan's Guest House, there has been a double booking. I shall have no room for tonight, but can I can sleep in the living room. I drive into the city, where I buy something to eat and look at the city center. Then I return to the Guest House where I am offered all kinds of things to eat.

*28.05.11 Cambridge* I leave early and ride the scooter into town. There I park it in Park Terrace. I then continue on foot. I first visit Bene't Church, the oldest church in town. I then visit the impressive St. John's College, which has five big courts and a "chapel" which in many places on earth could pass for a cathedral. The younger buildings are on the other side of the river Cam, linked to the old part via the "bridge of sighs", so called because it was built to resemble the bridge with this name in Venice. Punting boats pass underneath. I continue with King's College (which charges an outrageously high entrance fee of GBP 6.50), whose impressive chapel is also cathedral-size. It has a massive screen between the antechurch and the choir, on top of which a batwing-type organ is installed. The ceiling is fan-vaulted and apparently made from 12cm thick slabs only. There is a little museum in the north wing. The other buildings are not accessible, as they have exams right now. One can see the Wilkins Building at the far side of the front court and the



Gibbs Building to the right. Across the back lawn there is the Old Lodge. The Gatehouse is also visible from outside. I have my lunch from the supermarket in Jesus Green Park and then walk across a bridge above the locks of river Cam to Chesterton Road. There are many houseboats stationed along the shores. I cross back into Jesus Green on Victoria Avenue. A Beer Fest is under way and somebody is demonstrating a small jet engine which apparently serves no further purpose whatsoever. I visit Great St. Mary's Church and St. Botolph's Church with its noisy clockwork and then proceed to the Fitzwilliam Museum, a magnificently set collection of historic paintings, interiors, Egyptian and Coptic art, English and imported pottery. I really appreciate the Meissen figurines, which are beautifully preserved and masterfully crafted. The 15th century English pottery is extremely crude, hard to believe that 100 years later they made flawless china pottery. At five they close. I ride to a big Tesco supermarket, where I buy some food and return to the hostel, where I am greeted with the news, that I had to sleep one more night in the lounge, as they were again overbooked. Apparently, all the emails pertaining to reservations go to the owner, who is living in London and does not forward them to his manager on place. My brother Daniel tells me, that he will meet me on June 11th with a rented motorbike in the vicinity of Edinburgh and we shall continue together.

*29.05.11 Cambridge-Nottingham* I say goodbye to everyone at the Guesthouse, Jayson the Philipino-born manager and Luis and Clare, the Spanish-American couple who are trying to settle there. The sky is overcast with dark grey rainclouds. I miss a turn in Cambridge and have to do a loop through the old city before I get on way to Nottingham. I try to avoid the freeway. In Norman Cross I lose my way and switch the navigation system on, which leads me onwards. In Peterborough I stop at the Tesco supermarket and eat some pies for lunch. I continue following the GPS instructions. When it leads me around Nottingham, I get a bit suspicious. But when it leads me out of Nottingham again and takes to some sideroads. I check the destination. It seems right. I re-check and find out, that I only viewed the first page of five, all filled with Mansfield Roads in and around Nottingham. And the second-to-last item would have been the correct one. I have to backtrack a couple of miles, until the GPS tells me that I had arrived at my target. But wide and far there is no youth hostel in sight. I ask at a nearby shop and they tell me to ring the bell of a unobtrusive door right across the road and indeed, this is the "Igloo Hostel". I walk into town, but the weather is so threatening - there are black clouds and strong winds - that I turn around and return to the hostel.

*30.05.11 Nottingham* I leave early to explore town, which is not such a good idea. Everything is still closed and it is raining hard. They don't serve breakfast at the hostel, so I buy something at one of the convenience supermarkets which is already open. At Broadmarsh Shopping Centre I get some shelter from the rain. The caves are closed for refurbishment, though. I continue to the castle, where I arrive shortly before they open. I am their first visitor today. There is a large museum, with a section on the history of Nottingham, a very mixed collection of pottery, a paintings gallery and some very avant-garde modern art. I leave to buy some lunch in town and return on time for the tour of the caves. The castle is situated on a sandstone rock; there are several tunnels, one between the lower and the upper part of the castle (with an officers room and a dungeon), another one from the upper part to the mill, to bring in provisions during a siege - in those days the tunnel ended at a navigable channel. I then visit the Brewhouse Yard Museum, which has a very pretty exhibition on life during Victorian time and offers access to some of the caves which were inhabited for many years. On my way back I do some shopping at Victoria Shopping Centre. The old town of Nottingham is basically wedged in between the two shopping centres, with the castle overlooking it in the West. It is still raining, when I return to the hostel.

*31.05.11 Nottingham-York* I leave pretty early in Nottingham. The youth hostel in Nottingham made at first a scruffy impression, but it was quite comfortable. The internet worked and was free of charge, and there were not disturbances by drunken roommates in the dormitories, there was a kitchen and a lounge. I ride north. It is freezing cold, but it does not rain anymore. In Sherwood Forest I drive to the Visitor Centre. The forest is a loose oak forest, with bush and heath areas in between, not a dark pine forest as we are used to it. One can see for hundreds of metres; no wonder that Robin Hood was able to commit his robberies here. In Doncaster I make a right turn in direction Thorne. I visit the abbey of Selby, an impressive gothic building of an enormous size. In 1906, the belltower burnt down and the heat was so intense that the bells melted. The bell tower has sunk about a metre into the ground, thus the arches of the nave are completely distorted. They reckon, that the white and red stripes in the American flag are taken from the family coat-of-arms of the Washingtons, which had the same pattern. I eat my lunch in Selby. The sun has come out, but there are still black and threatening clouds. I continue and soon arrive in York. The GPS system cannot find the satellites and only manages in the second attempt. It takes right across town to the youth hostel. I check in and walk back to town, which is now basking in the sunshine. Across the museum gardens, where the ruins of St. Mary's Abbey are located, I walk to the city walls. On the city walls I walk all around town, but I get lost at Piccadilly and have to backtrack. Afterwards I walk past the Roman Bathhouse to Shambles (alley), a former butchers alley (Schamel = abattoir). I walk through the medieval old town, buy something to eat at Tesco Express and return to the youth hostel, where I chat with my roommates.

*01.06.11 York (Leeds)* Early in the morning I ride to Leeds. The GPS sat navigation takes me spot-on to Saltaire. In Saltaire I buy the manual for the self-guided walking tour and complete it. The town was built from 1853 by Titus Salt, a industrialist, for the staff of his textile mill, with pretty houses, churches, a hospital, a school, a bathhouse, shops and much more infrastructure. The textile mill has failed in the meantime, but the village has become a Unesco World

Cultural Heritage site. I continue to the Bradford Industrial Museum, whereby I get terribly lost and in the end have to use the GPS sat navi. I am very lucky: Many of the steam engines are under steam today. There is an abundance of steam engines in full working condition. The boilers have been replaced by a modern boiler and a compressed air pump. Adjacent is the exhibition of Jowett motorcars, which were also manufactured in Bradford. They had a quite unique engine: Two- and four cylinder boxer engines with thermosyphon-watercooling. They were said to be durable and economical. In the upper storey there is testing-, combing-, spinning and weaving machinery for wool, which were used in this factory. There are some machines from Switzerland, a Sulzer loom from Arbon and a Stäubli machine from Horgen. I return to York, not without stopping at a supermarket and buying something for lunch, which ends up taking far too much time. In York I quickly change to my street dress and walk to the National Railway Museum. There are many beautifully restored steam locomotives, where the drivers stand is open to the public. Of all the locomotives they say, that they were not usable anymore, because the boilers were dry for such a long time. In a second hall there are the luxury trains of the English kings and queens. There are like in most English museums a lot of very naughty children who run around, scream, climb through the barriers and purposely damage the exhibits. The parents don't interfere at all and neither does the museum staff. I am quite surprised, as in Switzerland, they would have been kicked out of the museum immediately. At six it is me that is kicked out of the museum, as they close for the night.

*02.07.11 York* I do my laundry. Terry takes me to the not-so-closeby Tesco supermarket, where I do my shopping. He then takes me into town. The weather is great, the sun is shining and it is warm. I visit the Minster, which was built in medieval times in the gothic style. On the same site was the Roman forum and a Norman minster of a smaller scale. During WW2 the stained glass windows were taken out and kept in a safe place. I first take part in the guided tour, then I explore the Chapter House and the crypt and museum in the basement. From here I walk to the Merchant Adventurers Hall, built only shortly after the Minster and despite its wooden (oak) construction still in good condition. The 13th-century hall has two naves and there is a large space in the basement, which served as an almshouse and hospital in medieval times. The Merchant Adventurers were a guild which possessed right into the 1820s a monopoly on most foreign trade. I walk a bit through town. Then I return to the National Railway Museum which I could not complete yesterday. I visit the Warehouse, a section where the exhibits are stored, which cannot be presented properly. There are hundreds of working models of steam locomotives, hundreds of track 0 train models and a coach which used to be part of the Flying Scotsman train.

*03.06.11 York-Newcastle-upon-Tyne* I get up earlier as usual and leave without saying goodbye to Terry, as he is probably still asleep. While I am driving north, the weather is getting better and better and the sun comes out. My first stop is at Greta Bridge, where the Morrill Arms Hotel used to be the inn at Greta Bridge, where Nicholas Nickleby changed from the stage coach to a simpler cart. At 10am I arrive in Barnard Castle, where I drive to the tourist information office and ask them for directions to Dotheboys Hall. They are most helpful and print an accurate map for me. In Barnard Castle there is also the pub to be seen, where Charles Dickens stayed when he was researching the book. In Bowes I immediately find Dotheboys Hall, nowadays a private residence subdivided in condominiums. I seek out the graves of William Shaw, the real-life Wackford Squeers and George Ashton Taylor, the real-life Smike at St. Giles graveyard. I quickly visit the castle and then hit the road again. At noon I arrive in Durham. I visit the 12. century cathedral, with the grave of St. Bede (not St. Beat!). It is an enormous norman edifice with pre-gothic features: Sturdy pillars, wider than gothic windows. I then proceed to the castle, where I take part in a guided tour. Most interiors are much younger than the castle, from the 17th century onwards. In the meantime it has become fairly hot and I am still in my padded cold-weather clothing, so I am sweating like a pig, but cannot shed them. I thus decide to shortcut my stay in Durham, get on the motorbike and continue. When I pass the Angel of the North, the largest Angel statue on earth, I stop and make some photos. With the help of the GPS I easily find the hostel, which is situated right in the heart of town. I may store my scooter in the backyard, whereby I have to make a huge ride to get to rear side of the house. I change into lighter clothes and visit town: Monument, Quayside, across Millenium Bridge, Baltic Square, across Swing Bridge, to the Black Gate and Castle Keep, on High Level Bridge to take some pictures of the bridges below.

*04.06.11 Newcastle-upon-Tyne* At 2am my roommates return, drunk as a skunk and very noisy. When they discover that there are already people sleeping in the dormitory, they get upset and shout at the top of their voices to wake everybody. They splatter their small change, the food they brought along as well as a can of coke all over the floor and then they fall into a drunken sleep. I seem to be the only person awake at 7am and when I hit town, the usually so crowded streets are empty. The weather has turned back to English standard weather, it is cold, overcast and windy, with the occasional drizzle. I walk up to Haymarket and back to St. Nicholas Cathedral - the photos yesterday showed to much shadow. I then continue to the Black Gate, Castle Keep and Quayside. I then return to the tourist office asking for a better map. They recommend joining the 10:30 walking tour, which is just about to start. I join as the only guest; the others are trainees. We do: Central Arcade, Grey Street (which used to be stream), High Bridge, Bigg Market, St. Nicholas Cathedral, Black Tower, Castle Keep, Bessie Surtees House, Quayside, where it ends. I then venture across Millenium Bridge to the Sage Gateshead, an ultra-modern monumental concert hall, which I explore. I then visit the Baltic museum of modern art, which has at the moment almost no exhibitions, only (very good) drawings by George Shaw and a video by Lindsay Seers. The viewing box is not accessible today. I continue to the King's Walk, where I visit the Hatton Gallery with very avant-garde exhibits of modern art. To my greatest surprise, they have a Merzbarn by Kurt

Schwitters, the famous German-Norwegian-English artist. I continue to the Great North Museum, where I visit the section of Hadrian's Wall, to prepare my visit there. At 17h they close and I have to leave.

