

A map of Europe with a blue line tracing a route from the Atlantic coast of France to the North Cape of Norway. The route passes through the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, Poland, the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), Finland, and Sweden. Major cities like Paris, Berlin, Warsaw, Helsinki, and Oslo are marked. The text 'You're going where...?' is written in large, red, stylized letters across the map.

**You're  
going  
where...?**

**An Odyssey**

**by**

**Chris Kemp**

**A RECORD OF THE  
ODYSSEY  
UNDERTAKEN  
BY**



For  
Yvonne



Who didn't make the journey  
but for whom  
everything  
was always possible

On May 11th 2023 80-year-old Phillip Massey left his wife Dorothy (Dot), in the comfort of their Lancastrian home to catch the 14:25 from Manchester Piccadilly to Haddenham & Thame Parkway to meet up with 83-year-old widower Chris Kemp. Then on Friday together they left Stoke Talmage at approximately 14:00 to commence their journey to The North Cape in Chris' 43-year-old 3.5 litre V8 Triumph TR8 that he has owned since new.

For those still curious and not hitherto bored senseless by Chris' incessant chatter about the project over the last two years The North Cape or Nordkapp in Norwegian is the most Northerly place on the European continent, some 2,500 miles away from Oxfordshire and 350 miles north of the Arctic Circle that is accessible by road. Those of you still curious about the thought of this journey or inquisitive to know where this very forgettable speck on the map is and looks like go to Nordkapp – Day & Night - Webcam PANOMAX 360° and take a peek!

Ask not why Chris undertook the journey, for the answers are both long, personal, and emotional. The V8 had been converted to run on Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) and petrol in 2007. This is why Chris is known amongst Tealing circles as “The Gas Man” As a result of the LPG conversion, the 43-year-old veteran car is far greener than the mayor of London's bicycle and many if not most modern vehicles. subsequently “green” issues should not be a concern.

The North Cape was named by Steven Borough, an English navigator and early explorer of the Arctic. He passed by the cape in search of the North East Passage in 1553, while acting as the captain of Edward Bonaventure's ship. However, the region only became popular with international visitors in the late 19th century, after King Oscar II visited in 1873.

Following the King's visit, boat tours from Germany and nearby countries became more common. With the lack of a road, tourists followed a path from Hornviken which was equipped with wired ropes. If you didn't freeze to death en route, this difficult arduous journey was the only way to get to the North Cape and to experience the magnificent views of the arctic ocean. In the summer the midnight sun, and in winter the Northern Lights. The first accessible road towards the North Cape was completed

in 1956. However, before this time, the lack of roads didn't stop Thomas Cook & Son promoting tourism to the North Cape.

This story starts with the game of football. Well, to be factual the seed was originally "planted" in Singapore when, in July 2016 my two grandchildren James, then aged 12 and his brother Sam aged 10, were both picked to represent Singapore in the world youth football championships that take place annually in Gothenburg Sweden and better known as "The Gothia Cup"



James & Sam

In common with all grandparents, my wife (Yvonne) and I, set about plans for going to Sweden to give them our support. Driving the Triumph was the obvious and most pleasurable choice.

And so, Yvonne and I drove to Kiel in Germany, parked the car for a week and took an overnight ferry to Gothenburg. It was during this leg of the trip that the idea occurred to me that after the footie we should just keep going North until we reached the top.

With this extension of our plans in mind, I sought approval from General Headquarters (Yvonne) but it was not forthcoming. However, the idea had been planted and began to itch. Following the passing of Yvonne, the idea became even more compelling.

Plans to depart in 2021 and 2022 were flawed with uncertainties due to Covid, so 2023 became the target year. With the influx of summer solstice

tourists to the Cape, mosquitoes, and the inescapable fact the car was a bit crook and needed to be fixed; a departure in May had been dictated.

My original idea was to travel completely alone. However, as luck would have it my madness was shattered by a phone call from one Phillip Massey, a friend from The Teal Owners Club whom Yvonne and I first met in 2007. We were on the Teal Owner's Club, "Spider's Run Rally" from Lands' End to John O'Groats; this was truly a once in a lifetime opportunity and an unforgettable experience that made us friends for life.

Phill asked if I was still planning to go on this trip, and if the passenger seat was taken. Now the fact that I had clearly intended a solo journey, and that given Phil's poor sight, he could not drive or navigate, flew out of the window with my immediate answer of yes! After all, who would not want this loud, jovial, retired Lancastrian baker to keep me sane during the darker moments of the trip and amplify the lighter moments whilst simultaneously keeping both our feet on the ground.



The leaving of Stoke Talmage in the rain

And so, on midday of Friday the 12th May, watched by a few friends, Phill and I began our odyssey to the Nordkapp.

I had had the car extensively checked-over and thoroughly reviewed, by the car's longtime service support, Steve Hope, and also by the boys of the Classic Project Workshop in Bicester.

We set out for Harwich via Walton on the Naze, for a dinner date with my longtime friends Bob & Carol Livermore some 18 miles from the car ferry.

On reflection, that first 130-mile leg of our journey, encompassing both the M25 and the A12, was the worst of our entire expedition. This was because, very embarrassingly, we arrived 3 hours late for our last fish & chips. Despite the late arrival, the fish & chips were delicious and were very much appreciated.

Nothing much can be said about our overnight ferry to the Hook except that I had difficulties with accessing and exiting the top bunk because of my medical condition. The service is very efficiently run. However, I view it as overpriced and overhyped. Given the quality of the food is not as good as their “self-praise” suggests. They need to eat out more often!

We were greeted in The Hook with wall-to-wall sunshine which shone the whole day. What didn't hold was my TomTom route for our journey to Aduard in northern Holland.

Probably because of my incompetence and stupidity, TomTom insisted on us making this journey via the multitude of roads that sit adjacent to related drainage canals. After persisting with this route for an hour we both agreed to abandon this route and plugged-in a more direct route which took us via the A7 and over the Afsluitdijk / Zuiderzee dyke to Leeuwarden. The Afsluitdijk is a major flood protection dam and causeway, it was constructed between 1927 and 1932. The dam runs from Den Oever in North Holland to the village of Zurich in Friesland province. The dam is 32 kilometres long with a width of 90 metres, and at a height of 7.4 metres where it crosses the deep channel of the Vlieter.

At Leeuwarden Phill and I stopped for a lunch break when I introduced Phill to the delights of Dutch pancakes (Pannenkoeken) and the

experience of us both being told-off for not speaking “Fris”, the local Dutch dialect, claimed by many to be unintelligible!



After the very welcome lunch break, we proceeded on to our destination for the night, a Best Western Plus establishment conveniently located just off the highway in the village of Aduard, a stone's throw away from Groningen. The hotel did not disappoint, good food served by a good-natured family who attempted to serve me a caipirinha, a Brazilian cocktail made with cachaca, lime or lemon juice, sugar, and crushed ice which I spread all over the floor in a misplaced gesture of gratitude.

