

The “Tooth & Toilet” Tour – Part I

Friday 30th September

In dribs and drabs through the morning, the various Ancient Briton team members and assorted supporters assembled at Gatwick airport.

As they arrived, and as planned, the communal stick bag was slowly filled and passed on to the next arrival with their name ticked off the list until only one name remained, that of Tom Ettling. Had he already checked in or not yet arrived?

As time passed and the end of check-in approached, Clive Kendall and John Pierce were in a quandary as to what to do, so they sent out a call over the airport tannoy system for Tom to contact the enquiries desk. Three times the call went out before it was finally established that Tom had indeed already checked in with his stick in his luggage. Problem solved.

Bearing in mind that at least a significant reason for the trip was to play hockey, it came as something of a surprise to find that our esteemed chairman, John Pierce, had contrived to leave his astro turf trainers at home. By that time it was too late to go back for them and nowhere at the airport to buy new ones.

Those that met Frank and Jackie Colwill on their travels around the airport were greeted with a rather more gappy smile than normal from Frank. Apparently, his children had implored him not to use the jackhammer just a couple of days before travelling but, like any good parent, he completely ignored their advice, used the jackhammer and several of his teeth fell out as a result!

Various groups of ABs explored the airport’s shops and eateries, waiting for the call to the gate which eventually came after several announcement times came and went – apparently the inbound flight was running late.

In due course, we boarded – a bit late, but never mind, we’re going on our holidays! Then the tug used to push the aircraft back from the stand broke down, and was in the way of any replacement. We finally took off for an uneventful flight about 90 minutes later than scheduled.

We were met by the coach driver for the journey from Turin airport to the hotel for the first part of the tour, the Roero Park Hotel. On arrival at the hotel car park we were greeted by a magnificent guard of honour comprising of beautiful vintage and veteran cars. These were mostly old Fiats, but also Lancias and other classic Italian motors, all congregated at the hotel for their annual pilgrimage to the area for the white truffle hunt.

Check in was smooth and arrangements made to meet up in the bar once we’d all unpacked our stuff (and some of us had even managed a quick snooze).

After the meet-up, those with the greatest hunger moved directly to the hotel restaurant where a pleasant set menu had been arranged by the hotel manager. Those that stayed in the bar seemed well-ensconced there so the hotel provided nibbles to go with the local beers and wine consumed. Most people retired fairly early to their rooms in preparation for the following day’s hockey.



Saturday 1st October

Following breakfast, the morning was generally free, although most people visited the local supermarket for supplies – mostly water for the players, but also things like tea-bags to supplement the selection provided by the hotel at breakfast – others went to explore the local amenities.

After the morning’s hiatus we were picked up by the coach for the 30-minute drive down the mountains to the pitches at Viale Madonna dei Fiori in Bra. Once at the ground we met up with our opposition

teams for the weekend, and Julia made acquaintance with her hockey-organising contact in Puglia, Giampaolo - "Giampi".

The tournament had been laid on in memory of Giovanni (Vanni) Ometto who had been a major player in HC Bra and whose family firm were one of the major sponsors of the club.

At the appointed time, the first two contestant teams assembled on the pitch, with the Italian Selection Over 65s team taking on the hosts, Bra 1960. A short speech and a minute's silence was observed in memory of Vanni before play commenced. This was a tradition followed at all subsequent matches in the tournament.

The match itself was a rather cagey affair with neither side able to really take control and it ended up as a nil-nil draw. Most of the ABs watching the game came away feeling that we stood a fair chance against either side, but we were concerned that our initial opposition, the Italian Selection Over 60s, would prove to be more of a challenge.

And so it was that the ABs took to the pitch, observed their minute's silence, handed over the commemorative pins to the opposition and waited for the first whistle of our tour. I will leave the match report to others.....



The Lull before The Storm



Keeper Boutcher prowling



Keeper Boutcher in control

ABs 3 v Italy Over 60s 0

The first game of the ABs Italy tour was the second game of the Vanni Ometto Memorial Tournament. According to the schedule we were due to start at 5 pm but, when we arrived, we found the prior game was scheduled to end by 4 pm. As there was no obvious reason for an hours delay between games we had a period of uncertainty until the opposition started to show up. Everything got organised, including the minutes silence in remembrance of Giovanni, and we actually pushed back (or forward as it was in a friendly spirit) around 4.30.