*05.06.11 Newcastle (Hadrian's Wall)* I leave the hostel at eight in the morning and walk to Haymarket bus station, where I was told to look for the bus AD122. But no such bus. I return to the hostel, where I find out that the bus actually leaves from central station. I walk to central station and have to check every bus stand, until I find the right one. In the meantime it is raining. I don't have to wait long, until the bus AD122 arrives. The driver is labouring with his electronic ticket machine. I help him and manage to get the printer back to work, but now the computer has also kicked up, so that we end up getting handwritten tickets. After 1 1/2hrs drive I drop off in Chester Roman Fort. I check out the fort and the museum, then I start walking. It takes me more than three hours of walking in the pouring rain to arrive at Housesteads. There are hardly any other tourists. I visit the Housesteads Roman Fort which covers a large surface and has very well preserved foundations of a granary. I visit the small museum and then check out the part of the wall immediately adjacent to the fort, which might be one of the best preserved parts. Where it ends, I turn around and return to the car park, where I seek shelter in the souvenir shop from the rain. When it gets towards 17:30h, I walk to the roadside, flag down the bus - the same driver as in the morning - and happily find refuge from the cold and wet. The bus takes me back to Newcastle.

## Scotland

*06.06.11 Newcastle-Edinburgh* The weather is dry and the sun shines. I leave at eight, the navigation system steers me out of Newcastle to the Northumberland Coastal Route. My first stop is in Warkworth, with its romantic castle ruin. The actual Castle Keep was built as a residence, with many interesting details such as stairs from the basement to the public rooms, heated chapel and musicians gallery in the main hall. All this in the 14th century! I drive along the coast. In Alnmouth I stop and visit the little town. After Alnmouth I ride along the coastline, where I stop again. There is black slate-like limestone, which is overgrown with all sorts of seaweeds and shells. In the cliffs are gulls nesting. I continue to Bamburgh, where there is a huge castle. The entrance fee (£ 8.50) is steep, but I get a printed guide for free. The castle belonged to the arms manufacturer Armstrong, known for his guns, who restored it in the 19th century, expanding it after his own taste with teak interiors. In a museum on the castle grounds, there is a bizarre exhibition of aircraft parts, which come mostly from downed World War II aircraft. Since 16h is approaching and the sky is now overcast with rain clouds, I decide to accelerate the onward journey. I drive on the highway, faster than usual, to Edinburgh. In Dunbar I stop to refuel. Then the GPS navigation system takes me accurately to the hostel, which is located in a dark area of ??Edinburgh, where all the buildings are blackened. I walk to Tesco to shop, eat my dinner and then I walk around the castle that is lit up by the evening light. In the evening, the internet at the hostel cuts out just as I am about to book the last bed available in Inverness.

*07.06.11 Edinburgh* In the morning, I get a complimentary half an hour on one of the wired computers to make my reservations. The wifi router is gone for good and a replacement not in sight. I am one of the first to be at the castle. They are installing a monstrous grandstand for the royal tattoo on the esplanade. Dark skies. Instead of buying individual entrance tickets, I buy this time the explorer pass, which allows me to visit on seven days within 14 days any National Heritage sight. I visit the castle, which is filled to the brim with hordes of tourists as well as the usual unchecked kids. I get an audio guide and do my tour of the castle: Argyle Tower, Argyle Battery (end 18th century), One o'clock gun, western bailey, New Barracks, Prisons of War exhibition, Foog's Gate, St. Margret's Chapel, the oldest building on site, Mons Meg, the large belgian-made gun, Forewall Battery, Half-Moon Battery with David's Tower, Royal Palace with the Honours of Scotland (Scottish Crown Jewels), Great Hall, another Prisons of War exhibition, then the Royal Scots Regimental Museum, Royal Scots Dragoon Guards Regimental Museum and National War Museum. Those museums were all about the same: Lots of stories of which regiment was formed into which regiment and served where, on display personal belongings and uniforms of some prominent soldiers. In the meantime it is afternoon and I do the Lonely Planet Walking Tour: Cannonball House, Witches Well, Ramsay Garden, New College, Riddle's Court, Victoria Terrace, Grassmarket, Flodden Wall. Here a hailstorm catches up with me and for quite some time I have to seek refuge on the porch of a house. After George Heriot's School I return to the hostel, where there is still no wifi. So I go to the public library, where the wifi is working and free of charge.

*08.06.11 Edinburgh* I eat breakfast at the hostel, which is rather abundant for GBP 2. Then I walk on the Royal Mile towards Holyrood. I visit Dunbar's Close Garden, Holyrood Park, trying to take a few pictures of Holyrood Palace and the ruins of Holyrood Abbey, without having to pay the admission fee and then I visit the new Parliament building (1998) of the Scottish Parliament. I walk back towards the city, including stops at the Canongate Tolbooth, where I visit the People's Story Museum. I then walk to Calton Hill, where there is the City Observatory, the Nelson Monument and the National Monument. I walk past St. Andrews House to the Old Calton Burial Ground with the Obelisk (Martyr's Monument) and the grave of David Hume. From here I walk back to the hostel, where I eat my lunch, then I visit the National Museum of Scotland, with its well structured exhibition. It has an interesting section on the industrial revolution, with some beautiful steam engines and locomotive models. From here I return in the pouring rain to the Scottish Parliament, where I listen to a session. From here I walk into town, along Princes Street, to the Albert

Memorial and via George Street back to town. I return to the hostel where I fetch my netbook to go to the library for the Internet. In the evening I sit for a long time with the German teachers from Siegen and a Brazilian, Roland Scialom of Campinas near Sao Paulo.

*09.06.11 Edinburgh-Glasgow* For the second time my three Brazilian roommates return dead drunk at 1am, have a long, loud and pointless conversation, thereafter they falling into the sleep of the drunk, snoring very loud. Nevertheless, they also get up at 7am, to my greatest astonishment. After breakfast, I pack up and ride in sunshine towards Craigmillar. Although it is after 09:30h when I arrive there, the doors are open, but no one is around. I visit the castle ruins, which are not very much worth seeing. The lighting is not turned on and it appears like an abandoned haunted house, with birds and bats escaping as I enter. Upon leaving I am caught and reprimanded by the supervisor - the ticket office was in an unmarked private home. I do have a pass for all attractions, though. I continue my journey on the highway. Soon heavy rain starts falling. I stop on the hard shoulder and put on my raingear. Upon my arrival in Bothwell Castle, it stops raining. I visit the castle, built of red sandstone, which was badly damaged in the 14th Century in the Scottish wars of independence. Especially the perfectly built octagonal keep was then destroyed to make the castle unusable for the English. Just I am about to leave, it starts to rain very hard. I am riding into Glasgow, but there roadwork everywhere and I get into a traffic jam. I take about half an hour to cover two kilometers. Then I drive to the hostel where I check-in, unload and park the scooter on a public parking lot. Then I walk about three kilometers to the cathedral, which is surprisingly far away from the city center. It has a very impressive crypt with the tomb of St Mungo and a peculiar room for the British Legion. The Blackadder Aisle (named after a bishop, not after Rowan Atkinson) is an interesting lateral underground chapel. I walk to the Museum, which discusses the different religions. The highly praised exhibition brought me nothing, though. Then I visit the "Provand's Lordship" house, Glasgow's oldest dwelling, dating from the 15th Century and as far as possible authentically furnished. I then do the Lonely Planet City Walk in reverse order: Merchant Square (today restaurants instead of the market), Sheriff Court, Trades Hall, where there is an exhibition of apprentice work which I visit, City Chambers and George Square, with its many monuments. For a minute, the sun comes through the clouds and I can take some photographs. Then I walk past the Gallery of Modern Art and through the Merchant City Entrance Gateway. I walk back to the hostel and then return to the GOMA (Gallery of Modern Art). I visit the exhibition, which is apart from a few good pieces on the ground floor astonishingly trivial. I then buy at Tesco something to eat and return to the hostel, where I prepare it. I meet a Scottish engineer from the Perth vicinity, with whom I chat.

*10.06.11 Glasgow* In the morning I ask about the Transport Museum - unfortunately, it is closed and its successor Riverside Museum will only be opened in two weeks. I have to put together an alternative program. In plain sunshine I walk to the tourist information office, where they recommend me to visit the Peoples Palace. I walk there. It is a huge greenhouse with tropical trees, on one side with a Victorian building. The museum is only to open by 11am, but when I return at 11am, I am turned out again, as the museum would open 15 minutes later than usual. It turns out to be quite interesting, but focused on the Labour Movement. According to the instructions of the Clyde Heritage Guide I walk along the Clyde river west. Here I pass the Victorian Clyde Navigation Trust Building with its large statue of Neptune on the gable. Later on, I pass the two Rotundas which were once entrances to a tunnel under the Clyde, the Finnieston crane, which was built for loading locomotives on vessels and the site of the Riverside Museum. I chat with a former dock worker. Then I walk to the Kelvingrove Museum, which has a superb art collection, which is completely labelled in an exemplary fashion: For each exhibit there is a short description and flipover pages with further explanations. I have never seen such before and it is very visitor friendly. I walk back to the hostel, where I meet an elderly Canadian woman with whom I chat. It is still bright and so I'm doing the Public Art Trail: Facade of Goma (Niki de Saint Phalle, 1996), Wellington Monument, Transition at the Royal Exchange, untitled sculpture on the façade of the Ingram Hotel, St. Mungo Statue in 177 Ingram Street, front of 178 Ingram Street and the adjoining building, cherubs in Virginia Place, police box and 1920s sign in Wilson Street, Glasgow Bouquet in Hutcheson Street and facade of the Hutcheson Hall with statues of the Hutcheson brothers, monumental safety pin in Rottenrow Gardens, sidewalk engravings in Ingram Street and Candleriggs, Empire logo and Neon sign in Tontine Lane, Mercat Cross in Glasgow Cross, St. Mungo figure, cherub and skull in the Tron Theatre, and La Pasionara statue for the spanish civil war volunteers in Clyde Street.

*11.06.11 Glasgow-Melrose* I stay at the hostel until nine, as I don't want to arrive too early in Blantyre. I finish reading one of my books, then I leave. The sky is black, it is raining. In Blantyre I visit the David Livingstone Centre, which is situated in his birthplace, a former factory tenement. The quite interesting museum is about the life and convictions of David Livingstone and his numerous travels through Africa. At noon I continue. At a supermarket I buy something to eat. As I am sitting on a bench and eat my lunch, heavy rain starts. Upon continuing my journey, the rain subsides a bit. In New Lanark, the utopian textile worker village of David Owen, I visit the exhibition. From the visitor centre one gets to the steam engine, which is not the original steam engine used here (but it is said to be in working condition, though). Then one enters a disneyland-like exhibition, where one is taken through on a trolley, but learns little of interest and the machinery hall, where there is a still functioning spinning machine. I then visit the model school and walk to the waterfalls, which are not very impressive, being only two metres high. I visit the workers accomodation, the shop and the house of David Owen. Then I continue driving. It is raining very hard now. I stop at a former petrol station to find some shelter from the rain. The owner and his son show up and gladly give me directions to Melrose. In Galashiels I

buy something for supper at Aldi. At a petrol station I leave my keys and glasses on the till and when I am about to fetch them, the attendant brings them to me. At ASDA I buy something to drink, then I drive to Melrose, where I first end up on a footpath, until I find the youth hostel. When I am just about to unload my luggage, my brother Daniel arrives on his Transalp 750. To my astonishment he had no problems driving here, despite the bad weather. We eat the supper that I bought in Galashiels.

*12.06.11 Melrose* In the morning, the sun shines and we (Daniel and I) walk through Melrose and chat with the locals, who warmly recommend to visit Scots View. We explore the pedestrian bridge over the river Tweed and then visit Melrose Abbey, the ruins of a gigantic monastery, which was destroyed by the English in the 15th century. We return to the hostel, fetch the motorbikes and ride to Scots View, which we find without any problem. The view is good, but not outstanding. We backtrack to Dryburgh Abbey, another destroyed monastery of enormous size. In Kelso we have lunch in a small restaurant, then we drive to Floors Castle, the castle of the 10th Duke of Roxburghe. The entrance fee is GBP 8 and since it can be viewed from outside free of charge, we decide not to go in. We return to the village, buy our supper at Lidl. In the parking lot there is a strange vehicle, named "Minuki": The body is from a Mini, the chassis from a Suzuki jeep and the engine a Ford V6. We chat for a long time with the owner. Then we continue to Kelso Abbey, another ruin of a large monastery. Here, only part of the belfry is left. It gets late and we hurry to Jedburgh, where we visit the ruins of Jedburgh Abbey, the best conserved ruin of all of them. All the monasteries were destroyed by the English during the Scottish wars of independence. Riding home, we get into heavy rain. Because of an accident, there is a mile-long traffic buildup.