Upon the third day, we filled up with both LPG and 97 octane and proceeded to follow the route I had planned to Laboe via the ferry crossing at Glückstadt in order to avoid the massive traffic jams around Hamburg. However, as per the previous day, TomTom preferred the canal route so without wasting as much time as before we abandoned the plan and plugged-in the direct route to Laboe where we arrived not too stressed or late and in time for a very tasty raw herring dish that we would take many days to forget.

Laboe had been Phill's choice as our second destination as he and Dot had spent many vacations at the same hotel with her sister and her German husband. It turned out to be an excellent choice and as Phill promised, the Museum and memorial to the world's sub-mariners would not disappoint and produced some chilling facts. For example, in WW2 Germany lost 28,000 crew members from 784 submarines and another 5000 were taken prisoner out of a total of 41,000 recruits. This compares with the British loss of 74 submarines.





Sub Mariner's Memorial Laboe



U-Boat 995 on display at Laboe

Day 4 saw us leave Laboe but not without the dual struggle of looking for the nearest LPG supplier, which we gave up on, and very poorly signed major road works in Kiel, before we were able to break free of the metropolis and head north for the Danish border and even further north for our overnight in Aarhus. Now, LPG suppliers are short on the ground in Denmark, there being only 5, all of whom appear to be focused at supplying the camping and caravanning fraternity. Having abandoned Kiel and Laboe as suppliers, our first chance was just to the east of Aarhus at Lasby where we filled up before entering the city. We searched forever for The Atlantic Hotel which, of course, we found right on the harbour front, but not first without receiving instructions from a tapas café owner who we rewarded with our presence for dinner. The hotel was excellent but for one quirky feature that they insisted you use. This was a UK telephone box as a lift for luggage; to this day I don't remember how it worked but it surely was very cramped, stuffy and stupid.



The Atlantic Hotel Luggage Lift

Departing from Aarhus was fairly easy and we were soon on our way. The traffic was not very busy, the road was good with little variation for the eyes upon which to marvel. Our next destination was yet another LPG source; this time east of Frederikshaven our departure destination for the overnight ferry to Oslo. We duly arrived at the address in Tars, yet another camping and caravan outlet. In the late morning, we filled-up and then proceeded to the central bus pick-up point, a car park which boasted a kiosk that

served delicious fast food which we consumed and then rested in the sunshine before motoring on to Frederikshaven and finding the port. Not surprisingly, the ferry part of the port was closed so we made our way to the city centre, which was not more than a thousand yards away. Small but perfectly formed on a grid basis, it boasted a tiny but impressive array of modern shops that included a very smart pharmacy where I received some sound advice about the elasticated sleeve that I purchased to protect my arm from being knocked upon and bleeding profusely. The town also sported a great coffee shop that sold the most amazing chocolate cakes; well, it would have been rude not to!

Sadly, I was amazed to learn that there is a limit to the amount of chocolate cakes and coffee one can consume so we were forced to spend about 4 hours in the car waiting for the ferry port to open, the ship to arrive and for us to be on our way. However, there was entertainment in the form of a hare, yes, a hare, well you know a rabbit with very long ears. This beautiful animal was sadly not of the Arctic variety but the very common grey variation found in fields of corn and seldom in the wastelands of concrete that make up a port. None the less this creature entertained us by zooming around for about an hour.

When the ferry arrived, we went straight to our cabin and found, much to our great relief that both beds were on the ground, no top bunk for either of us, and so we went straight to bed; well if you don't count the beer in between.

We were awoken by the routine alarm that all ferry operators employ in the morning to ensure they don't carry you back to your point of embarkation. I had been advised by a frequent traveller on this service that the food was fantastic, well you could have fooled me or both of us for we agreed it was both mediocre and expensive. Having consumed what we wanted of it we spent the remaining time looking at the scenery that rolled past us as we went up the picturesque Oslo Fiord, as well as looking at the couple enjoying themselves in the hot tub!



Our arrival in Oslo was disappointing and confusing and bore no resemblance to the beautiful city I last saw some 60+ years ago. We appeared to go around in circles and go in and out of endless tunnels all within the city but that was not for long as within 15 or 20 minutes we were into the countryside dominated by birch and evergreen pines; the scenery that would dominate for many days to come.

Finally, we were in Scandinavia proper and heading for our first stop which was to be Mora a small 10,000 inhabitant community in Sweden but not before I had a senior moment and for literally a second, I dropped off to sleep and left the road for just a fraction of a second. Luckily there were no boulders or other objects to damage the car but it shook me up considerably and God knows what it did to Phill but he was very good and supportively practical; from now on Phill and I agreed that if I felt sleepy, we should stop for as long as it took for me to recover!!

The Bishop's Arms in Mora turned out to be a delightful small establishment and part of a chain of pubs and hotels littered across Sweden. Their food was good but not exceptional, the beer somewhat better with both being served with great friendliness. We topped-off the day by hooking-up my iPad with Judith Pernette and her husband Dominic at St Leonards Church Watlington where we joined the monthly jazz concert performed by Alyn Shipton and his quartet. The sound was very poor and not something I would repeat unless desperate but it was great to have been able to keep in touch!

We left the next morning at about 09:00 in bright sunshine, a feature that has latched on to us for the entire journey so far. The road we took was to take us to the east coast of Sweden, to the city of Sundsväl where I had expectations of seeing the sea, and then following the coast with the sea on our right for the next three to four days until we left the Gulf of Bothnia. However, this was not to be the case as we never saw the Gulf until we got to the very top and then only after that we had to return for reasons I will explain later.

Both Phill and I marvelled at the quality of the roads and in particular their surface, but not so the road signage for road-works or diversions. They were rubbish, either almost non-existent, or gave very little warning of the issues to come and appeared to assume you knew about the diversions anyway. The roads were endless, straight and lined with a constant supply of pine and birch. Very occasionally there were interruptions made by small conurbations of dwellings but seldom did we see any inhabitants or evidence that there was life except when we stopped for coffee or to “gas the car”



The way north to Umea and Lulea

The most memorable of our next stops was Umea where the Elite Hotel was Phill’s point to remember and mine to forget. This was where we had rather poor steak in one of those “all you can eat” buffets. Here we were served by a very sharp, well-spoken coffee bar philosopher and part-time amateur lawyer, who scared the shit out of me because he appeared to

know more about me than I did. Luckily, we could pay and leave without him pursuing us and devouring any more of our inner selves.

For Phill, the magnificent palatial brick building that is the Elite Hotel Mimer, in central Umeå built in 1897 was the focal point. It had previously been a school, but has now been transformed into a modern hotel with first class amenities. The grand building captured his imagination; for it was truly splendid, very comfortable and served a great breakfast. It was about this time that Phill decided that paying for lunch was a waste of money especially since he; a retired master baker, could swipe a few rolls from our breakfast venue, add butter and cheese and meat and create lunch for a king and save us each about ten quid a day. He continued to do this every day for the remainder of our odyssey and what a good thing it was too.

