

# Die 2009 Grosse Bayern Rundfahrt: 847.5 km Yet To Go!

by E.W. (Wim) Kok.



## Introduction

Shortly after PBP 2007, Audax UK began advertising LEL 2009. Since I had very good memories of LEL 2005, it was high on my list of rides to do (again).<sup>1</sup> To register two years ahead however seemed rather premature. By the time I wanted to put my name on the list, it was closed. Then I came across *Die Grosse Bayern Rundfahrt*, the first ever 1200 km brevet in Germany. The website had tantalizing pictures of the scenery along the route. In addition, back in the 1970's I spent four months in the Black Forest as an exchange student which left great memories. Reason enough to return. Since there was a limit of 100 riders, I contacted Karl and Heidi Weimann the brevet organizers in Osterdorf and pre-registered. I remembered Karl from that fabulous brunch at the Best Western in the Rogers Pass during the 2002 RM 1200. Meanwhile Karl kept uploading the website with information, slowly increasing our appetite for the event. The precise route details were released at the riders' meeting the night before the start. Here is my account of the German adventure, which incidentally did not end the way I wanted it.

## Background

During the winter months I maintained my fitness routine: speed skating - short and long track- and riding rollers in the basement. By the time the roads were ready to ride, the weather wasn't cooperative. Winter lingered as usual, as did the snow.<sup>2</sup> I rode the qualifying series: Peace 200, Edmonton 200, Peace 300, Ottawa 400, Peace 600 and another Peace 200. By the time I rolled to the start in Osterdorf, I had over 4,000 km road- and more than 800 roller kilometers in my legs. In my humble experience more than sufficient for a successful finish of a 1,200 km brevet.

After arriving in Europe I visited family and also I met up with Michael Koth and Monica, his fiancé. Michael is one of Germany's brevet organizers. Together we rode the 2002 RM 1200 and the 2006 VanIsle 1200. We kept in touch since that time. Michael and Monica also gave me a good luck card. I traveled to Osterdorf by ICE train going in excess of 300 kph. By the way booking with the Deutsche Bundes Bahn was cheaper than using the Dutch system. Guess, I went Dutch by using the German system. I got off the train in Treuchtlingen, a mere 5 km from

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.randonneurs.bc.ca/newsletter/submissions\\_2005/051\\_lel-2005\\_wim-kok.html](http://www.randonneurs.bc.ca/newsletter/submissions_2005/051_lel-2005_wim-kok.html)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.randonneurs.bc.ca/newsletter/submissions\\_2009/018\\_peace-pop-photos\\_wim-kok.html](http://www.randonneurs.bc.ca/newsletter/submissions_2009/018_peace-pop-photos_wim-kok.html)

the start. Osterdorf is a tiny Bavarian village with 280 people, so small that it has no street names; instead there are only house numbers to indicate where people live. There are no businesses left in the community, no payphones and the village inn closed some time ago.



The settlement is referred to as an 'Angerdorf'. The village has its origin in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when it was part of medieval and feudal society. The farmsteads are grouped around a small commons, which includes a grassy area, fruit trees and others, and a communal well - now cemented in. At the east end of the commons a picturesque church with a distinct steeple, a walled cemetery and the 'alte Schule', an abandoned school. It has been converted to a community center and serves as the gathering point for the brevets. The main room is decorated with memorabilia from PBP and other RM events. The church bell sounds every 15 minutes, with a regularity reminding us of the rhythms of daily life, both secularly and spiritually. Historically the commons served as a safe place for travelers. The same area is now a safe haven for randonneurs, parking their cars and pitching their tents. History repeats itself.