*13.06.11 Melrose-Falkirk* We leave early in Melrose. After just a few miles it starts to rain heavily, so that we have to stop and put on our rain gear. No sooner was this done, as it stopped raining. Then we keep getting rain showers. We ride via Peebles to Whitburn. There the chain Dan's rented motorcycle is rattling so badly that we ask at gas stations, if they had any chain lube. An Indian tells us to try in Bathgate. There, we first try at a DIY market, but it is obviously on liquidation and barely has anything left. At Lidl we buy something for lunch, then we succeed in finding a motorcycle shop. The owner not only sells us chain lube, he also tells us where we can find a nice view. We drive there. Because of the weather, the view is not overwhelming, but we can eat there in peace. With the help of the GPS navigation system, we drive to Polmont, where we find our accommodation soon - it is a motel, equipped with everything, even wifi and still cheaper than the hostel. We then drive into Falkirk to visit the Falkirk Wheel, a giant ship lift built in 2002. Because a difference in altitude of 35m has to be bridged, 11 locks (and a half day) were originally needed. The wheel contains two water tanks. The ships sail into the boxes, which are sealed at the end and balanced, so that both boxes are of equal weight. Then the wheel turns around, so that the lower vessel is up and the upper down. An ingenious design. We then ride into the city of Falkirk. The city consists mainly of shopping centers. I did not see any remarkable historical sites.

*14.06.11 Falkirk (Stirling)* In the morning we drive to Stirling. The sun is shining and it is warm, which is pretty unusual for Scotland. We visit Stirling Castle, which has existed since about 1300 years ago, but in its present form dates largely from the period around 1540. We participate in a guided tour, then we explore the castle on our own. There are costumed actors, playing scenes of medieval life. There is also a court jester who teases the visitors with his jokes. Impressive is the newly restored palace building, which only was opened to the public this spring. The ceiling carvings, the so-called "Stirling Heads" are painted in the original colors, which makes them appear very colorful. The great hall and the chapel are also remarkable, the latter representing the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. At noon, we walk into town, where we buy food at a supermarket. Then we visit the rest of the castle. We leave the castle to visit the National Wallace Monument at the other end of town. We do not pay the steep entry fee and do without a visit to the exhibition inside. We then explore the city: Royal Infirmary, which is to be rebuilt into a hotel (it seems that the money ran out, though), Erskine Church (now the YHA hostel), Tolbooth (now an art center), Stirling Old Town Jail (we save the Admission fee and do not enter), the Church of the Holy Rude (unfortunately closed), Cowan's Hospital, the Star Pyramid, Mar's Wark (a ruin from the 16th century), Argyll's Lodging, Norrie's House and the Mercat Cross. It's still good weather when we return to the hostel, making a short stop at the supermarket in Falkirk.

*15.06.11 Falkirk-Fort Augustus* The sky is dark overcast upon leaving Falkirk. Soon it begins to rain. We drive in the rain through the highlands to Fort Williams. There we stop to look at the town and buy some food in a supermarket. At the church entrance we find covered benches, which let us eat in the dry despite of the pouring rain. Dan needs to top up oil in his motorcycle, it seems to be losing oil somewhere. We continue to Loch Ness. The rain stops, there is even some sunshine. Shortly before arriving in Fort Augustus we visit the Bridge of Oich, a suspension bridge. At Fort Augustus we put up at Morag's Lodge and immediately leave again, to visit the Falls of Foyer. We walk to the falls and the former aluminum plant. When we return, it rains again, but we make it back in time. We explore the five locks that connect the Caledonian Canal to Loch Ness. At a filling station, we buy food that we eat on a bench on the shores of Loch Ness.

*16.06.11 Fort Augustus-Inverness* We leave and drive along Loch Ness to Urquhart Castle. Here we explore the ruins of the castle which was destroyed in 1690 by the defenders of the Clan Grant themselves - it was not to fall into the hands of Jacobites. From here we drive to Inverness. We leave our luggage at the Inverness Student Hotel and walk along the River Ness to the two islands, cross the river and walk back. We walk through the city and visit the Inverness Victorian Market. We check into the hostel, then Daniel goes off again, while I stay behind to do the much needed travel plans.

*17.06.11 Inverness* In the morning we ride to Fort George. We are a bit early, so we visit a viewpoint from which there is a good view over the bay. Fort George is a huge fortress, which was built around 1750 after the Jacobite risings. The fort is still in operation and is therefore in perfect condition. To mention is the regimental museum, which is a fine example of a dusty relic of past times. We drive to Brodie Castle which is, however, not open for visits today. We continue to Dallas Dhu Distillery in Forres, the only whiskey distillery of the 1950s which is still preserved in this state. After a tasting the product we continue to Elgin, where we a sign "Moray Motor Museum" prompts us to stop. And indeed, there is the small but fine museum of the hardware store owner McWhirter, with many perfectly preserved rarities (<http://www.moraymotormuseum.org>). We are the only visitors, so we get a free guided tour. Then we hurry on to Spynie Palace, a former episcopal palace, which has been an enormous building in the middle ages, with six floors. Today it is largely ruined. The Caretaker tells us his undoubted not-shared-by-all views of the Picts (indigenous people) and about his tuned Saab 95. Meanwhile, the sky is overcast and there is a drizzle of rain. We drive as fast as possible back to Inverness and arrive there before the rain starts. At eight in the evening we take part in a guided tour and then eat at a Indian tandoori restaurant.

*18.06.11 Inverness-Broadford (Isle of Skye)* Despite the bad weather forecast, there is some sun and it is dry. We fill up and I take a bottle filled with petrol along, then we head on the Achnasheen road towards Kyle of Lochalsh. The landscape consists of bare, grassy hills and plains and rivers in between. There is a railway without overhead line that runs parallel to the road. Just before Kyle of Lochalsh, we stop at a forest trail, eat the lunch we brought along and I fill the petrol from the bottle into the tank. On a high and humpbacked bridge we drive from the mainland to the Isle of Skye. Here it is raining heavily. After a short drive we arrive at Broadford, where we cannot find Broadford Backpackers, who have no street address. In the tourist information they tell us where they are and we go there and do the check-in. Then we get back on our motorbikes and head towards Portree. There, I top up the gasoline - there are only four petrol stations on Skye and a round trip has to be planned well. Shortly before Staffin the rain stops and there is even a little sun. We stop at various lookouts from one of which one sees the islands of Rona and Raasay. In one place there are the ruins of diatomaceous works, which were operated until 1914, mainly producing for Germany. At Dunvegan we visit the cemetery with the ruins of an ancient church, which is now a burial place for the chiefs of the Clan McLeod. We drive to Dunvegan Castle, which at this time (18:30 h) is no longer accessible, but from where one has a beautiful view of the bay. We drive along a scenic route along the coast to Bracadale. Shortly after 8pm we get back to Broadford - I do not have much fuel left in the tank. We buy haggis at the supermarket for dinner. At the hostel we wash our clothes and eat the haggis.

*19.06.11 Broadford-Loch Lomond* We chat a long time with our roommate, a elderly man by the name of Douglas Smith, who is a native of the Isle of Mull and tells us about his childhood there. The weather is yet undecided, when we leave. We stop at Eilean Donan Castle ([www.eileandonancastle.com](http://www.eileandonancastle.com)) in Kyle of Lochalsh. The castle seems to be in excellent condition. Only upon purchasing the ticket and visiting the museum, we get the full story: The castle was destroyed in the 18th century and only reconstructed from 1912-1936. In the meantime the clouds disappeared and there is some sunshine, but it is still very cold. In plain sunshine we ride in direction Invergarry. From there we backtrack the A82. We stop in Fort William, buy something to eat at a supermarket and sit on a bench. Across are an old woman and a man, probably her son, who nip on gin tonic. Behind us a man and a woman, both obviously drunk, sit down. The woman tells us that the man is her father, whom she was looking for the past 22 years. The two keep trying to talk to us, while we want to eat our food. We are quite relieved when we can continue our journey. From here the drive is quick. In Crianlarich I have to fuel up again. The last leg of our journey is along Loch Lomond in increasingly dense traffic. It starts raining. In Alexandria we ride into the village, where I fuel up and ask for directions to the youth hostel. They tell me to return to the highway, across the marina. I follow these instructions but fail to find the hostel and have to ask again for directions. It turns out, that the hostel is across the road, in a imposing former mansion. We quickly return to the village to buy some food for our supper.

*20.06.11 Loch Lomond-Newton Stewart* We get up at 5am, breakfast together, then I see Daniel off to his 700km-trip to London, which he intends to do in seven hours. It is a beautiful morning. I leave, too. In Glasgow I take the wrong onramp and end up on the freeway in the wrong direction. I take the first offramp, park the scooter and consult the map and the signposts. A motorcyclist stops and tells me to follow him. He takes me to the Johnston crossing. I then find my way without any further problems. In Irvine I refuel and ride in direction Girvan. My first stop is at Crossraguel Abbey. The huge and then very modern equipped abbey was destroyed in the course of reformation. Well preserved are the chapter house, the gate tower and the abbot's tower. I continue to Newton Stewart, where the Youth hostel is still closed, so I continue. My next stop is Carsluith Castle, the ruins of a defensive and residential tower, picturesquely situated on the seashore. I continue to Cardoness Castle, much bigger than the previous castle, but similarly built. Impressive is the later addition of a partitioning wall, which does not go all the way to the ground. I continue to Threave Castle, which is situated on an island on the river Dee. I am ferried over with a dinghy and visit the impressive tower. It is built like the others: Celler, four stories of living quarters. It is here that the infamous Black Douglas lived. I drive to Orchardton Tower, which was recommended to me at Cardoness Castle. It is the only round tower in Scotland, also a defensive and residential tower. My next destination is Dundrennan Abbey, the ruins of a massive abbey, which after the reformation was given to a vassal of the king, who destroyed it in order to sell the stones for building materials. My last destination

is Maclellan Castle in Kirkcudbright, a large mansion in the style of the castle towers. After the ruin of the Maclellan Family, the villagers used it as a quarry for building materials. At the harbour I watch the people catching crabs with little bags of ham as a bait. It is a beautiful evening, thus I stop on my way back and walk to the beach. Then I drive to Minigaff, where I am the only guest for the night at the youth hostel. At the supermarket I buy supper, as there is quarter price food, I buy an entire carrot cake. I call Daniel in London who to my greatest relief tells me that he arrived without any problems in London.

## Lake District to North Wales

*21.06.11 Newton Stewart-Ambleside* The good weather has changed to rain. I eat a huge breakfast and leave late. My drive takes me through the National Park to New Galloway and from there to Dumfries. Because of the heavy rain I cannot properly appreciate the beauty of the National Park. I then drive on the A710 to New Abbey. There I visit Sweetheart Abbey, a ruined cistercian monastery, and the still operable New Abbey Corn Mill whose machinery dates from the 1790s. I then drive back to Dumfries and on to Glencaple, where I visit Caerlaverock Castle, which is surrounded by a water-filled moat and despite the heavy destruction still lets you imagine the Grandeur of the 1630s. I carry on in direction Annan. My tank is almost empty and I miss the Annan road (which is only signposted from the other direction). When I ask a farmer for directions, he explains how to get to Annan. The road to Annan gets narrower, so that I already fear to be wrong. Nothing is signposted. When I get into a village, I ask for directions, but am assured to be still on the right track. Eventually I reach Annan on the last drop of petrol. I fuel up and buy my supper at Tesco and then hit the road again. On byroads I get to Carlisle (the Scots pronounce it Kor Lal) and find my way to Penrith. From there I take the A592 to the Lake District, a very bumpy, narrow and winding road with an incredibly steep mountain pass in between. Eventually I arrive in Ambleside. I have to ask in a shop for directions to Ambleside Backpackers. When I find it, I am so relieved to learn that they have a drying room where I can dry all my wet stuff.

*22.06.11 Ambleside* I walk to the tourist information office where I get a map of the lake. They recommend the Walkers ticket for the only publicly accessible walking trail along the lake. I buy the ticket and get on the motor launch (but very much alike a steam launch) which takes me to Wray castle. There I first visit the castle which was built in 1840 in the gothic revival style. Inside it is Victorian. I then do the lakeside walk to the Ferry House. Lake Windermere is England's largest lake, but it is only 17 km long. While I wait for the launch to Bowness, I chat with an elderly couple, the Sykes, who not only offer me sandwiches but invite me to their home in Sandbach, should I come this way on my way back from Ireland. After a short boat trip we alight in Bowness, from where I walk to Windermere. There I explore the old town, which is kind of a tourist mecca, like Arosa or St. Moritz. On my way back I walk into the Steam Launch Museum, knowing that it is not open. When I disclose that I am a member of the Swiss Steam Launch Association, I am greeted like an old acquaintance and given a tour of the premises. At tea and cake I chat with a 75-year-old boat builder who tells me about the difficult repairs of the steam launches. Most of them suffer from rot and it is difficult and highly qualified work to repair this. Their engines are all removed for maintenance. In the floods of 2009 there was considerable damage done to steam launches, the boats in the boatshed and some materials were washed away. I hasten back to Bowness harbour to catch the 16:35 "steamer" to Ambleside, when a Japanese asks me for directions to the Beatrix Potter museum. Fortunately I remember coarsely where I saw it and can help him. Now I have to run for the boat, which I catch just upon leaving. Back in Ambleside, I buy a large Pizza which I have for supper.