For me it was a tad sad that the scenery for the remainder of our trip north was to remain the same with no views of the sea that clearly was of key importance to the region. That is until we stayed overnight in Lulea and struck further north east on the E4 to join route 99 which was to take us up the Swedish side of the Torne River. We had 45 miles of happy driving up this highway to a place called Karungi where we stopped for petrol, coffee and a kip. It was here that we came into conversation with an admirer of the TR who casually asked where we were going next and expressed concern that we not should continue on the 99 to Muonio because of the very severe flooding. He advised a safer and more predictable route would be for us to go up the Finnish side of the river on route E8 which would take us to the same destination.

It was almost without any hesitation that we both agreed that we had better do as suggested for we had already driven almost a hundred miles and had another hundred to go. We now had to retreat another 50 before we could progress our journey, this time via Finland. Clearly time was not on our side, not that we would run out of daylight for it was now almost daylight for 24 hours, but that I would be too knackered to reach our hotel at Muonio.

Thankfully, the roads were clear, very good and the weather bright with few clouds so the recovery of the 50 lost miles was achieved without

any further holdups. We saw virtually no evidence of flooding until we reached the point where the river entered the Gulf at Tornio and we turned north again onto the E8 where we encountered the true extent of the flooding every mile we drove. There were stretches of this road that were closed, with the usual very poorly signed diversions forcing us into the villages of the hinterland. There were places where it was possible to see that the river had become almost a lake a mile wide and other places where the stream became a torrent of raging water with ice cubes. Even in the car it was possible to feel dramatic changes of temperature directly affected by the icy stream, as we went round bends and fell in and out of the dappled shade; this feature became a climatical fixture and remained with us on most days whilst we travelled at these Arctic latitudes.

The remainder of our day's driving was punctuated by more of these watery images and being followed by a big yellow, American style, school bus whose journey seemed to last forever. Together we meandered on and off this flooded highway with the bus picking-up the adults and children of the villages and dropping them off at odd points on the forested road; their homes nearby perhaps.



The flooded Torne River & re-joining the E8 by the flooded Torne River

When we arrived at our stopover for the night it was a bit disappointing in that it was a large garage complex with a very simple hotel, shop and eatery attached but nothing much to commend it. Zombie like, I happily lay my head down, ate something and cared not what, for I had driven some 313 hard miles!

The next day, Tuesday the 23rd of May we tanked the Triumph with petrol, with the absence of LPG in Finland, we headed north west for Alta in Norway, where there was promise of LPG and a different conurbation

and vista altogether.

We were now seeing a few reindeer, but very few and we both wondered what the penalties would be for their destruction by a car. They are domesticated animals and owned by various peoples of the nomadic Sami tribes that frequent this vast almost empty wilderness i.e., Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia all combined.

Alta is the most northerly city in Norway, yes, a city with its own Northern Lights Cathedral built in 2013 and brags a steadily growing population currently at 22,000. I can also attest it has a great Italian restaurant that served the most delicious reindeer ribs that were served by a young lady who confessed to owning 17 huskies and thus had the necessity to go out to work in order to feed them!!

However, on our arrival in Alta all had not gone well as the first thing we encountered was that the hotel appeared to be locked-up. When I examined my phone for Bookings.com for advice they said that the hotel had cancelled my reservation. However, the cavalry arrived in the form of a couple from Germany whose reservation had not been cancelled and they allowed us access to the building. We immediately claimed a double fronted front room bedroom that overlooked the fiord and awaited the arrival of the landlady.

Eventually, the owner showed-up and resolved matters and in doing so she explained that it was Bookings.com who had cancelled the room as she was prohibited from cancelling any reservation. She then explained that we had “stolen” the room which she had allocated to another guest but this was OK so we could stay! I subsequently found out that this enabled her to charge us a higher price for the room as she was free of any Bookings.com contract. The fiasco all started when Bookings.com attempted to take the charge for the room a day or so before our arrival and, if for any reason this fails, and it did, they then assume your credit is no longer good and cancel your reservation but they do tell you by text and, if like me, you fail to see or hear their communication you can be in deep kaka!!

In addition to the couple from Germany there were folk from Italy and a

married couple from Holland who were riding twin motor cycles. They told us they had given-up riding up the Norwegian west coast because the weather was so foul; this made me feel better and a vindication of one of the earlier decisions I had made.

Our one-night stay was very good with an excellent breakfast and an appreciation of the view from the room overlooking the fjord in winter. With the added entertainment of the Northern Lights and the perpetual sunlight of summer; it was disappointing that our stay had not been filled with more sunshine.



The Alta fjord as seen from our room and the hiding place of the German battleships Tirpitz and Scharnhorst during WW2

I should have mentioned that the landscape after leaving Muonio had changed dramatically from woodland scrub, pine and birch to a black peat-like flatness interlaced with snow. In the process of melting, it provided huge punctuated puddles that became lakes and then rivers; totally uninviting and seemingly endless and presumably called “tundra”



Arctic tundra

We left Alta, having filled the TR with both petrol and LPG. This was the very last place we were to obtain this fuel until we left Scandinavia



altogether. It was here that for the very first time in the car's history I knew I was filling a completely empty tank and that when full it took-on 52.2 litres into what was a 60-litre tank whose physical limit was 52 litres.

Honningsvåg is the nearest town to the North Cape. It is a colourful fishing village along the lines of St. Ives or Brixham but the comparison is flawed as the place is entirely man-conceived, and boasts only 4000 inhabitants. It is the most northerly city on earth whereas they are both much larger and, in my opinion, much, much prettier. However, they don't have to contend with Arctic black night for 6 months of the year and perpetual daylight for the other 6 months, nor the cold or the isolation. However the famous Hurtigruten Norwegian Coastal Ferry Express service calls in almost weekly throughout the year no matter what the weather.

We stayed at the aptly named Arctic Hotel and you might assume correctly it was not famed for luxury or its amenities but it was warm, reasonably comfortable and its food was just a bit better than OK. However the politeness of the barman, a Lithuanian and his compatriots who staffed the hotel made-up for the other shortcomings. What was very surprising was the number of black and eastern European people that appeared to be working inhabitants, presumably because there was work available and at good salaries. Of particular note was the Somali owner of the only bakery in Honningsvåg, although when Phill went looking for it on the day of our departure to buy fresh rolls, he could not find the location of its premises.