Both teams started strongly with the ABs benefitting from some excellent mid-field control by Brian Hopkins and stout defending by Lee Baron when the opposition attacked. Richard Boutcher, in goal, made an excellent save on the edge of the D and at the other end there were a number of good breaks by Mike Christie. The first goal came following a sideways charge along the goal line by Paul Sharratt, an interchange with Jon Beale, and a typical finish from Paul.



Sharratt striking on goal



Sharratt watching ball



Sharratt turns knowingly

Pressure on the ABs increased in the second quarter. There was some good defensive work by Allan Sutton and a one-handed stretch to clear by Tom Ettling. When the ABs had the ball there were some fine sequences of passes and Frank baffled the opposition in his unique style, but at a critical point used his leg (inadvertently?) and was spotted by the umpire. The ABs got a short

corner, taken by Brian. Paul's hard strike caught a defender's stick and shot up into the top corner of the goal. The opposition initially disputed the goal but the defender acknowledged his touch; so 2-0 to the ABs.

At the start of the third quarter Clive and Lee were called on to do more solid defending. The ladies were amazed at the speed at which Clive moved on a number of such occasions! (Was it Port he had at half time?) There were numerous impressive sequences of passes, often starting from Brian, and involving Tom Ettling, Peter Danson, Jon Beale and John Pierce with the two Mikes (Handley and Christie) also working well up front. The star turn of the quarter came when Richard made the save of the game; smothering a very close opposition shot.

The ABs were under pressure again at the start of the final quarter, bringing out solid defending by Lee and Mike Handley. However, the ABs still managed their share of attacking with Peter Danson prominent. One forward move led to another short corner. Tom hit the ball out to Paul, who executed a typical well aimed whack to beat the keeper and score a third goal.

The ABs convincing 3-0 win was a combination of solid defending and taking the chances up front, supported by excellent all round teamwork. A hat-trick from Paul Sharratt and a great start to the tour!

Goalscorer: Paul Sharratt (3); Man of the Match: Paul Sharratt.

Reuter Correspondent: Allan Sutton. Note Taker Pam Sutton.



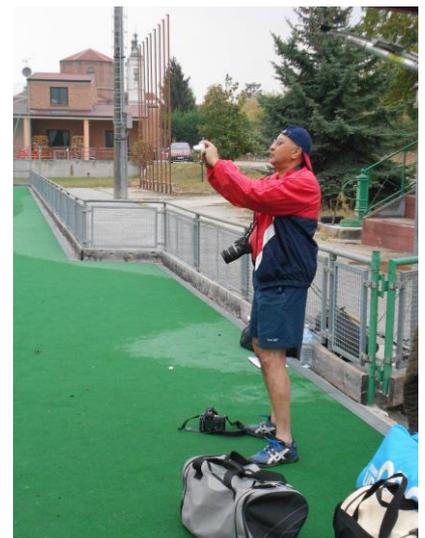
The third game of the afternoon was between the two Italian Selection Teams, the over 60s and over 65s. We were rather surprised that the Over 65s seemed to easily have the measure of the over 60s and came out worthy winners 2-0.



Pensive Skipper



What do you think of it, so far?



David "Mukesh" Bailey

Whilst the hockey was taking place, and unbeknownst to the players, two of our supporters (Beryl Darlington and Teri Baron) both managed to get themselves locked in one of the (unisex) toilets! After that, there seemed to be a desire from all present to only use the right-hand one of the two facilities on offer in the clubhouse. Other than that, the facilities at the club were excellent – two water-based astro turf pitches, each with a substantial spectator stand, and a fairly newly-built clubhouse with a well-stocked bar (at least until we'd left!) and a built-in pizza oven. For those of us that used them, maybe

they should invest in some upgraded changing rooms – unless we ended up in the opposition ones (I understand that it's common practice in the professional football world to provide only the most basic of facilities for the visiting team so maybe this was the same)? Following an interesting briefing on the coach the evening before, most of the AB players had decided to go ready-changed so this wasn't really an issue.

Hat-trick man, Paul Sharratt, generously provided beers for the players ahead of our departure for the hotel.