*23.06.11 Ambleside-Manchester* The sky is overcast and it is dark. I drive to Lakeland, where I visit the Lakeland Motor Museum. There not very many exhibits, but the condition of the vehicles is extremely good, some motorbikes look like new and only the scratches on the motor casing give away that they are used. In particular I noticed an MG M Type, the blue Bentley 4 1 / 4 of Sir Malcolm Campbell, and the Velocette and Neracar motorcycles as well as the British bubble cars. In a separate hall the record vehicles of Malcolm and Donald Campbell were exhibited. On the onward journey, the sky was overcast with dark clouds, almost like night. I put the rain gear on, but it never started to rain hard. In Penrith I turn on the GPS navigation system, which leads me directly to Ashton House Hostel. While I am doing the check-in formalities in the lobby, a worker walks up to me and says that I should immediately take the luggage off the bike, otherwise it would be stolen instantly. In addition, the receptionist tells me that absolutely no parking for motorcycles existed - I could put it in the garage if I were prepared to pay GBP 10 per day for a car. I thankfully decline and put the scooter on the sidewalk. Then I walk into town, buy some food and return to the hostel, where the owner is now back and tells me that I had to leave the scooter in the street because he would not have him in the backyard. I walk again into the city, where I look at the town hall and the library at least from the outside, and the cathedral. There is even some sunshine now.

*24.06.11 Manchester* The hostel where I am staying is a bit weird, almost dead, It lacks the exuberant atmosphere of other hostels, the rooms are all in the basement and dark. I walk into the city, to the Roman fort, whose north gate has been reconstructed. Then I walk to the MOSI (Museum of Science and Industry). The collection reveals little structure, but there are many fine exhibits. In Hall 1, there are spinning machines, in Hall 4 steam-, gas- and diesel engines, some of them running. In Halls 2 and 3 there are exhibits on water and sanitation, cameras, electronics and electrics. In Hall 5 there are cars and aircraft on display, including an Avro Shackleton AEW2 bomber. A steam locomotive is being fired

up. When I am done with the museum, it is already around four, thus it is no longer worth to visit yet another museum. I go to the tourist office, buy the instructions for the self-guided walking tour and run off to do at least part of it today: International Convention Centre (formerly Central Station), Bridgewater Hall, Castle Fields, Arena (where some festival is being prepared), railway bridges and Bridgewater channel, Merchants Warehouse and Middle Warehouse, Granada Television, Pump House, Opera House, Artillery Lane, St. John's Street, John Rylands Library, St. Mary's Church, St. Ann's Church and Royal Exchange. From here I walk to the Arndale Centre, where I buy food for my dinner.

*25.06.11 Manchester* I continue with the City Walk: Cathedral, Urbis (which will become the Manchester Football Museum), Chetham Library, Victoria Station, the Printworks, Triangle, Cross Street Chapel, Reform Club, Cobden House Warehouse, Craft Centre, Chinese Arts Centre (which has nothing on show right now). I then visit the People's Museum, which could be roughly described as covert advertising for the labour party. I then visit the John Ryland's Library, which is as dark inside as it is outside, with many valuable books. I then visit the St. Mary's RC Church, also referred to as the hidden gem, which indeed has a very uncommon altar. From here I walk a couple of kilometers to the Quays (Manchester's version of Docklands), where I visit the Imperial War Museum North (by Libeskind) which has few exhibits, but a lot of multimedia presentations. I then cross the modern pedestrian bridge over the Manchester Ship Canal, to visit Media City, the Lowry Galleries with exhibitions of Laurence Stephen Lowry (who was quite a talented artist, but later adopted a child-like style), Andy Warhol - Divas (with many excellent works) and Nadav Kander, Selected Portraits. Afterwards I visit the Lowry Outlet Mall, which for obvious reasons was recommended as a prime vista. I return by tram.

*26.06.11 Manchester-Liverpool* I get up late and try to make the required telephone notification to the hostel in Liverpool. I don't succeed, however, because the phone is not answered. After four or five attempts I give up and drive off. The navigation system steers me right to the hostel. To my great relief, the reception is open and I can unload my luggage, but since the check-in is after 14h, I can not change out of the rain gear. I walk into town and visit the Merseyside Maritime Museum. There is an exhibition on customs and smuggling (where we can even perform a search exercise), an exhibition about immigration, another with focus on shipping during World War II, and one about the sinking of the Titanic, Lusitania and Empress of Ireland. The third floor has an exhibition (with the usual stereotypes) about slavery and one with photos by Ian Berry on Apartheid in South Africa. Today is the first warm day since my departure, I am sweating as I am still dressed for winter. At the tourist information office I get a map and instructions on a walking tour. When it starts raining, I return to the hostel in order to fix Yvonne's computer via a team viewer session.

*27.06.11 Liverpool* I walk to past the Victoria Gallery and Museum to the Metropolitan Cathedral. From the outside it looks a bit like the cathedral of Rio de Janeiro, but on the inside it looks all cluttered, like a collection of odds and ends. I then walk to the Anglican Cathedral, started in 1904 and finally completed in 1978. The size of the neo-gothical church is impressive. The Lady Chapel, which in itself has an impressive size, was the first part of it to be completed in 1910. I then continue to Princes Rd Synagogue which is only to be viewed by groups and upon previous arrangement. The Williamson Tunnels I only find after asking for directions several times and they are closed on a Monday. I continue to St. George's Hall, closed today for a function, St. John's Garden with a very strange memorial to the victims of road accidents, past the Walker Art Gallery and down Whitechapel to the Albert Docks, where I visit the Beatles Story Museum. After completing the exhibition, On my way to the second site near the Royal Liver Building, I visit the Piermaster's House, where a 1940s wartime dwelling is re-enacted. At the second site of the Beatle's Story they show a 3d cartoon movie on the topic of famous Beatles songs. Most of the Beatles golden records are exhibited too. I then visit the Tate Gallery, where they have a very avantgardist collection of modern works of art. There are also works of my grandcousin Daniel Spoerry and of Jean Tinguely on display. I proceed to Mathew Street, where the Cavern Club, where the Beatles rose to fame, was situated. While it was warm and sunny in the morning, it is now overcast and cold again. Back to English weather.

*28.06.11 Liverpool* The weather is sunny and warm. I walk into the city and explore the small Chinatown around Nelson Street with its Chinese arch. In Duke Street I notice a well-preserved storehouse, the Humyak House, which even still has the pulleys for the winches. I visit the ruins of St Luke's Church, which was destroyed during WW2 by German bombs. Then I go to the Williamson Tunnels. I am the only visitor today. Alex, who is here under an employment program, leads me through the very short sections of the tunnels that are open to the public. The tunnels, built before 1840, have two or three arches on top of each other, each of which was probably just built to create a base for the next one. The purpose of the tunnels has never been found. The tunnels were filled with rubble in the 19th century. Some finds are now on display in the tunnel, particularly broken dishes and disposable pots, even a pedal car from the 1930s. My next stop is the Victoria Galleries and Museum, where I take part in the guided tour. There are casts of Hittite reliefs, dentures and dental instruments, worms and fish pickled in alcohol, and of course a small picture gallery. I walk to St. George's Hall, where I visit the former Crown Court, the Concert Hall and the cells of the accused. Then I walk to the town hall, where only the entrance hall (its fireplace has a built-in wine cooler!) is on display. It appears very abundant, and only the best materials were used. From here, I walk to the Bluecoat Building, the oldest building in Liverpool. I am so tired that I walk to the Albert Docks, sit in the sunshine on a bench and read up about tomorrow's



destination. A seagull sh.. on my jacket.

*29.06.11 Liverpool-Chester* It is overcast and cool. I ride in the drizzle to Chester. The Sat-Nav leads me perfectly to the house of my cousin Peter. Sandra makes sandwiches for lunch. I walk into town, get a map at the tourist office and visit the cathedral, where I participate in a guided tour. I walk on the city walls, whose core is back from Roman times, around the city, but make a stop at the Amphitheater and St. John's Church (which consists of the remnants of the former cathedral, which was largely destroyed). It starts to rain heavily, as I walk back. I meet a gentleman who is just unloading his 1928 Salmson, returning from an international Salmson meeting in France. At Peter and Sandra, there is a big dinner: Roast chicken with salad.

*30.06.11 Chester* I visit St. Peter's Church and Holy Trinity Church (today the Guildhall). Then I visit the Chester Grosvenor Museum. It focuses primarily on Roman Chester, has an art exhibition and the usual jumble of stuffed animals, as well as a house that is decorated in the style of various periods. I walk through the city and explore the "Rows", the streets with historic buildings. The sun is shining and it is warm. Therefore I walk along the banks of the River Dee and explore the suspension bridge and the Grosvenor Park.

*01.07.11 Chester-Conwy* I say goodbye to Peter and Sandra and ride in direction Conwy. The A55 has too much traffic, thus I ride on small byroads. I pass through Buckley. The weather is overcast, but it does not rain and sometimes the sun peep through. When I arrive in Conwy, the sun shines again. The well-preserved castle seems to dominate the bridge. I drive to the youth hostel, deposit my luggage and leave the scooter there. On foot I return (walking on the city walls) to town, where I first and foremost buy something for lunch. I buy a ticket for the castle and eat my lunch there. The castle is very impressive. It was once upon a time a huge complex with many floors. The wooden floors and roofs were of course removed a long time ago. The view from the towers is excellent. I then walk across the bridge to the other side of the fjord, where I buy supper at Tesco. On the other side of the city walls I walk to the highest section, there I climb down and walk to the youth hostel. I fetch my scooter and drive to Llandudno, an exclusive resort for the rich and the retired. I drive as far as possible, then I park the scooter and hike to the top of the Great Orme, a rocky koppie on the tip of the peninsula. I see the famous white goats and walk to the summit complex, where there is a good view of the sea. Upon walking back, I watch the historic Great Orme Tramway leaving. Upon walking back, I get terribly lost, in the end I have to climb through bushes. A resident explains how to find the path back, but I lose it once more - there are no signposts and many paths which could be the right one. Eventually I return to the scooter and drive back to Conwy.

*02.07.11 Conwy-Snowdon Ranger* I leave as late as possible, as the castles usually only open at 10am. There is plain sunshine. I drive past Bangor and across the bridge to Anglesey island and along the beautiful coastal road to Beaumaris. The Beaumaris Castle is a real gem: Surrounded by a water-filled moat and having two concentric rows of fortification, it was never completed, but the ruins are still very impressive. There are many rooms inside the inner walls, and an abundance of latrines which is very uncommon for the end of the 13th century. There is hardly any other visitors this time of the day. I continue to the village with the longest name, Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch (The church of Mary in the hollow of the white hazel near the fierce whirlpool and the church of Tysilio by the red cave), where I had to take the compulsory snap of the railway station sign. My next stop is Caernarfon, where I quickly get some lunch and then visit the Caernarfon Castle, an incredibly big and majestic building - although in many parts rebuilt - with museums, movies and many turrets, which I of course all had climb. It is really hot now and I am sweating like a pig in my waterproof bikers clothes. After visiting the castle I walk across the swivel bridge to the other bank of Selont River, from where I take another couple of pictures. I then drive to Tesco's, buy food for two and a half days and fuel up. The air dispenser for the tires does not work properly and when it keeps emptying the tire instead of filling it I get pretty worried, but in the second attempt I manage to get it working. I then drive to the Snowdon Ranger YHA, where the attendand turns out to be Swiss.

*03.07.11 Snowdon Ranger* I have a big breakfast, as all travel guides warn from the hardships of climbing Snowdon - I want to be prepared. The weather is fantastic, blue sky and plain sunshine. I start the ascent, which is to take three to four hours, at 08:30h. As I have plenty of time at my disposition, I keep a leisurely pace. After two hours, I am nevertheless at the summit... I enjoy the view, which goes as far as the Isle of Man. When a train approaches, I quickly run to take a picture - how surprised am I to see a steam train! As soon as it has entered the station, I walk around it onto the platform, where I can chat with the driver. The rack and pinion train was built by Swiss engineers, the engine in 1896 by SLM in Winterthur. The boiler is not original anymore. The engine takes half a ton of coal at the bottom station which is sufficient for one return trip plus some water which has to be replenished at the middle station from a tank installed there. I return to the summit, eat my picnic and slowly start the descent. Not far from the top I can see, after some searching, the entrances to the mines, which due to the poor ore were never really profitable. I descend slowly, but nevertheless arrive already at 14h at the youth hostel. Fortunately they have not changed the code of the inner door, so I can access my dormitory and fetch my helmet. Then I get onto my scooter and drive via Beddgelert to Harlech, where I visit another one of the famous castles of Edward I (Longshanks). The castle is dramatically situated on a rock on a steep incline. In the 13th century, the plains below were still flooded by the sea; today it has silted up and the village has expanded there. The castle is smaller than the other castles and is clearly divided in sections. The rooms had gigantic

measures and I wonder where they could find such long crossbeams. I continue driving to Porthmadog, where I stroll along the harbour. Then I return via Beddgelert to the youth hostel.