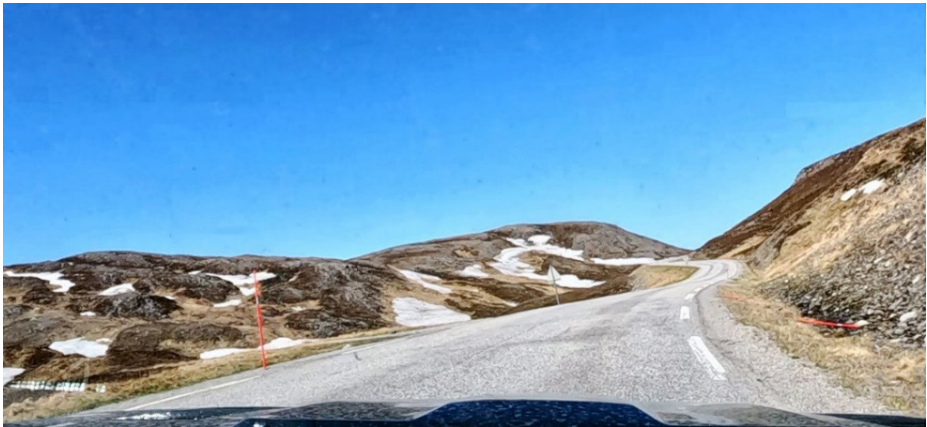
We stayed two nights in Honningsvåg with the second day used to travel the 18 miles to the North Cape which is actually situated on the island of Magerøya.

The route E69, first built in 1956, terminates at North Cape, which makes it the northernmost point in Europe that can be accessed by car but not the most northerly point of the European mainland, that would be at Cape Nordkinn which lies about 5.7 km (3.5 mi) further away and about 70 km (43 mi) to the east. That point is located near the village of Mehamn. The northernmost point of Europe including islands, is hundreds of kilometres further north, either in Russia's Franz Josef Land or Norway's Svalbard archipelago, depending on whether Franz Josef Land is considered to be in Europe or in Asia.



The tunnel to the island

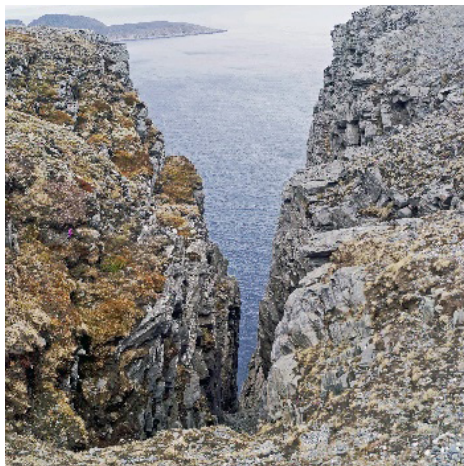
The visitor centre was built in 1988 and includes a café, restaurant, post office, souvenir shop, a small museum, and video cinema. To access the island, you drive through an undersea tunnel 4.3 miles in length. The tunnel took 6 years to construct and opened in 1999. Sadly, using the tunnel for us was not a pleasant experience. It was very badly illuminated; the signage was almost non-existent and the road surface was terrible with huge potholes. In summary a frightening experience and best undertaken in a 4x4 and not a low-slung TR8.



The final 18-mile ascent to the North Cape on route E69

However, the drive to the Cape is amazing for the road itself boasts a magnificent view of desperate dark landscape of lakes, streams, rivers and

tundra and on the day, we visited, unwelcoming and most inhospitable but perhaps with the sun shining, as it was in the GoPro 19-minute video we unknowingly shot, a welcoming place of glorious vistas and adventure. When you arrive at the “top”, for it remains an incline all the way to the visitor’s centre from where it then descends slightly and flattens out to reveal a stark plateau and the famous globe together with remnants and marks made on the surrounding stones by some of the Cape’s more famous visitors e.g., the King of Thailand in 1907 and various other heads of state but mainly European royalty anxious to demonstrate their interests in nature by having “the common” touch. Prior to the road being built the only way up to the plateau was by sea and then ascending the 1000-foot gully with the aid of ropes and cables. Amazingly this journey was even completed by ladies in their crinolines and depicted in pictures displayed in the museum.



The Gulley-Up pre-1956

Access to the Cape proper and the globe is essentially through the visitor’s centre a huge low long structure but inviting edifice that also housed a vast restaurant where much needed and good quality coffee and other edible goodies were available served by a team of Spanish waiters and waitresses. The waitresses that we spoke to all were on their second tour of the Cape presumably because the money was good and the social life was not far behind as we heard no complaints.

Having stocked up on caffeine and croissants we both felt fit enough to

brave the 300-hundred-metre walk to the Globe in what had become a howling breeze that threatened to blow you over should you succumb to its truly arctic gusts. There were two overwhelming thoughts about standing on the globe's plinth. The first was not to get blown over and the second was that having arrived, we have to get back! No real feelings of achievement or exhilaration, no desire to kiss the ground or the nearest human but an irresistible urge to get back into the warmth. This we did, with me napping for a considerable time before taking on the museum, gift shop and film theatre. The latter showed a couple of films about the place, people and animals of the NordKap in such an obscure and visually incomprehensible way for the question "Why did they bother?" to keep ringing in my head only to be reminded that it was Norway.

The land of Ibsen and Jacobsen; if only the conceivers of this project had thought to have gone a bit further south and drawn on the magic of Sweden's Axel Munthe and his "Memories and Vagaries" for imagination and visual inspiration that would have drawn out the beauty of this dark, cold lonely place and we would have all understood! As it was the darkness of this dark place was further amplified by the memorial that marked the demise of the German battleship Scharnhorst.

She was sunk on the evening of December 26th 1943 having been lured into a trap by the battleship Duke of York and her supporting vessels, the cruisers, Belfast, Norfolk and Sheffield. The deception triggered by the Norwegian resistance tipping off the British that she had slipped her anchor in Alta Fjord and subsequently confirmed by Bletchley Park who were breaking the German Enigma transmissions. She sunk and went down with the loss of most of Scharnhorst's total crew of 1,968 men as only 36 survived; what terrible New Year's news awaited the families of those poor men but we had to win!

We arrived at our objective at about 11:00 on the 25th of May and left a little after 15:00 not long after two plus years of serious planning. Was it worth it? Totally yes as I doubt that there have been or likely to be too many who travel to this place in the manner or in a car as we did or at our age. The very sad bit is that very few appear to know where the North Cape is. Most think it's in Africa thus totally ignoring the very descriptive title "North". The other question that I still mull over concerns the cost

of building the road to the Cape, the environmental impact, and the motivation(s) for the project. Has it fulfilled its economic objectives yet and would we today give the project a second thought?

The next day, if my memory serves me correctly, I felt a mixture of pleasure and relief as Phill collected our laundry and we pulled out of Honningsvåg and headed south towards warmth, safety, security and home, all still a very long way away. Nothing had changed except that on reaching the dreaded tunnel to the mainland, I knew I only had to go through it once more. It was interesting that on completing this sector we were greeted by a road worker who announced that a much awaited second and modern tunnel was to be opened on the 26th of May i.e., the very next day. Why didn't I plan for the whole thing to take place a day later?



Were we the last through the "old" tunnel?