The coach journey back was only notable for a very nasty junction – a give-way onto a downhill bit of main road on a sweeping blind bend. One car driver must have had a nasty shock as he found a large coach half-way out of the junction as he rounded the bend! Some passengers on that side of the coach probably shared some of his adrenalin hit at that moment!



This is my 3rd today!!

The coach driver found other routes back to the hotel after that first drive...

A buffet style dinner with wine had been laid on by the hotel for the players and supporters from all four competing teams which was much enjoyed by everyone present. There followed some speeches, an exchange of mementos, and the announcement of the ABs' Man of the Match for the first game which went to Paul Sharratt following his hat-trick and other contributions to our first victory of the week.

Bruno, one of the Bra players turned out to be quite a (silent) comedian, throwing himself to the floor to get unusual angles for his photographs and exaggeratedly mimicking Julia on her way to thank the hotel staff – much to the amusement of those watching although – at least at the time – not Julia herself! For his pains, he was immediately awarded the cap-of-shame which he took in good part, although I'm not sure it was really intended to be worn back-to-front like Norman Wisdom in his heyday!

All the players were under strict instructions from Captain Clive Kendall to only take alcohol in moderation and to get to bed early that night so that – finely-honed athletes as they are – they would not be jaded for the key matches the following day.

Clive failed to follow his own mantra, however, staying up into the early hours of Sunday morning with the chairman, John Peirce. Apparently, they felt obliged to keep the Italians company for the evening!!!!

Fortunately, most of the players heeded Clive's advice to some extent or other and retired earlier.

Sunday 2nd October

We had an early coach pick-up arranged (at 9:00am) so most tourers arrived for breakfast at a reasonable time, only to find that the toaster wasn't working, there were no spoons, and various other slightly chaotic issues. We can blame the late-nighters for this as the same staff set up and served breakfast as had served them into the early hours! Things got sorted gradually so we were all ready for the meet time.

During breakfast, the chairman was observed to sway into the restaurant area, eyes somewhat glazed over and a definite need to concentrate on placing one foot in front of the other. He muttered something along the lines of "I'm getting there", but no-one was fooled into thinking he was remotely sober at that time. We are all indebted to him for 'taking one for the team' and helping to keep some of our opposition from their beds, although none of them seemed to be in the same state in the morning!

We again journeyed to Bra to see how we would cope with the two matches lined up for us considering how we might fair against what now appeared to be the stronger teams in the competition.

The first game of the day was between the Bra 1960 side and the Italian Selection Over 60s team that we had beaten the day before. The score ended up as 3-0 in favour of the Bra team, rather crushing our theory that our previous victory had showed that we were a superior side to those that we still had to face on the second day of the competition!

Following the game, for those with the stomach for it ahead of our deciding match against the Bra 1960 side, variously-topped pizzas were provided and consumed – and very good they were, I understand. John Peirce chose another way to spend the break: asleep on a park bench. I understand that he even made a few cents in contributions from the passing public!

Italian Over 65s 0 Ancient Britons 1



This started with good attacking play by the Over 65s which found ABs on the defensive and having to battle it out in their own half. Against the run of play ABs were awarded a short corner which went into open play and a pass from Brian Hopkins to Peter Danson in the circle, gave Peter a chance to lob the goalkeeper with a well-placed scoop into the top corner of the goal. Perfectly executed and a delight to see. After that ABs took control of the game.



Danson prepares



Danson lobs keeper



Danson celebrates success

After the first break the O65s came back and Richard made an excellent save thwarting their attack. They came back again and Mike Christie made a well-timed tackle, which was followed again by more attacks and Clive cleared off the back line. They had a short corner and several long corners; Brian Hopkins got a stick in the ribs but carried on in good ABs fashion to totally out play the O65 forward.

After the second break Mike Heywood came on with gusto, started to run in the direction of the ball and made a spectacular dive into his opponent which resulted in both players on the floor grappling for their sticks, the ball nowhere in sight. The resulting tumult saw Mike Heywood limping off towards the bench. John Peirce had a shot saved by the goalkeeper and a short corner shot which was deflected in off Tom's knee was subsequently discounted after Tom owned up to the assistance by the knee.



Think this could be a "stick tackle"



"When you are ready ref, blow your whistle"

The final quarter saw attacking play by both ABs and O65s who by this time were getting frustrated in not being able to penetrate our defence. A controversial short corner was blown by their umpire in our circle which was under Tom Darlington's watch.