Upon arrival in Osterdorf I settled in my accommodation, courtesy of Karl and the Hüttingen family. After assembling the bicycle I returned to Treuchtlingen for supper; later that night I dropped in at the Weimann's, who so graciously extended their hospitality. If Osterdorf is Nord-Bayern's cradle of randonneuring, then Karl and Heidi are the parents of this beautiful sport. In fact they have made brevet organizing their hobby – passion is the better term. They draw on their children, friends and neighbours in the very supportive community. The next day I cycled the picturesque Altmühl valley, riding the bicycle paths that link the villages and slice through farmers' fields. The Altmühl is Germany's largest national park. It was truly joyful and I savoured every minute and mile of it, soaking up and reading the landscape, revealing many a fascinating picture of the past and present. Canoes floated down the Altmühl. I sat down for lunch at *Gasthaus zum Müllerwirt* enjoying a great German salad, soup and a beer.



### *The Eve of the Rundfahrt*

In the morning I did an easy ride in the area surrounding Osterdorf cycling on tertiary roads to appreciate the intimacy of field and forest. Cycled to Pappenheim, a beautiful town in the Altmühl valley. The community by the way is named after Graf zu Pappenheim. Considering the medieval times, it was not all that unusual, except that his name is now a colloquialism in the Czech, Dutch, Flemish, German and Scandinavian languages. When someone uses the expression "*Ich kenne meinen Pappenheimers*" - (I know my Pappenheimers), one essentially suggests to know people so well, that one can predict their behaviour without asking. In my younger days I often heard the use of this expression.



Most riders arrived the afternoon and evening before the ride. The mandatory bicycle check focused specifically on lights, brakes and spare brake pads. The local 'Blaaskapelle' played several tunes. The Bürgermeister from Pappenheim spoke to the gathering crowd, welcomed us and wished us well in our quest. This was followed by a pasta



dinner and route explanation by Karl and Heidi. Starting in Osterdorf we'd follow the Bavarian border through an incredibly rich and varied landscape. The route would cover 1,267.5 km for which ACP had allocated a time of 95:05 hours. The total elevation gain would be close to 46,000 feet, well in excess of Paris-Brest-Paris. The event would be challenge when compared with other 1200 km brevets. There were 12 stages, six of which in excess of 100 km.

## *The Ride: "Und jetzt geht's los."*



Following an early breakfast at the ‘*alte Schule*,’ we readied ourselves, checked a few more things and then assembled for the start. Ina Stengel played the saxophone: Happy Birthday for Peter Holtzenbein (AB Randonneurs), and then the national anthems for each of participating countries. Nice touch and touching. It certainly celebrated the international nature of the brevet. Then the stepladder was brought out. Karl ascended the ladder to assume - for those who have started in Osterdorf before - his classic position: astride atop the ladder, addressing the crowd of volunteers, onlookers and riders, drawing frequent laughter for his quips.<sup>3</sup> His underlying message was clear: enjoy the ride and above all have fun. We applauded. A very brief countdown: "*und jetzt geht's loss*" Mere seconds after the clock struck 10 we were off, leaving Osterdorf behind us. Down the hill we went, a couple of turns and before we knew it we were in Treuchtlingen, crossed the Altmühl River. Barely eight km into the ride, the easy part was over. The first climb, nothing major, but I am sure that it was not what most of us had in mind so soon into the ride. Whatever pack there was, it quickly stretched out in to small groups of grunting riders. The usual brevet thing.

After we reached the plateau, we undulated with a landscape of forests and pastures, interspersed with stubble fields covered in liquid manure. I suspect that most of us would have gladly done without the pungent smell. Then again, as some would say if you want to eat your *Wienerschnitzel*, the smell is part of the price you pay. A delayed seasoning one might add.

Notwithstanding that fly in the ointment, we passed through one tiny rural settlement after another. Agriculture rules!! It underscored the economic importance of that sector.<sup>4</sup> I remember the heavy discussions about the new European agricultural policy in the 1960's when listening to radio news and commentaries on the formation of the EU. The German farmers, especially those in Bavaria, appeared to carry significant political clout in shaping the future.