Lakselv, is a large village of approximately of 2,400 people and the administrative centre for the region of Troms og Finnmark at the bottom of the huge fjord that stretches down from the Arctic Ocean entitled Porsangerfjorden and our overnight stay. Our hotel, appropriately entitled The Lakselv Hotel was a joy of tranquillity, comfort, good food and managed by an Englishman who when hearing about my medical condition rather took over and helped me make an appointment to see a doctor at the local clinic back in the town.

To be truthful I was not feeling great but not as bad as I had on leaving the UK, when as I later confessed to Phill, I had got close to giving-up. I had put my entire medical status down to the evil steroids and thought that if only I could reduce them all would be well. My lovely personal physician in the UK, Dr G D had declined my long distant email plea to do this without clinical testing to support her decision but here was a chance to get the test and support the appropriateness of a new and hopefully lower dose.

The examination by a friendly nurse went well and revealed surprisingly low blood pressure. A further 30 minutes wait revealed my C protein status thus allowing consultation with the doctor to commence. Dressed in combat jeans with huge pockets this twenty something blond in spectacles cautiously questioned me for about 15 minutes and concluded that she saw no reason to reduce my steroid dose and I should be on my way. So that is what we did the next morning driving through the diminishing tundra and increasing birch and pine forests that dominated the roadsides as we transitioned from Norway into Finland.

Our next port of call, the Holiday Club Saariselka some 160 miles south was a ginormous complex clearly geared up for the young, very young and their guardians but we were not interested in their snow mobiles, huskies, igloos and the other play paraphernalia of Lapland. We just wanted bed, food and booze. This we received in reasonable measure but not quality because on my McDonald's - Ritz scale it could boast about a 3. Of special note was the check-in manager who after my gentle questioning as to his accent admitted to being Russian and given the geography, we were only 150 miles west of Murmansk, he was displaced I felt the need to be consolatory towards him which prompted a well-rehearsed and sensible reply that he did not want to discuss the subject. That put me in my place and made me feel stupid for not thinking through the consequences of my questioning.

Rovaniemi, is the capital of Lapland, bang in the middle of Finland and the declared home of Father Christmas or so it is viewed by the rich and the aspiring rich of the world and their children; for the rest of the world and for all of the "have nothings" the place means bugger-all. This is precisely what went through my mind with our next stop too which

I had allocated 2 nights mainly for a break but also so we could meet Santa. Despite being a city of 64,000 souls whose livelihoods depend on academia and tourism I saw no sparkle, and on visiting Santa's Village some 5 miles north of the city centre a place of emptiness. The place clearly had been built to generate large cashflows on a Disneyland scale. Note to self and all grandchildren "find out when is the best time to visit Santa?"

Our meeting with the great man was also a disappointment as he and his elfin helper failed to grasp the opportunity to metaphorically and verbally "jive" with these English visitors and only went a little way in the jokiness of our intentions. An overpriced photograph of our visit is more or less all that remains of Santa's last chance to give me the Ferrari I had often asked of him.



Our audience with the great man and his elf

The only other memory smidgen of the place that remains is of the unintended bus tour we took returning from Santa's village. It was with total unjustifiable confidence that we decided to catch the same bus to return to our hotel. This turned out to be a mistake and after much muttering to each other we summoned-up enough courage to admit our stupidity to the bus driver who indicated a morsel of sympathy and put us off at the same stop we had got on not five minutes later; how about that for timing?

Our location in Kajaani our next overnigher, turned out to be very pleasant, except for the hotel, which was pretty grotty. It was pitched on the pine filled slopes of a hill overlooking a very inviting lake that stretched forward towards the town proper. Since the hotel offered no evening meals this prompted us to walk along the lake to the downtown area where we ate a very uninspiring “gunge” masquerading as a burger. I now officially hate burgers but the beer was good. During our walk to the burger joint we came across a group of men and women of all colours and ages taking part in a fishing competition to which they invited us to take part. Holding no knowledge or expertise of the sport we thought it prudent and kinder to decline the invitation and thus avoid the embarrassment of wining and having to throw the prize back.

The Sokos Hotel Vaakuna in Mikkeli appears to have passed us by without comment but there we overnighed en route to Helsinki. The next day we stayed in a very good hotel almost in the centre and adjacent to where all the buses and trams came through. This was the place that where very memorably, we were able to use Phill’s disability parking badge to our great benefit as otherwise parking would have cost us 4 Euro an hour and we were parked outside the hotel for over two days!!

Helsinki was not as I remembered, not surprisingly as it was 57 years previously as a 26-year-old salesman representing Isotope Developments. I had driven my laboratory caravan and long wheel-based Land Rover via a ferry from Sweden to Tuku to attend a radiology conference. Then it was warm and friendly. Today it was not and we got lost and confused with directions to our various destinations which made me somewhat irritable. None-the-less, the sun shone and we went on a cold but fairly interesting tour of the harbour and archipelago but not before losing our way through the super-clean 20th century buildings that is today’s city of Helsinki.

On boarding our tour vessel, which again due to Phill’s incapacity he rode for half price and I went free as his carer, we found we were being overlooked by teams of police snipers on the roof-tops of the main government buildings that surrounded the harbour together with rubber suited and armed marine police on the water next to us. Other than the spectacle nobody seemed bothered as it was caused by an unknown



visiting American dignitary whose life only the police were concerned about preserving. Following our harbour trip which also demonstrated where the rich and super rich lived, we ate street pancakes that I rated OK to good and took a long walk back to our hotel through the University area which was very tranquil but tiring.

Throughout our Helsinki experience it slowly emerged that Phill had developed a love of train stations and had fallen in love with Helsinki's main station. Apparently, to aficionados and now Phil, it is the most beautiful in the world having been completed in 1919 and designed by Eliel Saarinen. For both of us it became the best eating place in town for it boasted a superb Italian restaurant called Olivia where we ate at least twice and on one occasion being served by an Emirati male waiter in his late 20's from Dubai. Never before have I encountered such a phenomenon as "a male Emirati doing manual serving work"; I concluded that he must have met a visiting Finnish lady in Dubai, fallen in love with her and followed her home only to be cut-off from the family wealth and now forced to work to keep his love alive!



The Olivia restaurant Helsinki train station

Our leaving of Helsinki by ferry to Tallinn at approximately 10:00 on June 3rd was not without an incident or rather a verbal exchange of views, that took place albeit in tongues neither could understand. I took objection to

being told off for following a posted directive to form or join the queue for the boat.

Eventually we were allowed to board our ferry to Estonia or become part of a ginormous booze-cruise back to mainland Europe. Upon arrival our navigation system appeared to go a bit bonkers and send us to a hotel not more than 100 metres from the ship. This was what I was expecting but on attempting to check-in we were informed that it was another hotel bearing the same or similar name located just down the road. Over an hour later we discovered that there were three hotels all in the same vicinity with the same or a similar name and on our third attempt we found the correct one! Our euphoria was soon quenched for when Phill returned from a town browse, I discovered I had lost my phone, something not to be done as it had all the hotel and contact data on it. Although not the only source of this data it was by far the easiest to access. After walking backwards and forwards to the other hotels bearing a similar name, I finally found it in my bedside drawer; I grovelled with eggs all over my face and finally found forgiveness with Phill when we went to the restaurant he had scouted out before where we both consumed moule mariniere, for which I paid.