Tom, bemused by another umpire blowing in his D, was not happy. Allan Sutton ran out number one for the ABs and single handed cleared the ball off over the side line. This all got a little feisty with the hot headed Italians, who were still unable to score even with the help of their umpire. Mike Heywood made a further appearance and had a shot on goal saved.



Christie open goal must score



Surely he must score!!



Good try !!

Overall we had lots of opportunities even they had their share of attacks, but ABs won because we were the better team and a superb goal by Peter Danson was that good it deserves a second mention. You could say he was "Danson on the ceiling!!"

Goalscorer: Peter Danson; Man of the Match: Peter Danson.

Reuter Correspondents & Note Takers: Teri & Lee Baron.



Has anyone seen Trevor??



ABs celebrating

BRA 1 Ancient Britons 2

This was our final match in the competition against Bra (no smutty jokes please). Bra needed a win to secure first place with the ABs just needing a draw. Let's hope it doesn't go tits up.

The first quarter saw excellent attacking down the right hand side and an expert lob from Peter Danson found Frank Colwill with his resulting shot being well saved. Clive Kendall made an excellent save off the line to keep the scores level.

The second quarter saw plenty of attack with John Peirce nearly connecting with another lob this time from Paul Sharratt. A great pass out of defence from Lee Baron found Tom Ettling who cleverly moved the ball straight on to Paul on the left wing. With surprising agility Paul galloped diagonally into the circle and smacked the ball back into the left hand corner of the goal.



Sharratt at speed



Sharratt winding up



Sharratt spins away

The third quarter started more slowly with Bra much more on the attack. They were rewarded with a penalty corner which they converted from a rising shot. This spurred Bra on as they sensed victory. Richard Boucher and Mike Handley kept us in the game with a series of fine saves.

The fourth quarter also started with the ABs under attack with Bra desperate to win their own memorial tournament. Another short corner to Bra was saved by Richard and the ABs pushed forward spurred on by Clive. This time the ABs were awarded a short corner which was saved but the clearance found its way to Tom Ettling on the left wing. Bra were expecting Tom to cross the ball and their defence moved out allowing Tom to slot the winner home behind them from the tightest of angles.



Ettling retrieves ball



Keeper off line – worth a try



Goal – “eye of the needle”

The ABs played magnificently as a team and were the worthy winners of a very tough game of hockey. We remained undefeated in the tournament and were the champions.

Thanks for the ladies support and for keeping us abreast of events which left Bra sagging and us with the cup!

Goalscorers: Paul Sharratt, Tom Ettling.

Man of the Match: Mike Handley.

Reuter Correspondent: Jon Beale. Note Taker: Marilyn Beale.



The chairman generously bought beers for the victorious team before the more formal ceremonies commenced. Every team received a trophy for the event presented by various members of Vanni's family, and various other presentations, speeches, and thanks to the organisers were made. Bruno and Julia had made up from the night before, and Bruno presented Julia with a Bra playing shirt which was much appreciated.

Eventually, the Italian players and supporters left the facilities, followed by a jubilant Ancient Britons team and their supporters. I'm sure that the residents on our route back through Bra would have been somewhat confused by the coach-full of not-so-young English people singing "Championé, Championé" as they travelled through their town!

As mentioned earlier, the coach driver took a different route back to the hotel in order to avoid the rather worrying junction en-route the first evening. The unfortunate consequence of this longer journey time, combined with the consumption of several celebratory beers consumed at the clubhouse, was an unseemly rush by some of the male contingent to exit the coach almost before it had come to a standstill and a dash up the hotel stairs to the nearest loos (Richard and Mukesh being the prime culprits)!

Once things had settled down a bit, kit and bodies washed, and cold baths for those that felt they needed it, several groups of hungry tourists headed for local eateries. The party of fourteen, that I was with, walked to a restaurant run by locals primarily for the locals.

The menu was limited and written entirely in Italian and the owners spoke no English, but the meal lived up to the hotel's recommendation by delivering excellent home-cooked food by Vanna, good, extremely drinkable local wine by the carafe, and great hospitality from Michael – mostly in hand gesture form. These two owned and ran the restaurant, and were kind enough to bring out some grappa to finish the meal in style. Paul Sharratt was seen to be using some pergola support poles on the walk home in an effort to stay at least close to upright.