While these memories crossed my mind, something else crossed our path: dark clouds. Precipitation seemed both distinct, but distant. No-one expected anything soon. How wrong we were. A few warning drops and the skies suddenly opened. It happened so quickly, that we had to hurry to get into our rain gear. We continued and descended into the Wörnitz River valley,

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<sup>3</sup> Photo Credit: <http://www.brevet1200.de/>

<sup>4</sup> Photo Credit: Emily O'Brien. 2009 GBR Randonneur

then cycled across a medieval stone bridge into Harburg. We entered and exited, almost simultaneously a tiny market square and faced a steep and narrow ascent with some 10-12% sections. This was the second challenge of the day, but we were still fresh and certainly up to it, albeit somewhat slow. Rolled onward through Mauren and shortly thereafter Erlingshofen, where we crossed the Danube River. I had been looking forward to it, conjuring up those Straussian images of *"die schöne Blaue Donau."* Well, how different the reality. Not only was the river not 'schön', it wasn't 'blau' either. It looked like a canal. So much for waltzing along and across the river. Johann, what were you thinking? Ah well. The ride progressed uneventfully until Wertingen, where we worked our way through a labyrinth of construction equipment, broken pavement and gravel sections to make it to **Control # 1: Wertingen (Km 83.2 @ 1:00 pm)**. We had been only three hours on the road at an average speed of 27.7 kph. Quite fast for the opener.

At the control we collected the necessary stamps and signatures, relieved and stuffed ourselves, refilled water bottles and camelbacks, and were on our way again. After a bit of a zig-zag we were on *Strasse #2027* into the rolling countryside. The rain had stopped, yet the sky was loaded and kept threatening, alternating between sunny patches and drawing shower curtains around us. While navigating the course, we noted that road signs only showed the next settlement. Bigger towns further down the road were not mentioned. For rural people who are intimately familiar with their surroundings and who have developed that sense of place, it is of course not an issue. For us to stay the course we had to keep a very close eye on both route sheet and road signs. Fortunately most roads in Bavaria were well marked with letters/numbers such as St 2027; A6; Gz 1 and Nu 7, which by the way nicely matched the detailed route sheets Karl had prepared for us.

While tackling a small hill on my way to Burtenbach, two randonneurs passed (me) at considerable speed. No attempt to latch on. Soon after Peter Hoeltzenbein caught up and we rode to Burtenbach where we came upon a bridge re-construction project. Cars had to turn around, but cyclists could use the narrow footbridge - lucky for us there was one to somewhere!! That experience basically confirmed the pattern that began in Wertingen. We now assumed that *"whenever there's a construction zone, road closures apply to everyone else except pedestrians and cyclists."* That assumption however would cause a problem later on, but little did we know. "Blessed are the innocent randonneurs for they shall enjoy the ride as it comes!" Sounds like a randonneur's beatitude. After Kemnitz the terrain became hilly with a few short, steep climbs.



Climbing went well. I enjoyed these ascents as a mental and physical experience. Some 15 km before the second control, the sky threatened again. We hoped to outpace the building storm and to reach the control before the cloudburst. We got close, but that was about it. Five more minutes were all we needed; the cloud however could no longer hold its heavenly bladder. Like the morning downpour, this one too, started with a few drops and then the floodgates opened. We got hosed before we arrived at **Control # 2: Illertal Ost (Km 169.8 km @ 4:40 pm)**. The

architecture of this "art-rest stop might be considered post- modern to be generous, garish is probably a better term. Pop culture is a more neutral and appropriate classification.<sup>5</sup> I am sure that it was created to draw attention to Germany's hurrying motorists on the Authobahn: an advertising ploy specifically directed at kids in cars, who at the sight of the giant ice cream cone immediately chant desires for cool sweet treats: "ice-cream, ice cream, ice-cream, we all scream for ice cream". Repeat as many times until there is a favourable response from the front seat. One must be indeed very cold not to melt for the backseat chorus. One stops, buys and licks the treats, everyone happy; kids, parents and the business owner. Bingo! It works.