## Ireland

*04.07.11 Snowdon Ranger-Dublin* I leave at 9am, choose the longer and prettier route via Beddgelert to Llanberis. At a former slate quarry I stop and walk to the dilapidated installations. Maybe this was even one of the copper mines, of which there are many in the area. I continue to Bangor, where I first buy something to eat at a supermarket and then visit the small town. There is not much to tell of, the university on a hill, the cathedral, where an elderly lady shows me around and the pedestrian zone of the main shopping road, which leads around the cathedral. Bangor means wicker fence in Gaelic, thus there are more places of the same name. In the meantime it is almost 1pm and I have to hurry, if I don't want to miss the ferry. Across Menai Bridge built by Thomas Telford I ride to Anglesey and follow the signs to Holyhead. Suddenly there is no more signs and I get quite confused. But a policeman whom I ask for directions assures me that I am right, there are just no more signs. Eventually I get to the freeway and have to hurry a bit to get to Holyhead on time. 13:30h sharp I arrive at the ferry terminal, exactly on time. Upon loading the scooter I meet two Belgians who are travelling with heavy BMW bikes. The crossing takes 3.5h. In Dublin I am one of the first ones to drive off the ferry and drive according to my GPS navi. I arrive at the Celtic Hostel, which even offers me a enclosed parking for my scooter.

*05.07.11 Dublin* Today I have a very large program: I have to see all Dublin sights within a single day. I start early in the morning, when none of the sites are yet open: Trinity College, National Bank of Ireland, the British-built Castle with its statue of Justice of which the Irish say: "There she stands, above her station, with her face to the palace and her arse to the nation" and the Dubh Linn Gardens with the Coach House, the Royal Exchange (now City Hall) and the Christchurch Cathedral. At 10am I return to Trinity College, where I participate in the guided tour and visit afterwards the Book of Kells exhibition and the Long Room in the library, they claim it to be the biggest library room on earth. Afterwards I walk through the pedestrian zone of Grafton Street to St. Stephen's Green, where the Dublin Fusiliers Arch (1904) back from the Boer War stands. I continue to the National Museum which has an enormously rich exhibition on celtic treasures. Apparently they were sacrificed in the bogs and conserved extremely well there. Past Leinster House (1745) which houses the government now to Merrion Square, where I take snaps of the quirky Oscar Wilde Memorial. I visit the nearby Natural History Museum, which is like a relict from the Victorian times with its stuffed animals. Via the pedestrian zones of King and Johnson's Street I walk to the George's Street Market (the former South City Markets, 1894) and through them to City Hall, where I can now see the interior. I visit the Chester Beatty Library, with its exhibitions on religious books, on the art of book binding and a special exhibition on Henri Matisse. Past St. Werburgh's Church (1715) and Christchurch Cathedral I walk to St. Audoen's Gate (1275), a remainder of the old city walls. Right above is St. Audoen's Church, which is now obviously the meeting point of the Polish community, which seems to grow rapidly. I walk to St. Patrick's Cathedral (1192) and eat some cookies in St. Patrick's Gardens. Then I walk back to the river Liffey, the Four Courts, across Fr. Matthew Bridge and back to the south side across Millenium Bridge (1998). There is a beautifully decorated house on Essex Quay which I want to investigate further. Across Ha'Penny Bridge (1816) I return to the north side of the river and explore the pedestrian zone of Henry Street and Parnell Street. Now I have to hurry to the Garden of Remembrance (1966), which is bound to close in short. I then walk along O'Connell Street, with the Parnell Monument, Gresham Hotel, Father Matthew Statue and a strange Jesus statue dedicated to the Taxi drivers, make a short sidetrip to St. Mary's Pro Cathedral, where Mass is just about to start and I quickly leave. Past the Millenium Spire (2003) and the General Post Office I am tempted to make another detour into Earl Street North, with the lifesize statue of James Joyce and lined with shops. At the bottom of O'Connell Street is the O'Connell Monument (1882) located, made out of black stone and thus very difficult to photograph. I return to Parnell Street, where I buy my supper at Tesco. At night I go with Carine, Jo and Samato to a music pub on a drink.

*06.07.11 Dublin-Belfast* I leave Dublin at 9am, just following my nose. The first few miles I drive on the freeway to leave town, then I drive on the R132. Sometimes it rains a bit, but never much. In Newry I fuel up and decide, considering the traffic jam into town, to continue on the freeway. I turn on the navigation system, but it malfunctions and leads me around in circles. So I return to the freeway and drive, against the protesting GPS (turn around! turn around!) until the navigation system succumbs to it and starts issuing correct information. In a supermarket I buy some food, then I drive to the hostel, where I quickly check in and eat my lunch. There are two girls from Neuchatel (Switzerland) here. Then I walk to the botanical garden, where I visit the Tropical Ravine, a greenhouse from the turn of the century with tropical plants. Unfortunately are the glass panes and wooden windows completely in a state of decay. Then I visit the sophisticated and well organized Ulster Museum, with paintings, natural history and exhibitions on the history of Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, I'm ushered out by five. I walk back to the hostel, fetch the scooter and drive to the Catholic Falls Road to look at the murals. Twice I am bullied by motorists, who reckon I should use the bus lane - I'm the only one that complies with the 30 miles per hour speed limit. I photograph many of the paintings, then I drive through Northumberland Street to the Protestant Shankill Road, located directly next to the Catholic area. There, everything is decorated with English flags. There are a lot more murals than on the Catholic side. Between the two

areas, there are is a partition wall!

*07.07.11 Belfast* In the morning, I walk to City Hall, which has a Boer War Memorial and a Titanic Memorial on its east side and a Queen Victoria Memorial and Sculptures made from rubbish on its north side and a WW1 and WW2 memorial on its west side. I then visit Linen Hall Library with their collection of political posters and walk to the Tourist Office, where they mark the prime sights for me on the map. I walk to the ultra-modern Victoria Square Center, which has a view point on the top of its glass dome, from where one has a good view over town. If only the weather were better. It is cold, it rains and it is overcast. At 11am I take part in the City Hall Tour, where we are shown the portraits of former mayors and the representative rooms. I then walk to Tesco and buy something to eat. Unfortunately I have to eat it under my umbrella, as it starts to rain heavily. I then walk past the Grand Opera House and the Crown Pub and then across town to the leaning Albert Clock (the foundation settled in one corner) and the strange James Larkin Memorial (the same statue as in Dublin, but fitted to the facade of a house). Just when the rain gets stronger, I arrive at St. Anne's Cathedral, which was only completed in 1930 and miraculously survived the heavy bombing of 1941. I then visit Central Library and the War Memorial Museum, where a Burma War veteran shows me with great enthusiasm through the museum. In the meanwhile it is raining cats and dogs outside. Just when I want to leave, I notice that he has a bloody sleeve. I ask what happened and he tells me that he was knocked by the door and it cut his skin. We both go to his little office, where I grab the first aid kit and dress his wound. It is not a bad cut and it will not need any stitching, but he did lose quite a bit of blood. And his shirt and blazer are badly stained. When I am sure that he is alright, I continue to Customs House, with a funny statue of a speaker on its steps. I then buy a ticket for the Titanic Boat Tour. I am utterly surprised to find out that I am the only passenger on the boat "Joyce Too". The owner tells me that tourism has been very bad this year, possibly on account of the lousy weather. We see the WW1 steam turbine ship HMS Caroline, the Titanic Dock of Harland & Wolff, the builders of the vessel and parts of the Port of Belfast. He recommends me to follow it up with a walking tour, which I do. So I walk to the Titanic Quarter and see the dry dock and the pump house close-up. Near the Odissey Complex there is a funny sculpture called "the Kit" which shows Titanic as a Airfix kit. I then walk to Tesco, buy my supper and walk past the Europe Hotel (Belfasts most-bombed luxury hotel) and the Crown Pub (where I peep in) back to the hostel.

*08.07.11 Belfast-Derry-Donegal-Sligo* When I want to leave I cannot find my deposit of £5 where it should have been deposited for me and I must wait until the reception opens. At 09:15 someone comes and returns my deposit. Only now I can leave. I leave the city on the M2 motorway and then ride on the A6 to Antrim, Maghera and Derry. Despite the delayed departure and I manage to catch up and at 11:30am I arrive in Derry, where I buy something to eat and then go to the Tourist Office, where I am allowed to park the scooter outside the office. Then I walk on the historic city walls (1618) to St. Columb Cathedral, which I visit briefly, then around the city to the opposite side, where I walk down to the Catholic Bogside district, which is far below the city walls. There I see the following murals and monuments: Free Derry (on a remaining house facade, now on the center strip of the ring road), Bloody Sunday, Bernadette, Petrol Bomber, The Death of Innocence, Bloody Sunday Commemoration, H prison (on the center strip) , The Runners, Operation Motorman, Civil Rights, Saturday Matinee, John Hume, Peace. The wall paintings are made with synthetic resin paint in the style of socialist realism, with the exception of Peace, which was added later by the school children and is of a completely different style. There is also another, not cataloged wall painting, which is of worse quality than the others and celebrating Che Guevara. At the H prison memorial there is some kind of celebration. I walk back to the city wall, walk around the rest of the city and then into the interior of the town, to the WW1 monument, called "Diamond". The city was from the 1970s to the 1990s heavily bombed (by various extremists), resulting that many valuable buildings from the 17th Century have been completely destroyed. Interesting is the department store "Austin's" (1830) which they claim was the first independent department store in the world. I walk through the Ferryquay gate out of the city and visit the monument "Hands Across the Divide" by Maurice Harron, before I return to the scooter. There I chat with the tourist guide whom I have met earlier on the city walls, then I hit the road to Sligo. It is raining now and again, but never so strongly that I have to put on the rain gear. First, I drive through small mountains, then the landscape gets greener. In Donegal I stop and visit the castle. I am once more the only participant in the tour. My guide is obviously a First Nation, she is from Rosslyn NC. When I continue to Sligo, I make a detour to Mullaghmore on the coast. Suddenly the silhouette of the Benbulbin literally jumps at me, the mountain can hardly be confused, because it can be recognised from afar. It is a table mountain with a deep green base, which in some places has slid off. The sheep graze, even in the inaccessible steep terrain directly under the vertical parts. I drive to the parking lot of the nature reserve and walk along the base of Benbulbin to a lookout point from where I can shoot some good photos. Then I enter Sligo, where I park the scooter right in the city. I walk through town and see the Yeats Memorial Building, the historic warehouse Henry Lyons & Co, the old shops in Wine Street, the town hall, the bishop's residence, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (1875), where I can convince the sacristan to let in me quickly. On the banks of the River Garavogue everything is blocked, as a kind of car rally is held. I buy something to eat, then I drive the last 30km to Lough Arrow, where I am booked in the Arrow Rock Hostel for the night. I am kindly received by the owner and because the dorm is full, I even get a single room at no extra charge. His wife leads me through the property. I walk down to the lake where I watch the sunset.

*09.07.11 Sligo-Galway* After being so urgently recommended to visit the Carrowkeel burial sites, I ride the scooter

there. Of course I catch the wrong path and walk around for hours without finding the tombs. The sky is all dark. I walk back and try the other path. Just before the parking lot I have to leave the scooter behind because the road is flooded and one can only get through on foot. Meanwhile, my shoes are wet anyway and it's drizzling already. I find the burial sites and into the first one can climb inside, plying yourself through the narrow entrance. Inside one can stand upright. I took the torch along can see three grave chambers. The third one has, in addition to the three grave chambers below two smaller chambers on top of the side chambers. Now I must make my way to Galway. I ride in the drizzle on side roads to Ballymote, Ballaghdarreen (where I eat and refuel), Ballyhaunis and Tuam. Here I catch the N17, which leads straight to Galway. But in Claregalway there seems to be an event, there is a mile-long traffic jam. In Galway I don't need a navigation system, I drive right past the tourist information. When I inquire, where the hostel "Snoozles" is located, it is right across the street. I check in, change into lighter clothes and start exploring: JFK Memorial, Browne Doorway (an entrance area of ??an old merchant's house that was demolished), remains of the city wall (hidden behind a shopping center), Lynch's Castle (now a bank), Lynch's Window, St. Nicholas Church (built in 1320 as a unique three-aisled construction), Spanish Arch with a piece of city wall, Columbus monument, River Corrib Walk, Court House, Town Hall Theatre, Across the Salmon Weir Bridge to the giant Cathedral (1965), built of solid granite blocks. From here I walk along the Eglinton Canal to Wolfe Tone Bridge. Then I walk to Tesco, where I buy something to eat, I take it to the hostel and walk to the Dock Road, where the ships are moored. Meanwhile, the clouds have cleared and the sun has come out. I walk in the beautiful evening light "The Long Walk" and via the Wolfe Tone Bridge to the Quayside in Claddagh.