Another group ate at a different local restaurant also with great food, but once again the toilet seemed to be a problem with yet another AB, skipper Clive Kendall, getting locked in and having to bang on the door for quite some time before being rescued.

Monday 3rd October

The hotel seemed to have got themselves better sorted out for breakfast on this the third morning. The Bouchers and Mike and Lou Handley were all under the impression that the coach had been booked for 9:00am like the previous day and were therefore surprised to find various ABs still breakfasting when they duly turned at that appointed hour, only to find that they could have had an extra half hour in bed.

The morning's excursion was a guided tour of Bra, an ancient Baroque town with some fantastic old architecture. The tour was mostly walking which didn't entirely suit some of the more frail members of the party, but everyone somehow managed the coffee and patisseries at the stop in the late morning. During this stop Mukesh worked through the voting for Man of the Match for the third game of the weekend in the form of a simulated horse race. Mike Handley was the clear winner.

Having been awarded the honour, he diligently wore the medallion throughout the rest of the day. As there was no further game until Friday he had it – and wore it – for the rest of the week – indeed, we only have Lou's word for it that he took it off overnight. He even wore it for a business meeting he had scheduled on Friday.





“Don’t panic, I can hold the wall, I have the Medallion”

Julia had managed to extend our stay in the town by delaying the coach return at the last minute with the intention of allowing time for a visit to the shops, only to find once we were there that the shops close from about 12:30 until 3:30 – so the retail therapy had to be put on ice for those that craved it. However, everyone found something to occupy the extra time, mostly sitting in the glorious early autumn sunshine at one of the many street cafés in the area.

The late afternoon and evening were ‘free’ in as much as there was nothing specifically arranged for the whole party, although various groups did their own thing, eating and drinking at one or other of the local restaurants. On his way to one of the restaurants, Richard Boucher decided that it would be wise to rugby-tackle a tree that clearly jumped into his path, but neither was injured in the encounter.

Almost unbelievably, once more one of the party, Christine Ettl, got locked into a toilet – the fourth person locked in facilities in the space of as many days.

Most people ended up with a fairly early retirement to their rooms, anticipating the reasonably early start the following day.

Tuesday 4th October

Oh, what a day: two castle trips, three very different wine tastings, various nibbles, a coffee break and lunch with wine! We were warned, but most failed to heed the warnings. This was the day set aside almost entirely to the imbibing of various wines, organised by Giampi, whose day-to-day work is as a sommelier, aided by his daughter, also a sommelier.

There were three ‘official’ wine tastings, plus wine with lunch, meaning a total of twelve different wines of the region including Arneis, Barbaresco and Barolo. Those who had the will-power to spit some out or tip some away of each that we tasted on the day were those that fared best at the end of the day.



“It’s alright Paul, I’ll get my own”



A nice steady spin round the block



"I can't go any faster, Marilyn"

Pam and Allan Sutton had managed to lose the key to their valuables safe at some point over the previous days with passports and other key items locked inside. With no master key available, the hotel resorted to some workmen coming in and removing the safe from the wardrobe where it was fixed, putting it on the balcony and setting about it with power cutting tools to gain access to the contents.

Once again the evening was 'free' and again various groups visited local eateries or stayed in the hotel in an attempt to recover from the excesses of the day.

Wednesday 5th October

The day was designated as a 'free' day and different groups went their own ways, bus trips to local towns, relaxing in the hotel, driving around the district, but the largest single group travelled to Alba to go quad biking through the beautiful local countryside. Karen Daly had taken it upon herself to get this arranged and those that joined the trip were very grateful to her for taking the trouble as the trip was loved by everyone on it.

With the impending hockey match on the horizon, those participating in the quad biking were implored to be careful and come back injury-free. In fact, it was the group leader who was closest to "coming a cropper". He was using a trail motor bike to monitor the group from the back to the front of the line of quads. On one of his races back to the head of the train, he lost the bike on the damp grass track and was very lucky that Lee Baron just managed to bring his quad to a halt, just inches from his head!