Other than the views round the docks and the newly constructed old town, we saw nothing of Tallinn except the next morning when we left, we found big wide roads and lots of big investment in buildings that appeared to pop-up almost everywhere but no LPG which is really what we wanted. We did finally find a serve-yourself garage and managed to escape after an hour of meandering the outskirts of the city. The road to Riga was straight, in good condition and protected by vast quantities of pines. As in Sweden the sea should have appeared on our right and we had 100 plus miles to do so but never did. The weather deteriorated and by mid-afternoon a drizzle had set in but this was of no consequence as we were warm and dry and whistling along at 60 mph. I decided I needed a rest and pulled into a lay-by and simultaneously the car lost everything, power, steering and electrics. Luckily, we were doing almost zero and were able to use the layby as a refuge. As everything appeared dead it seemed pointless to rummage around to find the problem and therefore calling the rescue service was the best and quickest option, after all that's what I had paid for. This proved a tad more challenging than I

had expected. Not because of a lack of phone connections or because of a language barrier.



Breakdown - 36 miles to Riga

I got through very quickly and spoke to a perfect English speaker who correctly asked about my position. I replied “I am 36 miles north of Riga on route A2 going south towards Riga” to which I received the reply “OK but where are you?” I patiently replied “I am 36 miles north of Riga on route A2 going south towards Riga” to which I received the question “Isn’t there a road name or sign near you?” to which I replied “No, just trees” to which the astonished voice responded “there must be a road name” to which I grittily retorted “I am 36 miles north of Riga on route A2 going south towards Riga you just need a map and a child of 5 years old and you could find me”. This did not go down well for the voice who then asked for my latitudinal and longitudinal positions to which I had no clue or anyway of finding out! This conversational stopper did just that and I received information that a pick-up truck would be with me within an hour; relief all-round.

Meanwhile over the road our predicament had been seen by a young lady in a 4x4 who had gone to retrieve her husband, clearly a knight in shining armour and a hero capable of fixing everything in her eyes. Our well-meaning and very kind helper did turn out to be very helpful for he discovered that if you fiddled with an electrical connection block just under and adjacent to the steering wheel and starter switch the car’s

electricity came alive momentarily and enough to start the car. Sadly, when we tried to move her, she immediately quit. Our new found friends suggested that we pursue this avenue of self-rescue which I politely declined in favour of waiting for the pick-up truck. We parted good friends and we thanked them for their help and apologised for rejecting their kindly meant suggestions.

The truck as promised arrived on time and transported us to a car pound on the outskirts of Riga where we duly awaited a taxi to take us to our hotel. After an even longer delay the taxi arrived blaming the pound supervisor for his poor directions. Eventually, we rocked-up at the Welton Riverside Hotel for the night, much relieved, fed and watered ourselves for the evening not knowing what the immediate future had in store for us.

The next morning, Monday June 6 and the 25th day of our odyssey the two key burning questions were, first to find out where the car was being repaired and two, when would it be ready? As it turned out there was a third question which was, who locally had the knowledge to repair the electrics on a 43-year-old British car in this day of plug-in chips and modules? This was the first issue that emerged from the lips of the person I called and my heart began to sink as they assured me, not very convincingly, that they would solve the problem but my mind began to fill with thoughts of cancelled hotels, appointments and challenging conversations with insurance companies. However, on putting down the phone the realisation that we were living in the Internet age dawned on me and I started Googling on my iPad and began to unearth a significant number of companies who alleged that they were expert and totally knowable in the intricacies of all classic British cars. Writing down their names I then called back the breakdown recovery folk and began telling them the names only to be interrupted and told my car was already being repaired by an expert company and how good they certainly turned-out to be. Over the next two hours I had a couple of brief chats with the company who at about mid-afternoon announced the car was repaired, ready and did I want to collect it immediately or should they bring it to our hotel. I declined both of these offers in favour of picking it up the next morning from their location which is what we finally settled upon. It was with much relief that night that I went to bed with the thought of

how were we going to make up the lost day as I had to meet my family relation in Warsaw in two days!

The next morning, Tuesday the June 7th our taxi was very late picking us up to take us the 17 Km to meet Ivars Dortans and his business partner Roberts Cimmermanis and their colleagues of SIA FINE AUTOMOBILES RESTORATION who were located at Strauta iela 6, Upesciems, Garkalnes nov.LV- 2137 Latvia. What a surprise this was for me as well as my now newly washed and polished TR8. This professional car restoration company boasted a newly renovated 1929 8 cylinder in-line Hupmobile Opera, a TF MG, a 1930s BMW, a Rolls Royce together with a plethora of other largish exotic machinery undergoing love and care before being released back to their owners. As already mentioned not only had the fault been identified, repaired and the car washed but they had identified other items requiring attention and where possible they had undertaken these in the interests of safety, good practice and securing their reputation. So, it was after much ooing and ahing over the cars that I paid the bill and drove out onto the highway and headed south towards our destination Vilnius the capital of Lithuania almost 200 miles away! The sun was shining and the pleasure of driving the repaired TR all went to heighten the day and the pleasure of being alive.



The TR was in good hands for its repair with SIA FINE AUTOMOBILES RESTORATION

That was until remarkably some miles after we had left when I came to use the indicators and found to my horror that neither the left nor the right worked. Sadly, we had gone too far to turn back and have Fine Autos take another look so we were compelled to continue using hand signals until we could find another organisation to fix this problem. We determined that the warning signals still worked and subsequently found out that hand signals were legal throughout the EU but for me the issue was would anyone understand what we were signalling? So it was that we pressed on with me shouting at Phill every time we needed to turn right or merge into the right lane. This appeared to work well and without incident allowing us to arrive at our Artis Centrum Hotel unscathed but keen to find a shop that sold the thermal form of relay required for a repair.

It was here that we failed as directions given in broken English with the aid of pictorial street maps didn't work and so we retreated up a longish hill to an area where street food and restaurants abounded and fell into a large glass of beer and a pizza before returning to the hotel and to bed with yet another problem to solve as well as two days drive in one in order to meet Jack and his other half in Warsaw. This last problem took precedence and so it was that before allowing my slumbers to take over I decided to take a look at the TomTom for the actual distance I would have to drive between Vilnius and Warsaw. Having plugged-in the two capitals to my joy the TomTom told me that it was only 330ish miles so with this jubilant note ringing in my head I fell asleep having first alerted Phill to this welcome news but still with the worry of a lack of turn-signals still nagging away!