As we left the control the storm subsided as quickly as it began. We were riding into the dusk of day. As we passed through the many hamlets in rural Bavaria, it became obvious that after 6:00 pm the lights go out, the curtains are drawn, and souls are no longer seen. Day is done. A definite and distinct peace and sense of accomplishment settles over the land. This however poses a bit of a dilemma. Translation: good luck finding places to eat, or restock your supplies in those hamlets. By the time we reached Ottobeuren (Km 206), the skies had cleared; whatever was left of the day's sun had returned. It promised to be a great evening and night. The cobblestones in Ottobeuren gave us a bit of a Paris-Roubaix experience. That was interesting, until I felt something in my rear wheel that was not quite that great. On the contrary it was quite unsettling, a wobble. As I couldn't see anything, I asked Peter to take a look at the rear wheel as we cycled. He did not see anything wrong either. When I stopped to check the wheel, everything looked fine. No broken spokes, frame, rim or skewer. The tire looked fine and properly seated on the rim. I was puzzled. Every time my speed went over 25 kph, the wobble became very distinct, which made descents very challenging.

Needless to say I developed a bit of 'equipment anxiety' (with credit due to Willi Fast for the term). I did not know what to expect. Would the rear rim fly apart? Was something wrong with the frame? Lots of question marks in and above my head. We caught two more riders and cycled as a foursome through the early evening. While it was a joy to ride in the pastoral landscape, the uncertainty of my bicycle spoiled the joyride as much as the manure spreaders did to the ambiance of the evening landscape. What a stinker! In Börwang (Km 228) I stopped again, put the bicycle upside down and again checked everything. No sign of a problem. While the others continued, I cycled by myself on a dubious bicycle into the rapidly falling night. It cooled quickly and ground fog formed in low lying areas. Cows were sauntering in the hilly pastures, still grazing late night snacks for regurgitation at a later hour. While I could not see them, the jingling bells gave them away. Neat! Those sounds provided a bit of comfort.

Past Wildbolstried the directions did not seem so clear to me, so I veered to the right instead of left and crossed the B12 -- a bit too soon as I found out. Next thing I found myself looking at a fenced in gravel pit. In the process, I must have scared a deer, for suddenly this phantom crossed right in front of me. After the near miss I ascended a hill, and slowly rose above the surrounding landscape. When I got to a hamlet of no more than five homes, I realized that I was lost. With the help of a passing motorist and my map I got on course again. In Görisried I caught up with other riders. Then wobbled down a steep descent into what one German rider called "*ein tiefes Hohl*", the Wertach River valley, only to find a much steeper grade on the other side. Shifted to my 26 x

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<sup>5</sup> Christian Schulz/Emily O'Brien 2009 GBR Randonneurs

30 gearing; called on my granny and tried to zig-zag uphill with her. That worked for a while, but then the ascent became so steep that I had to walk the last 100 m to the top.

Once on the plateau at Barnstein, we turned to Wimberg - possible translation: Wim's mountain :-). After a few wrong turns, we found the right one. Near Seeg another challenge -- one of my own making -- for I turned too sharply at an intersection and did a bumpy ride through the berm before making it back to the road, unscathed I might add. No fall and no flats, but a not so subtle hint that I needed a break soon. Only 14 km left to the control. The long climb ahead to Sulzberg did not pose much of a problem; I dropped my companions. On the descent however I had to slow down, because what should have been a rapid descent, had to be done slowly due that *xq@&!!3&?* rear wheel - pardon the silent expletives. We arrived at **Control # 3: Rosshaupten (Km 275.00 @ 00:05 am)**. Hosts in Bavarian costumes greeted us. Another neat touch!