The ABs prepare to travel



Hold on Diane, this could be fun



Mount up, we're moving out

The rest of the trip was relatively uneventful, although one of the trickier sections caught a couple of the party out, grinding them to a sudden standstill against the bank at the edge of the trail. Speaking from personal experience of this, it was a lot more worrying than it appears in the video taken by one of the guides on Frank's tablet.



ABs relaxing on high



AB Girls



ABs taking the sun

The hotel very kindly laid on drinks and finger-food in the early evening, ahead of us all setting off for an arranged meal out at a renovated 13th Century monastery overlooking the Langhe hills. The meal was notable for a number of reasons, one of which was unfortunately the length of time it took to serve. As a consequence of this, we didn't arrive back at the hotel until nearly 1:00am leaving everyone to rush their packing for our transition to Turin early the following morning.

Thursday 6th October

Following the late night the previous night, the 9:00 start on Thursday came as something of a shock and the early part of the coach ride to Turin (Torino) was accompanied by a certain level of yawning and snoozing.

Probably as a result of the rushed packing, various items got left behind at the hotel including Diane Boutcher's sunglasses. Peter and Sue Danson believed that they had left their keys at the hotel so the hotel staff turned the room upside down in an effort to find them but without success. Fortunately, the Dansons finally tracked them down, wrapped up in Peter's pyjamas!

The hotel promised to get the various items that had actually been left behind to their various owners but this hadn't taken place at the time of writing.

Having made the journey to Turin, we were then treated to guided tours of the St John the Baptist Cathedral (where the Turin Shroud is held), the Royal Palace, and Venaria Reale (the royal hunting lodge), all very impressive in their own ways.



JP getting a Bird's eye view



ABs milling



JP checking the ceiling

This was interspersed with a coffee break at the Fiorio cafe and a four-course lunch (with wine – surprise, surprise). Following the day's tours, we all checked into the Turin Palace Hotel for our stay in Turin. Everyone agreed that this was a step up compared to the previous location, but of course accompanied by a comparable increase in costs. Following so much consumption during the day, and over previous days, most people elected to stay in the hotel for a light snack before retiring to the luxury of their rooms for the night.

Friday 7th October

With the whole of the day free and following the long days and short sleeps of previous days, almost the entire touring party chose to have a lie in before taking a late breakfast. Following that, people split up for trips to museums, shopping areas, or local cafes and restaurants for a chill-out ahead of the evening's final hockey match of the trip.

The coach pick-up time for the journey to the Torino pitch was changed twice in the 24 hours leading up to it, but unfortunately Brian and Hazel Hopkins didn't get the message about the final change. Fortunately, they were in their room when the call went out and they made it to the bus only about ten minutes after the allotted time, and we arrived at the pitch with time for the team talk and warm up before the game actually started.

Rassemblement {RHC} 1 Ancient Britons 3

The game was played over 4 quarters, each of 17½ minutes.

In the 1st quarter the game started with both sides having an even game. Good hockey being played by both sides with ABs settling down quicker and playing some attractive hockey. Clive Kendall adopted a diamond shape formation with Frank Colwill at the top, Brian Hopkins behind him and Paul Sharratt and Peter Danson marshalling left and right flank respectively.

Frank played an excellent receiving and holding role whilst Brian distributed the ball around beautifully allowing Peter and Paul to make marauding runs. 6 minutes in we were awarded a penalty corner that was defended well. No score in this quarter.

The start of the 2nd quarter was the same with us doing more of the pressing. RHC did get a shot at goal, but was wide. Our defence marshalled by Clive sweeping, Mike Handley, Allan Sutton and Lee Baron, right, middle and left defence respectively, with Richard Boutcher in goal were solid. Richard had to make a double save on one of their rare entries into our circle. Jon (Lumberjack) Beale was charged to play at the top of the diamond and he got a bit overexcited with his responsibility making a tackle on the Italian Centre Half that had Phil Hall written all over.

12 mins, good ball into circle collected by Mike Christie (sub for Frank) resulted in a penalty corner. Injected by Brian to Paul who duly converted with a well struck shot. So at half time the score was 1-0 to the ABs.



Sharratt shooting a blur



Sharratt turning, also a blur

The 3rd quarter started evenly with RHC pressing hard. After 7 minutes they scrambled a goal. After 11 minutes RHC won a penalty corner which was defended well by Allan Sutton. A minute later and ABs had another penalty corner which was injected to Clive who purposely aimed towards the right hand post where "Snuffles" Peirce was hovering to deflect the ball into goal.