So it was on a happy note that I breakfasted, packed the car and drove out of the garage and onto the road that would in some 300 plus miles land us both in the middle of Warsaw. The day was sunny, the road good and the traffic light and we bopped along at an easy 60 mph bolstered by the thought that the journey would not be so long or arduous as previously thought. As lunch time approached, we began to notice a series of trucks parked nose to tail on the right-hand side of the road. Soon the odd series became a continuum and included families in addition to the drivers and after what was probably 20 miles the left-hand side of the road became inhabited.



Parked-up and on the road to where...???

Eventually we appeared to be approaching a series of buildings that stretched each side of the road confusing me as I had no idea that a form of barrier existed between Poland and Lithuania. I briefly halted and bizarrely spoke to a man who clearly spoke no English but appeared to understand my predicament but encouraged me to continue forward, which I did, until I was halted by a tall young man in an olive grey non-descript uniform with even less informative badges to his lapels who eyed us with a mixture of confusion and suspicion and after a brief while of contemplation barked at us “Vere you go”? “Warsaw” I squeaked in reply. This was followed by an even sharper response of “Vi you go”? “Holiday” I blurted out brightly! This retort clearly took the situation out of his paygrade and he marched off to our right into a building that housed his boss who had been watching this drama unfold from behind a glass panel.



“Ver, you go”?

The boss clearly decided this was the moment to display authority and the reason why she was paid to be the boss and laud it over her minions and seize this as her Laurance Olivier or Peggy Mount stage entry right. So, bristling with an AK47 assorted batons and miscellaneous bulbous devices hanging from her belt she appeared in front of the car but said not a word. Her presence was enough to frighten Old Nick, a good looking, very well proportioned, blonde with a face that said everything including don't f... with me! For me however, the penny still hadn't dropped but I was slowly beginning to get a tadge concerned and wondered what the next question might be and even more concerning as to what answer I might conjure up as flippancy and humour was rapidly disappearing from the menu of options. When out of the blue or more precisely from deep in the ranks massed behind the Amazonian commander a voice shouted the question “You use a navigation device”? “Yes” I half nodded and chocked out. “Ah ha” retorted the Amazonian's Rottweiler and continued “If you go direct from Vilnius to Warsaw you must come through Belarus” he declared triumphantly but adding with a victorious growl of victory “But you don't have a visa”!!!!

Oh hell, the very thing I had been always aware of was the narrow opening that allowed a passage between the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad on the right, going west, and Belarus on the left. In my haste and desire to get to Warsaw a.s.a.p. I had become blinded and travelled straight for Belarus. Luckily, we had not crossed the line and they declined my idiotic request



to turn round in no-man's-land so smiling, much gratitude and relief I turned the TR around in Lithuanian territory, sped off and tanked up with some very cheap LPG at a nearby garage in the forest, had a pee and drove the 400 miles to Warsaw but not without laughing at the stupidity of my actions and the predicament in which we might have found ourselves; this was not how Jo and Mike, my children, saw it as they were live tracking our every move and they were convinced we had already gone over to the other side and were in prison only to become a fragment in Joe Biden's and Vlad Putin's bag of bargaining chips! It was later that I determined that the actual location of our misdemeanour was on the A4 road near the Lithuanian town of Druskinninka and its counterpart on the Belarusian side of Grodno on what was their road P42. The 400 miles to Warsaw was indeed very hard as the road kept disappearing from a full motorway to a two-lane rural highway without any clear signage; I was never so pleased to have arrived and parked outside The Metropol hotel in full display for all but not without nearly being wiped-out by a big black Merc 4x4; I was bloody tired!!



Outside the Metropol Warsaw with Jack, Alex & Phill

The entire day of Friday June 6th, our 28th day on the road, was spent in the company of Jacek (Jack) Lewicki [1], my stepfather's grandson and his longtime partner Aleksandra who kindly took the day off to show us

around. We had a very enjoyable but steaming hot day taking in this much restored city which for me was too much but generated the need to return at a cooler time and spend more time doing the place full justice. The whole day was very memorable as we drank coffee in a very fashionable district before moving on to the Jewish quarter that had become a ghetto and was destroyed by the Germans. To my great delight we completed the day by picking up Miska, Jack's husky, from Alexandra's old home and taking her to dinner with us. I very much enjoyed my spaghetti Bolognese and fell into bed content in having not let my relation down and had a glimpse of this beautiful capital in Europe.

I had previously visited Poznan, our next city in 1968 in the week prior to August the 20th for that was the week the Russians or rather the 200,000 forces of the Warsaw Pact decided to crush the Prague Spring and unknowingly I and a friend had driven past all these troops parked up in Poland and Romania waiting for the "go" signal. I had been at the Poznan Fair and was en route to Prague to fix a recorder at the University, which I did, returning home on Sunday only to wake up on Monday morning to hear the terrible news. The journey to Poznan was on this occasion without incident or of any particular event except one.

We had stopped on the motorway to water and feed ourselves as well as the car. It was towards the end of our visit that I noticed a very special car in the car park and decided to park next to it and I vowed to speak to the driver or owner if at all possible. The car in question was an Aston Martin 4 x 4. A very low-key device in olive green and almost totally nondescript but nevertheless a thing of beauty, if you are a petrol head!

The two vehicles parked alongside each other looked a treat and so when the driver emerged and got behind the wheel I sprinted forward and

[1] Prior to 1997 I had no knowledge of Jack's existence since he was born in the UK to my step-father's daughter who was visiting the UK some 50+ years ago. Thus, it was in September 2007 when Yvonne and I visited Krakow to find my stepfather's daughter, when we found she had just died but her husband was surviving but surprise, surprise their progeny Jacek was alive, very well, married with two daughters. In the passage of time that has since transpired Jack is now divorced, his father has died and sadly, both daughters have been diagnosed with MS and just after our visit daughter Kate was very badly injured in a car accident. Since our earliest first meeting we have kept in contact.



If you had to choose.....?

knocked on his window and commented about the beauty of his car and asked if he would like to swap for another British car but 40 years older. The immediate response was “OK, but not now” and it was then that I looked at the owner of the voice. An early 30s male in a light-coloured suit sporting a tie-less bright floral shirt with a heavy gold chain and rings on his fingers. The effect on me was immediate for this was not a person you engaged in light hearted banter in a motorway car park, this was a man with whom you did a certain type of business in a car park and not of the category I knew anything about; simultaneously he drove off and I backed away to live and let live.

The Poznan we arrived in was a very different place from the place I remembered some 60 years previously. TomTom led us deeper and deeper into the old part of the city and we got to a point where I thought we had gone too far and were lost. Pulling over onto the kerb of what was a very narrow lane I entered an Indian restaurant at about 4 pm and asked if they knew the Kolegiacki Hotel. The very solid and rotund gentleman that attended me did not. His English was impeccable and he insisted on providing further help which after about 15 minutes concluded that our

hotel was about 150 meters further up the street and could, should any of us have tried, be seen clearly! I drove on very happily entering a big square with our beautiful picturesque hotel on our left and the centre of attraction.