*10.07.11 Galway-Dingle-Cork* The weather is overcast and drizzling. I leave shortly after eight. I turn right at Kilcolgan onto the road to the Burren. On the beautiful coastal road I drive towards the Cliffs of Moher. The road is terribly bad, my scooter is suffering quietly. At the Cliffs of Moher, one must actually pay an entrance fee! The cliffs drop straight into the sea ([www.cliffsofmoher.ie](http://www.cliffsofmoher.ie)). The weather is still undecided, brief moments of sunshine followed by drizzle. I drive very fast, because I am hurrying to catch the 11-clock ferry. But progress is slow and I only arrive fifteen minutes later in Killimer, where the ferry departs. There, I have to refuel first. But I am lucky: The ferry is late and I still catch it. On the other side, in Tarbert, there is a huge power plant that seems to be shut down. I drive fast on to Tralee. Here I turn to Dingle. The weather is now getting better. I drive over the O'Conaire Pass to Dingle. On the other side there is bright sunshine. I enter Dingle, which is a very touristy town. At Lidl I buy fish and bread for lunch, which I eat on a rock in the harbour. Then I do the Dingle Peninsula Loop trip. The views of the blue sea are fantastic, with the backdrop of the deep green hills. Here, Ireland is so as we imagine it: Windows background picture alike. Again and again I stop and admire the scenery. One of the prehistoric Beehive Huts is right on the roadside, so I can see it without paying the entrance fee. Near a hill on the coast I stop and walk to the summit, from where there is a beautiful view. My next stop is the Gallarus Oratory. When I do not have enough coins for the admission, I am let in for my remaining coins! It is a most peculiar church, built around 1100, entirely of stone, even the roof, 8m long, 5m wide and 5m high. Inside, there is nothing at all. Now I have to hurry if I want to reach Cork tonight. I return to Dingle, fuel up and drive on to Cork. As soon as I leave the Dingle Peninsula, the sky darkens up and it starts to drizzle. The remaining distance is still quite large, around 100km. I drive to Killarney and then on the N22 towards Cork. The road is sometimes extremely bad, it has a very uneven surface. In Cork, the sat nav leads me in circles until I find Sheila's Hostel. After 12 hours of almost uninterrupted ride I need rest now.

*11.07.11 Cork-Kilkenny* I start with the city tour at eight. Coincidentally, I run into a sign "Cork Walk". That's exactly what I'm looking for, so I follow its instructions. I visit the building of the former Beamish and Crawford Brewery, the Anglican Cathedral of Saint Fin Barre's (1879), the Elizabeth Fort (1626), the South Presentation Primary School which seems to be abandoned, the Red Abbey of which only a tower dating from the 14th Century is left, the South Chapel built in 1766, but looking much newer, it was probably rebuilt later. Over the southern branch of the River Lee I get to Holy Trinity Church (1850), despite the impressive stone facade it is built almost entirely of wood. In South Mall, a former shipping channel of the river Lee, now a shopping street, the tour ends. I visit the English Market and walk through the pedestrian zone, then I return to the hostel, where I am doing some internet research regarding motorcycle shops. I find that there is a very big Honda dealership in Cork (Lee Motor Cycles) and manage, with the help of the reception, calling them. Yes, they had my tires in stock and I could come over to have them fitted. So I go there. The entire police force is there, they bring in their motorcycles to be serviced. They marvel at my scooter and it can't believe that I had driven it so far. They saw me yesterday at Roundabout, when I started up my GPS sat nav. After an hour, the tyre is fitted and I can continue. I drive on the highway to Youghal, where I fill up and eat something. Then I turn onto the R671, a tiny byroad and drive towards Clonmel. The drive is slow. Shortly after Clonmel I get onto the N76, which brings me swiftly to Kilkenny. There I turn on the GPS and follow its directions. When I am in the city center in a traffic jam, the van in front of me suddenly reverses. I try to drive away, but he catches my front wheel. It looks ghastly as it happens, but except for a scratched fender and a twisted handlebar there is nothing to see. First he says that it is OK, but I'm unsure whether it suffered damage. So he asks me to follow him to a motorcycle shop. I do this and the mechanic checks my scooter, straightens the handlebar and says that there is no visible damage. I'm relieved, because I want to catch the ferry to Holyhead the day after tomorrow and therefore have no time for repairs. I go to the hostel where I can put the scooter in the garden. Then I explore the city: Buying food, castle (one side was destroyed by

Cromwell's troops, hence the U-shape), the Tholsel (Town Hall, 1761), Saint Cranices Cathedral (13th century). Then I return to the hostel where I prepare my Cottage Pie.

*12.07.11 Kilkenny-Dublin* The weather is beautiful, the sun is shining. In the morning, I explore Kilkenny. The city center is compact, less than a mile long and only about two hundred yards wide. I visit the Black Abbey, whose origins go back to 1225, which however was more than a hundred years in ruins until it was rebuilt. The interior is thus from 1816. I visit the St. Mary's Cathedral (1857), although extremely large, not much worth mentioning. Then I walk past the old jail and court house, which still serves as a court. The building is quite forbidding, just as one imagines a prison to be. Then I walk to the Castle, which in the meanwhile has opened. The rooms have been largely restored to the way they looked under the previous owners, the butler family, with the pomp of the early 19th Century. I walk back to Irish Town, once again around the cathedral Saint Cranices. When I go in and want to buy an entrance ticket, at first glance I see that it is not worth it, so I refrain. I want to participate in a tour of the Smithwick brewery, which opens just now (11:30), but the tour is full, no chance of getting in. I buy some food, prepare it and eat it at MacGallaghans Hostel. Then I chat a bit with the owner before I say goodbye. I do not go far: In Dunmore I stop at the Dunmore Caves, which I visit. The entrance is similar to the Carlsbad Caverns, an oblique funnel into the mountainside. There are not many stalactites and stalagmites, because the river has stopped flowing through them only 50,000 years ago. As a participant wants to break off a stalactite, our guide gets quite angry and threatens to throw him out. A large number of the local celts was killed by the Vikings inside the caves, as evidenced by bones. I continue to Athy, where there is, due to pathetic traffic planning, a several-kilometer long traffic jam. I switch off the engine and let the scooter coast past the cars, which keeps my loss of time within limits. Shortly after that I get on a new piece of highway that is not marked on any map. In Kilcullen I leave the highway and drive on back roads to Naas. Then I have to return to the highway to get to Dublin. I arrive already at 17:30h at the Celts House Hostel, where I check in. Quickly, I change out of my heavy motorcycling gear and walk into the city, where I buy something for dinner at Tesco and eat it on a bench on the banks of the River Liffey. Once the sun is gone, it is getting cold and I explore the Temple Bar Quarter (entertainment district of Dublin), before returning to the hostel to prepare for tomorrow.

## South Wales and Southern England

*13.07.11 Dublin-Birmingham* I wake up at five in the morning and get ready to leave. Using the Navi I drive to the harbour, where I arrive half an hour early. When the usher asks which ship I am booked on, I say: "the Eight-O-clock-ferry". He replies: "There is no eight-o-clock-ferry". After some reflection, he says, "but this ferry runs at 08:05am." Aboard the ferry I meet Gerard, who arrives in the last minute with his Buell Ulysses motorcycle. He is Polish, but now lives as a bus driver in Ireland, where he is very satisfied with his life. With the motorcycle he travels to Poland for a few days off. We chat until the ferry arrives at Holyhead. Contrary to the weather forecast, there is beautiful summer weather. We part, he goes on the highway to London, I on the A5 towards Langollen. The road is pleasant and the Welsh countryside beautiful. First mountains and slate mines, then they taper out. After Langollen, I leave Wales and get into a more built-up area. I avoid Shrewsbury and drive on the R458 to Bridgnorth. There, I turn on the sat nav which leads me via Wolverhampton to Birmingham. The Birmingham Central Backpackers Hostel even has a backyard where I can park the scooter. The chain of the scooter rattles now terribly and will probably have to be replaced as soon as possible. I check in and walk into town, where I buy something to eat at Tesco. I feel a little sick. Maybe I just need some sleep?

*14.07.11 Birmingham* The weather is nice and warm in contrast to yesterday. In the morning I am busy trying to organize the maintenance of the scooter. First I buy oil and chain lube from Hein Gericke. Then I ask about chain maintenance at various motorcycle shops, until a Yamaha dealership refers me to a few miles distant motorcycle repair shop, who are the chain specialists. I go there and they look at my scooter immediately. The result was a relief: The chain was not completely worn, as I was told in Cork, but they had adjusted it incorrectly in Cork, which of course I could not check with my tight itinerary. It has some hard spots, but it sufficient to take me back home. The two sprockets are still good. The entire job cost me very little. At the hostel I change the engine oil, which I may dispose of in the adjacent garage. In the afternoon I go first to the tourist information, where I get two maps with self-guided city walks. I start as follows: St. Philip's Cathedral (1715), where mass is held when I visit, Victoria Square, with its monumental Council House (1879), and strange modern sculptures in front of it, which are based on Egyptian, Persian and modern designs, the former main post office, the Town Hall (1832) in neo-greek style, Chamberlain Square with the Museum and Art Gallery (1889), Chamberlain Memorial Fountain, Centenary Square, currently a huge construction site, with the Hall of Memory (1924), a memorial to the soldiers killed in the two world wars; Brindleyplace, next to the canal, then I walk along the canals along due east, beneath the streets. At one place there is a series of locks for narrow boats, the boat owners can operate them themselves. The channel is partly covered by later-built office buildings. I walk to the Georgian St. Paul's Church and the Argent Centre (1863), where I visit the pen museum and have a very pleasant chat with the attendants. From here, I do a little tour of the Jewellery Quarter. I walk past the Ramgarhia Sikh Temple and through Vittoria Street to Thomas Fattorini, one of the oldest manufacturers of the quarter, Chamberlain Clock (to commemorate Chamberlain's visit to SA), Warstone Lane Cemetary (1848) with its catacomb tombs, which are sealed with boards, Jewellery Quarter station, from where I walk back to St. Paul's Church. From here I walk to St Chad's

Cathedral, which is already closed, the Victoria Law Courts and the Central Hall across the street. As my current tour is finished, I buy something for dinner and return to the hostel, where I take part in an ale and cider tasting. I chat for a long time with Frank from Czech Republic, who has just bought a vintage Landrover.

*15.07.11 Birmingham* In the morning I go to the Bull Ring market, where surprisingly, however, little is happening. I walk to the Science Museum, where I notice the monumental, now abandoned, neoclassical Curzon Street Station. The museum is with an entrance fee of £12.50 too expensive, so I continue to the Law Courts, whose photos have not come out well yesterday. I repeat the photographs. Then I walk to the Museum and Art Gallery who have an outstanding collection of paintings. I particularly enjoyed the exhibition of local artists from the mid-19th Century, which have largely anticipated the Art Nouveau. It also has a special exhibition of the Staffordshire Hoard. When I come out it's too late to visit another museum. I walk along the western section of the canal from Broad Street to Mailbox. Then I go back to the Bull Ring markets and the now open church of St. Martin in the Bullring.

*16.07.11 Birmingham-Cardiff* It is raining cats and dogs. I eat breakfast, but it's still raining. I go to the market, but upon my return, the rain has become even stronger. Waiting does not help. I put on the rain gear, fill up the scooter and drive towards Solihull. There, I get on the highway (in heavy rain I cannot ride on byroads as I cannot read the signposts). The visibility is practically zero. I can not read the road signs because of the torrential rain. Where the highway splits, I get on the wrong section because I can not read the signs. At the first exit I turn around and turn now to the right highway. There is yet another junction, where I manage to find the correct lane. Shortly before Worcester my scooter is getting slower. I imagine already to break down on the highway, but when the rain subsides sufficiently to see the instruments again I notice that the choke is still on. I correct this and everything runs fine again. At Worcester I need to refuel. When I get closer to Wales, the rain gets less intense. Finally, in the vicinity of Cardiff, the rain subsides completely. In Newport fuel up and eat something and then I arrive in Cardiff, where I check in at Nomad Backpackers. I explore Cardiff Queen Street, the Tourist Information (where I get no useful information), St. John's Church, Cardiff Castle. The castle is indeed huge, but there is little to see. In the outer walls, there are tunnels that were used during the Second World War as bomb shelters and in the living area the enormously costly interior of the Bute family can be seen, which was only built in the 19th Century. The introductory film is completely useless, as is the audio guide, which works completely without a concept. Overall, the extremely high entrance fee is not justified in any way. And a must-see it is definitely not. By the way: Only non-residents have to pay admission fees; the residents of Cardiff are admitted free. The only interesting feature of the castle is that the exterior walls are built on the foundations of the Roman fortress, which is easily visible from the outside at no entrance fee. Meanwhile, even the sun has come out. I walk around the Millennium Stadium and through St David's Shopping Centre, buy a fish casserole for dinner and return to the hostel where I prepare it. Then I walk to Cardiff Bay. The residential areas along Lloyd George Avenue have been restored with much artistic skill and decorated with miniature works of art and naval accessories. Cardiff Bay is an upscale entertainment center, with the central Roald Dahl Plass, many restaurants at Mermaid Quay, the dominant Wales Millennium Centre, the adjacent Senate, the former Norwegian Church and the Lightship 2000. As I walk back, it begins to rain and storm heavily. My umbrella is flipped from one to the other side, tearing up all the threads. I make it back somewhat dry to the hostel. As I am writing the diary, a group of already fairly drunken youths compliment me out of the lounge - they want it all to themselves.