Clive receives and aims



JP hovers and deflects



JP likes final result

Four minutes later and Paul cutting into the middle from the half line was fouled on top of the 25 metre line. Taking quickly Paul then passes to Peter on top of circle. One step in and Peter's shot at goal was pretty innocuous, but "Sniffer" PEIRCE waved a stick at it in front of both the keeper and defender. The keeper went for the deflection that never took place and the ball went straight into goal.



Peter aims at goal



"JP leave it"



"Good decision JP"

In the 4th quarter RHC pressed hard but with a good sound defence, which was lovely to watch as the team played out of trouble, ABs saw the game out.

Halfway through the last quarter we were awarded a penalty corner but did not add to our attractive score line. Mike Heywood also came on to play and caused mischief amongst the RHC defence.

RHC were gracious in their loss.

Goalscorer: Paul Sharratt, John Peirce, Peter Danson.

Man of the Match: Mike Christie & The Whole Team.

Reuter Correspondent & Note Taker: Mukesh Phakey

Understandably, the coach trip from the ground to the restaurant where our Italian hosts had laid on an excellent meal was jubilant after the fourth win of the tour. Many of the longer-serving members of the club were trying to recall any previous tour that had finished with a 100% record, and none could think of such a successful previous ABs' tour.

The after-match meal was cooked and served by a very small family operation and they did an excellent job of keeping up with various special orders needed to satisfy people's preferences and allergies. Inevitably, the wine flowed and the conversation flowed, before we were forced to leave due to the coach-driver's time limits. The spirit of the evening was, however, dampened somewhat by the apparent loss of a wallet by Allan and Pam Sutton. As I write, I am not aware whether this was recovered or not.

Your author for this first part of the tour had to leave a day early in order to attend an England selection trial on the Sunday, but I am sure that someone else will pick up the story of the Saturday, the end of tour dinner on Saturday night, and the second week that some were able to enjoy.

Saturday 8th October

Richard went early on Saturday morning before everyone was down for breakfast hence the absence of continuity. A lot of us went shopping in the various markets although others were more high-brow and went to Churches and/or museums.

Having got back from our various travels we then got ready for the first of the "End of Tour" dinner that evening. It took place in the private Library area which was on the mezzanine floor overlooking the ground floor bar and lounge area.

Having spent all week driving through countryside full of lots of wonderful looking vegetables, it was not until this final meal at the hotel that some of them actually appeared on our plates!

Some people were up the following day to see the others off on the next leg of their holiday but the majority of us went home!

Part 1 created by Richard and Diane Butcher.

PART 2 FOLLOWS SHORTLY.

**BUT IN THE MEANTIME, PLEASE SEE IF
YOU CAN WORK OUT WHICH LETTER
BELONGS TO WHICH PERSON.**



A



F



K



P



U



B



G



L



Q



V



C



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M



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X



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T

The “Tooth & Toilet” Tour – Part II

Sunday 9th October

Most of our sad farewells were said the evening before at the End of Tour dinner, but a small intrepid band of 4 members who were returning home, namely Tom, Basher, Mike and Lou came outside to wave us off just as it started to rain. The group continuing the tour, under Julia's guidance, consisted of 11 brave adventurers in the coach and Mike and Chris in the vanguard in their car.

The trip to Lake Como was uneventful until we came off the motorway and hit the narrow roads around the lake. By now the rain had started again, after a brief shower and some sunshine, and was falling quite heavily. The driver was weaving his way past buses with inches to spare on streets in the villages that did not look wide enough for one coach let alone two to pass each other! The bus and its occupants arrived safely at Villa Carlotta on Lake Como but we were an hour late.

Unfortunately our morning coffee was cancelled and a thirsty band of travellers were shown round the Villa, after being kept standing in the rain, a number of us were without raincoats (they were packed at the bottom of the suit cases in the boot of the coach!)