Kolegiacki Square & Hotel

It turned out that Kolegiacki was not the name of a Pope but the name of a religious order that preceded Poland's Catholicism; well, that's what our very pretty receptionist told me when asked. The hotel was indeed delightful, very comfortable with an excellent breakfast. Sadly, the Indian restauranteur who had provided us with directional support and to whom we rewarded with our presence for dinner was not up to par. Could it be that Indian food has not moved well to Poznan or my palate is shot?

It was a very pleasant and memorable stay with Phill finding several ecclesiastical photo subjects for me to browse over; perhaps he had prayed for "it" to be over soon. I would certainly like to return to the city where I had stayed before.

The journey on June 11 to Berlin, just short of 200 miles, was hot and very busy with the autobahns crammed with trucks and on stopping where TomTom thought our hotel was, it turned out to be some distance away and provided Phill with an uncomfortable sit in the car which was illegally parked and me with some very long and frustrating walks until the hotel was finally nailed some half mile away albeit almost in the

same street. Pointing out the inadequacies of the hotels telephone contact system to the receptionist proved difficult and the ineffective face to face only established “an issue” between us which sadly we never resolved. However, a good Berlin stein and a steak revived our inner bits with the mind quickly catching up and I soon loved the world again!

The next day, from what I saw of Berlin was magnificent but Berlin deserved better from me as I fell asleep in the heat during our city bus tour and subsequently felt pretty shitty all day and was only revived with a doughnut and coffee served by the prettiest of young South African ladies in a big square with a huge fountain daubed with graffiti.

The next day, June 12, en route to Hanover was when I felt we were truly on our way back but by this time we had only 4 days left and two cities to visit and to be perfectly frank I have no recollection of the stopover or the 150-mile journey there and not much more of the journey to Arnhem except I do remember very well our arrival.



A Stein & Steak later!

I saw the sign for the Bastion Hotel on my left as we circled to the older part of the town and simultaneously was being confronted with a newly created bit of medieval fortification and clearly also a part of the university. All a bit confusing but very interesting. The hotel turned out to be, as far as I could tell, on the very site of the WW2 defensive site of the battle for the Nijmegen Bridge. Sadly, tiredness and hunger prevented further research which now must be undertaken as soon as possible.

Our lack of reverence for the heroism of this place was rewarded by a very crap and very expensive Italian meal but preceded by a superb Campari and tonic. However, the next morning Phill was out and about early and took some pics before we departed for our last port of call and the penultimate days of our odyssey.

As we rumbled up on June 13th to the Van der Valk hotel in Wassenaar I felt much relief. We were almost home and I was within almost shouting distance of friends on whom I could rely as well as being just less than 20 miles from the ferry home;



The Nijmegen Bridge – The One Too Far

slowly I could relax. The hotel was undergoing very extensive reconstruction and expansion but was to all those on the inside pretending to be operating normally. What was normal, probably we will not find out but the car park certainly was not normal as over two thirds of it was now a builder's yard. The hotel service was good and the temporary restaurant was excellent with the pretty girls overshadowing any problems.



Not far from Wassenaar

Our next and last full day of our journey was spent with Janet and Jim Bernard, a couple my wife and I have known since we moved to Holland in 1976. In the 49 years that passed we had kept in touch and visited each other in the US, France, Holland, Japan and the UK and our children especially the girls have remained even closer. Jim was a retired Shell man and a chemist who had run Shell Japan for some years. Janet his wife was a flautist who qualified at the Royal College of Music where she met Jim who was studying in the same street at Imperial College. They now lived in Wassenaar in a house they had bought some 40 years previously.

They both turned up to collect us in great shape and behaving as if we had only said goodbye last night and took us, at my request, to the Kaag an island amongst the dykes where the extremely rich and infamous had their private motor yachts built; the names Adnan Khashoggi and Robert Maxwell spring to mind and where the best Pannenkoeken in Holland could be found. Sadly, this turned out not to be the case as all cafés had either gone bust or were closed. Not to be outdone we moved to the Delft where we walked the streets, photographed and took in the sights. Lunch was in a converted warehouse where we continued to enjoy lively conversation within and outside our group.

The day ended with J&J taking us back to their beautiful home and then onto Renbaan Duindigt in the dunes of Wassenaar where competitive trotting races take place but it is also a place where thousands of Dutch regularly exercise themselves, their dogs and their horses. It is a place of simple beauty and so loved by the population that they rose up against the intended demolition of their beloved restaurant and café some years previously, where we had our supper and made our farewells.

The next day June 16, our last on the Continent of Europe and of our trip, arose as the others before very sunny, bright and full of promise. We took a late breakfast before paying the bill and leaving to travel the eighteen miles to the Hook of Holland where our return ferry awaited us. To my great surprise I found the journey very easy and stressless, unlike my previous memories of tunnels and intersections and very heavy traffic. Very sadly, our reserved seats for the journey did not exist and the food coupled with its cost made the whole Stena involvement a very forgettable experience.

Thankfully, our hotel in Colchester, did not disappoint and we spent a very restful night knowing that tomorrow we were not under pressure to get anywhere by a drop-dead time just simply to get home after 36 days on the road, having travelled 5,150 miles through 11 countries.

Finally, I dropped Phill at Reading station, receiving a storm of abuse from a local bus driver, he then caught the 12:46 to back from whence he had come!!

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*In completing this narrative, I must pay tribute to those critics whose comments only served to sharpen my determination and my planning skills. To thank my family whose concerns also refined my focus as well as all my supporters and friends, some of whom never thought it would happen but enjoyed the endless chats. I also am grateful to Steve Hope and the boys of the Classic Project Shop for putting their skills into HOJ 491W and lastly to Phillip (Phill) Massey for having the courage to come with me and for his incredible support throughout the journey which I could never have been completed without him and of course Dot his wife and my friend.*

*Chris Kemp - October 2023<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> **The Author:** - Chris Kemp was born on December 7th 1939 in Aylesbury. He began his education in a Polish boarding school in Lanarkshire at the age of 6 where he was the only English pupil but completed his formal education at Maidenhead Grammar School and the University of the Thames Valley (Slough Technical College) where he qualified in Electrical Engineering. He married Yvonne Kendall in 1962, a BOAC stewardess and together they had two children Michael and Joanne.

An apprenticeship and career in the nuclear and medical device industry followed in which he spent many years working in the US, Asia and Europe. He completed his career running his own consultancy after periods of secondment to the UK Government's Department of Trade & Industry and as the Director General of the Association of British Healthcare Industries.

In 2005 Chris retired with Yvonne to their cottage they had bought in 1963 to "fiddle" with his cars, a disease that began with ownership in 1958 of an Austford (an Austin 7 chassis equipped with a Ford 10 engine and cable (no) brakes) followed by a Morris 8 and then a 1933 J2 MG. The TR8 was acquired new in November 1980, has now completed 110,000 miles all in Chris' ownership where it currently remains.







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"You're going where.....?"