Upon leaving the control, the wobble was still there. It had not straightened itself out during the break. Wondered why? Frazzled I returned and took yet another look at that rear wheel. It had become very frustrating and above all demoralizing. Again nothing problematic turned up. As wit's end and last resort I replaced the rear tire. After rolling away, I fully expected the problem to persist. But surprise, there was nothing, absolutely nothing! The wobble was gone!! What should have been a moment of triumph, victory and rekindled energy, sparked absolutely nothing, no sigh of relief, no inspiration, no wings for me. I felt as deflated as a punctured tire. In that state of mind I cycled along the Forggensee, a placid lake with a beautiful mountain backdrop. Ground fog. Incredibly peaceful. After some 6 km I had to turn-off the main highway to go to Thal. When I stopped to check the route sheet, a voice in the dark confirmed that I had to turn left. Calling from somewhere was Michael S., who had fallen ill after eating at the control. Wrapped in a space blanket like a baked potato in aluminum foil, he had dozed off in a bus shelter in the middle of somewhere. After checking to see if he was ok, we decided to ride together.

We followed a dark, narrow and winding road through farmyards and forests, where one wrong turn could have easily tossed us among the trees, never to be found again. By the way we did take a few wrong turns, back-pedalled the same number, and lost a bit more time. Upon checking *GoogleEarth* recently, that perceived forest proved to be no more than a heavily canopied road. In Gründl we hit a barricade, another construction zone where vehicles were barred. Pedestrians



and cyclists could make it through, but only on foot. We cycled through Steingaden, left it behind as we found it: sound asleep and deserted. In Ilgen we turned onto a country road. By now we developed a steady rhythm. It seemed that things were improving. Finally things were looking up. Just past Rudersau another barrier. This time the road was completely blocked, no detour sign or alternate route indicated. Having learnt from earlier experiences however, we applied our knowledge and looked for that detour for cyclists and pedestrians. We saw several tire tracks going into the pasture besides the road, so we followed them and found a gaping hole with a fast running creek, a steep walled trench.<sup>6</sup> We stumbled around for a while

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<sup>6</sup> **Photo Credit:** Walter Jungwirth 2009 GBR randonneur

in the dark and in the pasture, only to return to the hole.<sup>7</sup> There two slippery logs across it. Darkness and ground fog reduced the visibility. The question was whether there was a world beyond the creek, mud, trees and steep embankment. We hesitated, but in the end Michael ventured across the logs, explored the way beyond and noted that it was possible to get back on



the road. While I was not convinced, Michael assisted to get me across the creek. We then crawled up a steep mud bank and to our surprise found the missing road. Some unannounced adventure, for as Karl later on explained, the entire route had recently been checked and there were no problems at this site. *GoogleEarth* showed that an alternate route did exist. GPS would have been handy. We lost a lot of time. Meanwhile morning broke slowly, a perfect dawn, except for that quick dash off the road as an oncoming taxicab passed another vehicle, oblivious to two

randonneurs. Guess it pays to be alert.

In Schoffau we paused and foraged breakfast out of our panniers. We continued through Uffing and along the Staffelsee, another beautiful lake. The route rolled and wound itself through a very



picturesque setting. Sunny and the odd cloud. It was still early and a light wind was the perfect companion on our way to Kochel am See, a village in a stunning setting. At the foot of a major climb we stopped for another bite then started a serpentine ascent up the Kesselbergstrasse. The climb was perfect While an old photograph showed an extensive set of hairpins, we could maintain an uphill speed of

10-12 kph, which at an announced grade of 14% would have (a) been impossible, or (b) made us supermen.<sup>8</sup> In reality the grade was substantially less. We rose along the steep wall of the mountain through a beautiful deciduous forest. The ride was cool in many ways. Smooth, the perfect grade and attractive scenery. No groans. Traffic was very courteous, albeit that some motorist in the past had not quite heeded the speed warnings. There were a few roadside crosses, memorials for victims of the road, artifacts of death. Meanwhile this morbid scenario came to mind. A warning: "*Fritz, sei doch vorsichtig*" (Fritz, be careful); something went very wrong, turning Fritz into a statistic and road side memorial. A YouTube video taken from a motorcycle provides a good view of the many hairpins (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wizXgp4OUQI>).