*17.07.11 Cardiff-Bristol* Early in the morning I leave Cardiff and drive off. There is a drizzle. The M4 freeway leads me across a huge suspension bridge across the Severn. On the other side of the bridge I get into heavy rain. As it is only another 15kms to Bristol, I don't get into the raingear and drive right into Bristol. There I fuel up and use the dry petrol station to switch on the sat nav which takes me to the 007 hostel, which is located in one of the poorer suburbs at a distance from the city centre. I leave my luggage there and walk back into town. My umbrella was damaged beyond repair last night by one of my roommates, so I am exposed to the rain. I go to the tourist office and ask about the main vistas. There is an abundance of places to see and many museums, most of which are free. I decide to see some of the sights first: The modern Broadmead area (where I buy a new umbrella), Bristol Royal Hospital (where I do not find the Banksy mural), Park Street (where I find the Banksy mural) and Council House and Cathedral. I then start the harbour walk, walking along Hanover Quay to Hotwells and Underfall Yards. I visit the historic vessel SS Great Britain built by Isambard Kingdom Brunel in 1843-45, then the largest ocean liner. I then do the self-guided curiosities trail, which I bought earlier at the tourist office: Queen square, Quaker burial ground with tunnels underneath, St. Mary Redcliffe Church, the ruins of Temple Church with its leaning tower (actually bent like a banana), boy poet Thomas Chatterton's birth place, the modern Shot Tower (to make lead shot), castle park, obelisk entrance to medieval caves, St. Nicholas Church (only church with minute dial), Queen Victoria Fountain (1859), Bristol Exchange with four "nails" to count out money, Lloyds building (1857), All Saints Church, Christ Church with its two quarter jacks, old Bristol Guildhall, Edward Everard Building, St. John's Gate, St. John's Conduit (medieval public water tap), Christmas steps, the lovely John Forster's Almshouse with the Chapel of the Three Kings of Cologne, St. Stephen's Church yard, burial place of Edmund Blanket, inventor of the blanket, Corn Street. Here I have to break off, as I still have to buy supper and then walk all the way back to the hostel. It is raining very hard, but I cannot use the new umbrella, which has already been damaged by the gales. Back at the hostel, the internet is not working, but starts working again later.

*18.07.11 Bristol-Bath* In the morning, I walk in the drizzle into town. The M-Shed museum is not open today, it is closed on Mondays. I walk to Brandon Hill, where because of the bushes the promised view over town does not materialize. I then walk to the nearby Bristol Museum and Art Gallery. Their exhibition on the painter Beryl Cook is quite charming, her paintings being full of humour. On the second floor they have a collection of excellent local and international art. I discover Lucas Cranach's portrait of Luther, very lifelike. At 11:30h I have to return to the hostel. I eat my lunch while walking back. At the hostel I load my scooter and get going. The distance to Bath is less than 20 kilometers, but the sat nav sends me twice in circles, probably because the road has changed. At the youth hostel, which is situated at the top of a steep hill in a posh area, I check in and return immediately to town. I walk past the Holborne Museum and Great Pulteney Street (which is lined with Victorian Townhouses that are like stencilled there), across Pulteney Bridge (which is built over with houses so that one cannot see the river Avon) and through Buildhall Market to the Bath Abbey, which I visit first. The cross-vaulted ceiling is very elaborately done and the walls are plastered with monuments. I continue to the Roman Baths Museum. The Great Bath is water-filled and the lead-lined bottom still watertight after more than 2000 years. There are a number of hot and cold baths and the 12th century King's bath which is in place of the former sacred hot spring. I then walk to the Circus, a roundabout lined with Georgian Houses, and the Royal Crescent, a further array of Georgian Houses. It is still raining very hard and it has become bitterly cold, so I return to the hostel.

*19.07.11 Bath-Stonehenge* The youth hostel in Bath is really an exception to the rule: Spacious, tidy, clean and friendly. So for the first time, I regret having to move on, but today, a lot of sightseeing is planned. The weather is threatening rain again, but right now it is no more than a drizzle. I drive in direction Avebury. At a petrol station, I have a long chat with the attendant who wants to know everything about my travels. In Avebury, I visit the prehistoric stone circle, which runs straight through the village. Between the stones, the sheep are grazing and one has to be careful not to step on their droppings. I don't pay the entrance fee for the Avebury Manor, but see it from the outside. I also visit the little St. James Church, whose core is Norman but the naves were added later. I then drive to Silbury Hill, Europe's largest man-made prehistoric mound (2400-2300 BC). From here I drive in direction Stonehenge. I stop in Devizes (sic!), where I buy some lunch and stock up with food for supper, as I don't know whether there will be a shop nearby the youth hostel tonight. I continue to Salisbury, where I stroll through the pretty town and visit the Cathedral (1220). There is an exhibition of the sculpture artist Sean Henry planned, so his statues are everywhere inside and outside of the cathedral, some like effigies of saints on those pedestals, some on top of the sarcophagus. The cathedral is monumental in size and, because it was never destroyed, the tombs are in excellent condition. In the chapter house, there is one of the four copies of the Magna Carta on display. The Magna Carta was drawn up as a truce between the king James and his Barons, who felt exploited by him and threatened to switch allegiances. In the meantime the sun has come out for a couple of minutes, followed by rain. I drive to Cholderton, where I am utterly surprised by the YHA: Super-modern, clean, spacious, free wifi and free breakfast. What more could one ask for? There is free entrance to the adjacent Rare Breeds Farm where I pay a short visit.

*20.07.11 Stonehenge-Exeter* After breakfast (which was included!) I leave the friendly Cholderton Youth Hostel and drive in direction of an intimidating dark grey wall of clouds. I feel really ill now; despite all the (useless) fruit I ate and the (more useful but too late) vitamin tablets taken I have lost the battle against the flu. For a week now I have been driving in biting cold and constant rain, now it got to me. My nose is running and I feel weak. After a few miles I put the raingear on. Just in time, as a torrential rain sets in. At times I cannot see a thing. It is like driving through a waterfall. In Yeovil there are signs to the Haynes Motor Museum ([www.haynesmotormuseum.co.uk](http://www.haynesmotormuseum.co.uk)). I follow the signs and visit the huge motor car museum. There is the red room, where all the cars on display are in the same red colour, some of the outstanding rarities. The collection comprises almost all British brands, even some makes which have long since fallen into oblivion. There are some excellent exhibits of American supercars, like the Duesenberg 6.9 Liter Model J Derham Tourster or the Cadillac Model 452A Madame X Imperial Cabriolet. When I continue, the rain has subsided. For about half an hour I enjoy the absence of rain, until it starts again. Because of the bad weather, I don't seek out byroads but move fast along mainroads. In Exeter I drive to the hostel, where I leave my bags and the scooter and walk right into town. I take part in a tour of Exeter's Underground Passages. The passages were built in the 14th and 15th centuries for the purpose of waterpipes leading into the city. During WW2 they also served as air raid shelters. They run under a good part of the city center. After the tour, I visit the Cathedral (1400), with its cross-vaulted ceilings and its astronomic clock. There is an abundance of colourful tombs inside the cathedral. I then buy my supper and walk to the River Exe, where I walk across the bridge and on the other side of the river to the next bridge. It is pretty far to get back to the hostel.

## England's South Coast

*21.07.11 Exeter-Penzance* Upon leaving Exeter, the sky looks like yesterday, a solid wall of black rain clouds. But it does not rain yet. I am still feeling rotten, but the aspirins last night did help a bit. About 20kms outside Exeter I remember that I forgot to grease my chain. I stop at a layby, spray the chain and put the raingear on. When I continue, after about half a kilometer, I remember that I forgot to put the little rubber plug back in. I stop and indeed, it is missing.

This could destroy my already withered chain within a short time, so I leave the scooter by the roadside and walk back (it is a freeway with unidirectional lanes). I find the rubber plug and walk back to the scooter, all in the heavy raingear. I continue driving, but the rain does not start, despite the dark skies. In Bodmin I stop at Asda, buy lunch and supper, as I am not sure whether the place I will stay tonight will be a backwater, and continue to Newquay. Suddenly I remember that I never looked up where exactly I had to branch off for the Eden Project, which Dorothee Rohner had so warmly recommended. I branch off and drive to St. Austell, where I ask at the tourist office for directions. It is actually pretty close to Bodmin, so I was driving in a circle. In the meantime the sun has come out and it has become a bit warmer. I don't buy the discounted ticket from the tourist office as I might get a greater discount there - the entrance fees are astronomically high. Upon arriving there, they want to charge me the full fare of GBP 22, which I am not prepared to pay. Eventually they find a way to key in the YHA discount, but I still have to pay GBP 18.70. I visit first the tropical biome, with rain forests from Malaysia, West Africa and South America. There are even some streams and waterfalls there. I then visit the mediterranean biome, with plants from Spain, South Africa and California. In the end I visit the educational "core", with a big "Tinguely-Machine" (not by the artist) and a video on the creation of Eden Project. I then visit the outside biomes and return to the scooter. I drive on the east coast of Cornwall to Truro and Falmouth, where I drive the scenic circuit and meet a Swiss with whom I have a chat. I then continue to Land's End. I forget to fill up petrol in time and arrive in Land's end with a mere drop in my tank. The evening is beautiful, there is bright sunshine. Everything is closed already, because it is past 17h. I return to Penzance, where I fuel up and then ride past the youth hostel without even noticing and have to ask for directions. I then check in at the hostel and walk into town, where I watch the sunset from the shore. Penzance is a tourist and retired OAP village, probably frightfully expensive, with all the infrastructure that one could possibly expect, including a Tesco and a Lidl supermarket. Upon walking back, I get totally lost (the map shows only some of the major roads and even those not correctly), but when I ask for directions I am already on the right track again. I prepare my meal and eat in great haste, in order to still have an hour or two for the diary.

*22.07.11 Penzance-Plymouth* I am leaving early because I have a long program today. In St. Austell I ride again in direction of the Eden Project. I park the scooter, go into the tropical biome when a nasty downpour starts. The thundering on the plastic shell of the biosphere is quite an experience. I do not attempt to climb the lookout, which today would be open, because of the long waiting times. In a dry spot I eat picnic. As soon as the rain has subsided, I return to the scooter and drive on, prudently dressed in rain gear. I make good use of it when I catch up with the rain front near Plymouth, which is like running into a curtain of water. Now I'm glad Dan has given me his surplus visor, because that's the only way to see anything. The driving glasses mist up instantly so I can see nothing at all. In Plymouth, it does not rain so much. I check in at the University of Plymouth, change and walk into town. First I go to the tourist information office where I visit the Mayflower Museum. Then I continue to the Elizabethan House, furnished in the style of Elizabeth I (late 16th century). Then to the Merchant's House, which is a museum. The top floor has a historic pharmacy, which was transferred here. In the second world war, Plymouth was almost completely destroyed by German bombs. These two houses are among the few that are still standing. I walk then the Armada Way down to the Hoe Park, where there is a Ferris wheel, a number of monuments (the Drake Memorial, the World War I and II Memorial, the Armada Memorial, the RAF Memorial and the Boer War Memorial) and Smeaton's Tower, a former lighthouse which has been dismantled at the original location and rebuilt here. Meanwhile, the weather has improved, at times there is sunshine. I visit the Mayflower Steps and explore the modern city. I still feel bad and today, and the flu has upset the stomach.

*23.07.11 Plymouth-Torquay* I wake up late, pack, check out and drive off. The weather is beautiful, although there is a black cloud hovering over Dartmoor, but it holds. I drive through Dartmoor, from Yelverton to Princetown (past the Dartmoor Prison) and then turn on an extremely narrow road to Hexworthy. Again and again I stop and take pictures. Everywhere there are horses and ponies. The weather is getting better. I drive very slowly in order to miss as little as possible. Between Buckfastleigh and Holne the road is lined on both sides by dense, tall shrubs, through which a trail is cut for the road. From here I return to busier streets. I arrive at 1pm in Torquay at "Torquay International Backpackers". I check in quickly - I have to carry my luggage five storeys high. Then I walk into town. I buy some food at Tesco and sit down on a sunny bench in the harbor, where I devour it. Then I walk along the pedestrian path up the steep hill and back to the Rest House, then into the city center to city hall and return to the harbour, where I walk on the road to Daddyhole Lookout. The weather is beautiful, the sun is shining and it's even warm. Very un-English. I walk down the footpath to the Meadfoot Beach lookout. I sit there a long time in the sunshine and watch the boats. Then I walk on the South West Coast Path back to the city, where I pass a strange WW2 bunker. At the hostel I take my dinner outside, and there is a group of girls who have already been drinking quite heavily. I still feel very ill with flu.