At the summit we enjoyed the magnificent views of the Kochelsee. Then we began the hairpin descent down to the Walchensee, another stunning lake. Perfect alignment allowed for a pro-cyclist descent. We had to use the brakes a few times to maintain a safe speed. After all we did not want to add to the road side memorials. I immensely enjoyed the scenery surrounding the lake. There was more to come. Soon thereafter we turned onto the Mautstrasse, a toll road, where cars and busses had to pay. No charges for cyclists. Aha, somewhere along the road there is justice. For a while we followed the shoreline of the lake and then disappeared in the forest along Jachen River. Once we exited the forest, we entered what I'd call a poetic landscape, a setting

<sup>7</sup> As noted we stumbled around in the dark; the daylight picture provides of course a much clearer view

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.heimatsammlung.de/topo\\_unter/82\\_ab\\_02/images\\_01/kesselbergstrasse-633.jpg](http://www.heimatsammlung.de/topo_unter/82_ab_02/images_01/kesselbergstrasse-633.jpg)

that felt like heaven on earth. The slightly downhill road meandered through the valley, its bottoms covered with green pastures, the hills draped with forests, and the Bauernhöfe -



farmsteads - decorated with hundreds of colourful geraniums. A quintessential Bavarian picture, the ones you see in tourism promotion. Almost year later I still have peaceful flashbacks of these images, especially when listening to choir voices singing Gregorian and Eastern Orthodox chants. Some 27 km later we got back to reality, a busier road along the Isar River taking us to the control.

With no more than 47 minutes to spare we arrived at **Control # 3: Bad Toelz (Km 403.0 @ 12:05 pm)**. We got our cards stamped, purchased some food and drink. We'd barely settled when the skies opened again. This time we were lucky, stayed dry and watched the torrent. It turned streets into fast flowing rivers. Slowly munching away at my food, I began to take stock. At about one third of the ride completed there was no time in the bank for possible delays, rest and sleep breaks. Normally there would have been a comfortable cushion. I saw a situation developing of racing - not cycling - against the clock for the next for 850 kilometers. That was my prognosis at the time, not too good. Meanwhile three riders resumed, but soon one of them returned with the announcement: "*Ich breche ab*" - I stop. I felt anything but optimistic at that point. At least gave it another try. So off we were battling shower after shower, shed from the unstable air masses. Upon reflection these recurring showers had all the making of Shelley's wonderful poem "The Cloud". He so succinctly and poetically described the scientific intricacies and processes of evaporation, condensation, precipitation. It is well worth to cite the last stanza of the poem:

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,  
And the nursling of the Sky;  
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;  
I change, but I cannot die.  
For after the rain when with never a stain  
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,  
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams  
Build up the blue dome of air,  
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,  
And out of the caverns of rain,  
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,  
I arise and unbuild it again.

We continued on bicycle paths toward a dark and looming horizon: the Alpine skyline. Our progress was slow. While I had little sense of time, I knew that at this pace, we would not make the next control in time. There was some significant climbing ahead, one ascent of more than 8 km, offset by a 16.5 km descent. Relying on past experience where I had sufficient time in hand, I felt the situation different this time around. Just past Ostin, the skies darkened once more, ready to dump the next load. While we stopped to put our rain gear on, I made up my mind and called it a day, thanked Michael for his help, wished him good luck and turned around. Michael made both controls at Unterwössen (Km 517) and Waging am See (Km 585) with literally one minute

to spare! He told me later that his ride had indeed gone as I predicted: a race 'contre le montre' - a time trial. Like a chasing dog, time kept nipping at heels and wheels. Chasing the clock for the next 847.5 km was not and is not my idea of randonneuring. I decided to "break the ride off" as the Germans so aptly call it. I cycled back to Gmünd, licked my wounded pride and tried to come to terms with my decision. In life as in randonneuring one can't always have it all.