*24.07.11 Southampton-Torquay* When I leave, the sky is overcast and it is cold. There is a drizzle, too. I quickly have to stop and put on a sweater and rain gear. I am making good progress. At Exeter I get totally lost for a moment, when there are no more signs to the A35, but a passer-by can help me. When I approach Southampton, I notice that I am close to the Beaulieu National Motor Museum. So I decide to do this visit today. I pay the extremely high entrance fee of £17.75. The exhibition is really very good, there are many great rarities and all vehicles are in very good condition. Only few exhibits are from the postwar period. I especially like the vehicles that travelled around the world. Six such



vehicles are on display, incredible, that this was possible with an Austin, something unthinkable in times of British Leyland. An eccentric has even made a tour around the world in a children's car powered by a lawnmower engine. I also visit the not-so-interesting palace and the mostly destroyed Beaulieu Abbey, which was secularized by Henry VIII. Then I drive to Totton to check in, and go straight to the city where I walk along the city wall: God's House Tower (from which the floodgates for the moat around the city were controlled), Watergate, the former Beaulieu Abbey Wool House, Westgate and Westgate Hall, which was moved here from St. Michaels Square, Tudor House, St. Michaels Square, Catch Cold tower (which has nothing to do with the flu, but from invaders which were caught cold from here), Bargate. There is even some sunshine now. Then I return to Totten. The flu is subsiding.

*25.07.11 Southampton-Winchester* In the morning I am served a full English breakfast, which is included in the accomodation. Considering this, the B & B was not a bad deal! I deposit my luggage and ride the scooter in the city where I park it again on the motorcycle parking area of Red Funnel Ferries. Then I walk through the city in search of the Tourist office. I have no map. The city was almost completely destroyed during World War II by the Germans and since then has not been able to recover fully. It is noticeable that there are still large undeveloped areas in the city center and vast parks. Many shops are vacant. Two shopping centers are almost completely vacant or have only third-rate tenants. Only after asking at a petrol station for directions, I find the tourism office. There, they give me a photocopied map, not very good but still better than nothing. There are few sights in Southampton. I visit the Maritime Museum, which has two steam engines, a few ship models (including a about five metres long model of the RMS Queen Mary) and an exhibition on the Titanic, which left for its first and last journey from here. Meanwhile, there is plain sunshine and for the first time on this journey it is summery warm. Faced with this weather I do not visit more museums but walk through the city, the parks, the quays, where I end up at Ocean Village, a posh marina and buy my lunch there at Tesco's and walk to the end of the former Quays, where I sit on a bollard and eat my lunch while watching the boats go by. Then I walk back into town, buy some small items, and walk on the city walls back to the Town Quay, which I walk to the end. Then I take the scooter back to Brimar Guest House, get my luggage and drive through notoriously congested streets towards Winchester. In Winchester, I find the house of Eva Pirie, my cousin, immediately. We drink tea and she wants to know all about my travels.

*26.07.11 Winchester-Brighton* I breakfast with Eva, then I ride by scooter into town. The sky is overcast and there is a drizzle. I park the scooter in the centre and walk down High Street. The town is quite pretty, there are medieval and new houses in mock tudor style. The tourist information office is not yet open. In a photoshop I want to print some pictures, but there are too many photos on my USB stick. They recommend another photoshop, where it can be done and I am told to pick up the pictures in half an hour's time. I then proceed to the cathedral and take part in a guided tour. I quickly notice, that our guide is not able to keep it short. Indeed, the tour takes almost two hours - in between I even go to the loo without him noticing. The cathedral was built in the Norman style (1079-1093) and later "gotified" (1350-1410). It suffered from structural problems from the outset and the tower collapsed shortly after completion and the foundations started sagging. In the early 20th century, a diver (William Walker) had to dive into the water covering the foundations and reinforce them with concrete. Funny are the western windows, which were assembled in 1660 from the shards of the windows which were destroyed by Oliver Cromwells troops. Interesting the hole underneath the icons, where the pilgrims crept to Saint Swithun, to be closer by his bones. We still visit the crypt (which is flooded almost every winter), then I quickly visit the Triforium Gallery, where the Winchester Bible is exhibited. Then I pick up the photos and return to Eva, where we have lunch and I quickly show her how comments are inserted into JPEG pics. Then I leave in direction Brighton. The sky is all dark, but it does not rain. I ride via Petersfield and Midhurst. In Stopham I visit the historical bridge (built in 1757, extended in 1822). Shortyl before getting into Brighton I want to enter the address of the hostel into the Sat Nav, but it cannot find it. I enter King's street, but the Sat Nav gets completely crazy and takes me out of town. I stop at a petrol station, fill up and turn around, this time without the Sat Nav. Indeed, I almost automatically find the hostel. I check in, change and walk into Brighton, which is about three kilometers from here. I see the ruins of the second pier and the Brighton Pier. The city consists of massive concrete buildings along the beach. I walk to the princes palace and return to the hostel.

## **Back on the continent**

*27.07.11 Brighton-Boulogne-Sur-Mer* In the morning we get breakfast, despite the low price of accomodation. I then deposit my luggage and ride the scooter into town, where I park it next to the "Thistle" building. I walk to the Royal Pavilion and wait for it to open. The palace was built in the early 19. century in the islamic style and the rooms decorated in the chinoiserie style. They are richly, decorated if not overdecorated. The visit at the palace takes much more time than anticipated so I can only quickly visit Brighton Pier and have to ride back to the hostel, load the scooter and leave. I ride along the A259, the picturesque coastal road. As I left in time, I am not pressed and can take my time coasting along. I stop in Hastings, Rye and Dymchurch (Folkestone), where there is a strange round tower. It is one of 103 Martello towers, which were built in 1805 because of the threat of a napoleonic invasion. In Dover I refuel, ride into town and spend my last coins. I arrive at the docks a little bit late and hardly have to wait until I can ride the scooter aboard the ferry. Upon arrival in Calais, I am one of the first to leave the ferry. But when there are no roadsins

to Boulogne, I leave the freeway and first try to use the map, then switch the Sat Nav on. After half an hours ride on the freeway I arrive at the youth hostel in Boulogne and check in.

*28.07.11 Boulogne-sur-Mer-Reims* I leave Boulogne at eight. The sky is dark and it is foggy and cold, but it does not rain. I follow the directions of the receptionist and get up to a certain point, from which I can not proceed any further. All roads seem to lead to Abbeville. I turn on the GPS sat nav and take the road to Abbeville, from which after a few miles a tiny little road branches off to Desvres. Finally I get on the N341, which brings me up to Arras, although a couple of times I am suddenly riding on a road with a different number, because the N341 has branched off somewhere and I have to backtrack. Sometimes it rains a bit, so I have to wear the raingear. I proceed to Saint-Quentin and Laon, where I stop and buy some lunch. Then I drive up to the old city, picturesquely situated on a hill. A large part of the medieval city walls are still present. I park the scooter at the mairie, pick up a map at the tourist office, eat my lunch and start the tour: Cathedrale Notre-Dame (1150-1235), a huge cathedral, which is regarded as one of the most important examples of Gothic architecture in France, but the interior radiates in fact much Norman influences. Behind the Cathedral is the former Episcopal palace, now a courthouse. The gargoyles on this side of the cathedral are intended to represent the seven cardinal sins, but I can only see animals and humans. I walk to the Chapelle des Templiers (Knights Templar Chapel, 1134), the well-preserved Porte d'Ardon and to the other side of the hill to the Eglise Abbatiale Saint-Martin (1120). Meanwhile, the sun has come out and I'm sweating in my warm clothes, which had just been so urgently needed. I visit the church. From here I walk to the Porte de Soissons (13th century) and the enormously leaning Penchée Tour de Dame Eve (12th century). The ground beneath the tower has slid off, lopsiding the tower. I return to the Eglise Saint-Martin Abbatiale and visit the associated monastic buildings on the grounds of the hospital: Logis Abbatiale and the monastery buildings. I walk past the Hospice Petit-Vincent back to the Mairie, where I parked my scooter. A menacing black rain cloud from the west is threatening rain, so I drive fast. There are only about 40km left to Reims. In Reims I drive towards the city center because from the sight of the cathedral I would find the hostel immediately. But the route is blocked and the bypass road also ends up blocked, so that I find myself in a maze of one-way streets. To top it off, the dreaded rain storm starts. I park the scooter and try to find shelter in a driveway while attempting to fish out the sat nav. In this moment, the garage door opens and the not overjoyed owners pay me a punitive glance and leave with the car. As soon as they're gone, I stand under again. When the rain is subsiding a bit, I drive on. At the next square I park the scooter and wait until the sat nav finds my position. But somehow it starts going crazy. It can not locate my position reliably and repeatedly sends me around in circles because I am told to turn too early or to turn in the wrong direction. At one place, it insists that I drive down a bus lane, in another location, it wants me turn the wrong way on a separate lane highway. It is between five and six pm, everywhere there are traffic jams which I circumvent in a not-so-legal manner. Finally, I find the hostel despite all difficulties. I may put the scooter in the bicycle cellar. The cellar is usually only for bicycles, I am told but when I am finally given the keys and I put my scooter in, there are only large motorcycles in there. I walk briefly into town, then I prepare one of my last food emergency supplies.

*29.07.11 Reims-Strasbourg* When I go to breakfast at half past seven, I'm very surprised that at eight clock everything is cleared off; I suddenly realize that I've probably forgotten the day before yesterday to switch the clock and am still on UK time. Thus when I leave, it is already 10am. It rains a little. Once again, all the arterial roads are closed due to construction. Nevertheless, I manage to get through to the right side of town. At Champagne Pommery I stop. Because the next major tour is an English tour, I take part in it. The buildings of Pommery are held in the English style, because the widow Louise Pommery had found special favor in it when she lived in England for a while. The tour itself is extremely uninformative. We are led through the limestone cellars that were dug by the Romans for limestone extraction, about 30 feet below the earth and always have a temperature of 10 degrees centigrade. They are filled with all sorts of exhibits of modern art, especially sculptures and video. Then there are the reliefs commissioned by the widow Louise Pommery. In the end, the product is tasted. I meet a Swedish couple, with whom I chat for long. At 12 I continue driving in the direction of Verdun. I am making good progress. In St. Menehould I buy something to eat at a supermarket and then continue. The sky is very dark, and once it's raining quite heavily, but I get out of the rain area again. I stop nowhere, drive through and on to Verdun and Metz. This time, I cannot find the ring road and must drive through the city. I continue to Chateau-Salins and towards Strasbourg. In Delme I stop at the former synagogue which is now an art gallery, and am allowed to visit. In Sarrebourg I stop at Lidl and buy something for dinner. I only find a petrol station after scouring pretty much all of town. The last 40 km to Strasbourg stretch tremendously. In a place I believe to be in a one-way road and ride on the left, until a car comes towards me. I was obviously wrong! At eight clock in the evening I arrive in Strasbourg, fuel up again and go to the hostel. The receptionists are just at supper (both at the same time!) And therefore the reception is closed until 20:45. I quickly eat my dinner while I'm waiting for the reception to open. Finally I can check in.

*30.07.11 Strasbourg-Thal* At 1am a French couple join me in my room - the TGV is cheaper in the late night hours than during the day. I could not sleep anyway. In the morning I eat breakfast at the hostel and then drive towards Offenbourg. The roads are well signposted. The weather is still overcast and I am expecting a downpour, but it remains dry. In Villingen-Schwenningen, I have to refuel, but just as the gas gauge indicates it, there is far and wide no gas station in sight. Only in the next village, I find one at a shopping mall. Then I press ahead to Constance. There, I pick up a package at Mrs. Klein, who is shocked when I propose to dispose of the packaging in a public litter bin. Apparently she

has had bad experiences. I buy food at Aldi and load my scooter to the brink with food. Under gray skies, but still warm weather, I drive to Thal. When I arrive home, my garden is overgrown wild. The refrigerator has gone all moldy, so that I cannot use it. I first have to clean it for an hour. Then I put all the perishable food in and get the garden in order. I give Maex his U.S. flag and try unsuccessfully to get his U.S. TV set up and running. In the evening I drink with Beppi and Thomas a few glasses of wine.

\*\*\* This concludes my journey \*\*\*