I took the train to Treuchtlingen and then cycled to Osterdorf. After a shower I went to the control, where I asked if I was indeed the first rider to arrive at the finish. Still some gallows humour left. During the remaining days I toured the region and at night returned to the control where other "Abbrecher" gathered. Wednesday night we witnessed the arrival of Tom Rey, who covered the 1,267.5 km course in 59:38!! With less than one hour of sleep, he looked remarkably fresh. After he got off the bicycle, he sighed a few times – after all the last few kilometers were uphill -- and asked if someone could call his wife. At that point Heidi replied to take a look behind him. There was his wife. It was touching to see the expression on both faces. Tom reappeared at the crack of dawn to watch the arrival of other riders. Karl was one who made it right under the wire. I don't think he had any second to spare. Good for him!



Thursday I cycled to Windsbach, where I explored the final 45 km of the brevet. There were beautiful sections. A steep ascent from Splat got me on the plateau in Grossweingarten with beautiful fields and orchards galore, then down toward Ellingen and Weissenburg, two remarkable cities. From there it was only a brief ride back to Osterdorf. The day after I took the train from Treuchtlingen to Amsterdam, and then flew AMS- LHR-YVR-YXJ- home-sweet-home.

### *Postscript*

Yes, I do have regrets about not finishing the brevet, particularly not having seen the other 847.5 km, not met the other volunteers, and of course not felt that sense of satisfaction at the finish line: "we did it!!!" This time I did not. I have relived the route and just about everything else about the GBR, except the missing 847.5 km in order to rationalize the result. After all I was well-trained; equipment was in good working order and tested. The wobble that appeared at 205 km and plagued me for some 70 clicks was a significant setback. Items such as the near miss with the deer in the dark, getting lost, and crossing the abyss near Rudersau were mere irritations as separate incidents, combined however they were like freeze-thaw action, physical weathering, slowly eating away and crumbling the hardest rock, one's emotional energy. At that time my emotional capacity had taken a bit of beating. I had lost a lot of time. In retrospect and on the positive side I knew that I was climbing well, and that I could maintain a pretty good pace. So the question what went wrong? This would take some time to answer. In randonneur planning they say that the devil is in the details. When I discussed this with Ken Bonner on the eve of the

2006 VanIsle 1200, he casually parted a few words of wisdom. "It ultimately boils down," he said, "how you deal with the unexpected (issues) during a brevet (as in life)". In retrospect I did not do that so well at the 2009 GBR. Then again as one of my *co-abbrecher* noted, one has to put every brevet in perspective of the other ride, the larger ride of life. We may think that each brevet has a special purpose. It should however not dwarf the rest of one's life to the point of danger or exhaustion. After I put everything in a row, I knew I made the right decision. I could and did recognize where I was at (in Ostin) when I made my decision. Returning once more to Shelley's poem, it might be worthwhile to draw inspiration from it, so that I can "laugh at my own cenotaph" on the 2009 Grosse Bayern Rundfahrt, and "out of the caverns of rain like a child from the womb, like ghost from the tomb, I arise and unbuild it again". The power of poetry!! That of course begs for a return in August 2012 for the next edition. I hope to return and to see a larger Canadian contingent at this event. It is a beauty and with the passion of Karl and Heidi it should be a gratifying and memorable experience. I like to express my appreciation to Karl and Heidi, their family and community of friends for their wonderful hospitality. Last but not least, my gratitude to Driekje, my wife and partner in life, for her support-.

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For further reading:

<http://www.brevet1200.de>

<http://www.emilysdomain.org/bayern1200k/index.html>

<http://www.mountainbike-expedition-team.de/brevets/bayern1200.html>