Waiting in the rain



The Villa Carlotta in the rain

When we had been shown round and listened to our guide, who seemed determined to tell us all she knew. The high point of the trip was when Allan overstepped the mark. He stepped slightly behind one of the rails that were in front of the paintings and set off all the alarms in the

building! Our rather bedraggled little band headed to the cafe for a rather late lunch. Julia had tried everything to make the sun shine, but nothing worked, but spirits rose when the Manager and his assistant at Antica Serra Caffè offered us drinks of our choice and enormous plates of anti-pasta followed by pasta of our choice and a sweet or gelato.

Replete, we returned to the coach and the coach driver treated us to a very safe but hair-raising trip down some very narrow streets, to our hotel by Lake Como.



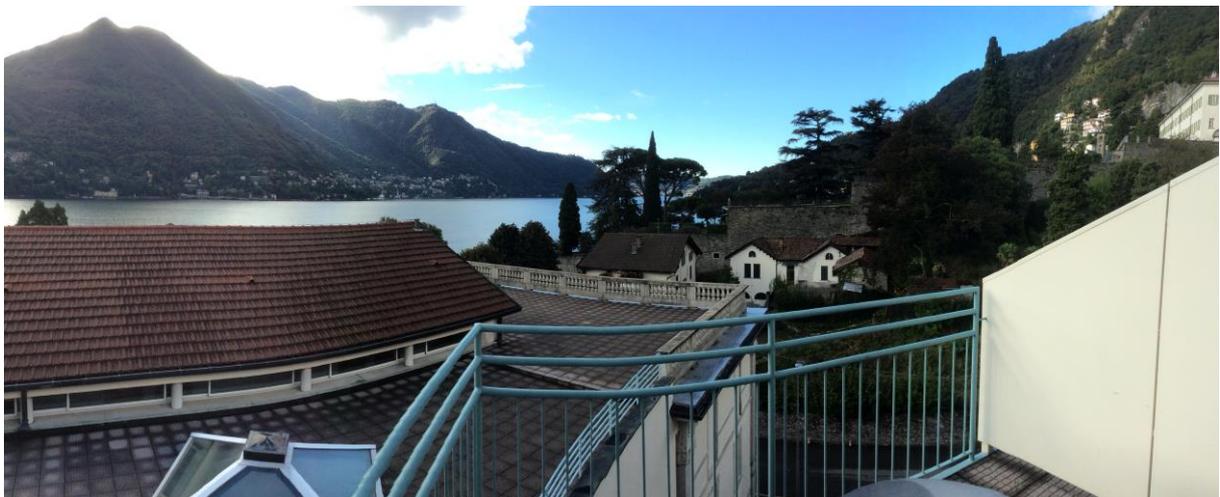
Lunch at the restaurant at Villa Carlotta



Narrow streets around Lake Como

Cars were coming towards us at break neck speeds, in fact one driver got out of his car to check for damage as he had come hurtling round the corner and had to break hard, before he would allow the coach by!

After all the excitement and we had booked in to our lake view rooms, we enjoyed a quite evening in the bar either chatting, eating and enjoying a drink or playing in the card school in the corner.



Monday 10th October

We had a free day. The sun came out by midday and there was no rain. Most people were at breakfast before going their own ways to enjoy the glorious scenery and exercise or not as they felt inclined. Some went walking on the narrow roads around the hotel and enjoying the views. It was necessary to have your wits about you, what with two way traffic, including buses, lorries and parked cars on roads that in England would be classed as one way!

Others went on the ferry to Como and went up the mountain on the funicular, where the views were glorious. Others made use of Mike's car to go places.

Everyone enjoyed the day in their own individual ways. We had the card school going again in the evening.

Tuesday 11th October

Julia had planned a day on Lake Como for us, starting at 9.30am. Julia was given the wrong information by her contact in Italy, which led to us waiting in the hotel and the captain of our private hire boat waiting at the pier! We were not too late setting off for Bellagio despite this delay. The weather again was not on our side. As the rain came down the boat captain took us along the lakeside and pointed out George Clooney's house and also Richard Branson's residence: both, needless to say were large lakeside properties. They are two of the many celebrities who have houses here.



Richard Branson's Estate



George Clooney's house

We arrived at the rather quaint village of Bellagio, where we landed and went exploring and window shopping for an hour. The specialities of the village being silk scarves and pashminas, jewelry, leather bags and shoes, all well out of our price range!

Bellagio, set at the meeting point of the arms of this Y shaped lake is built, as most settlements here, on the steep hillside, but there were shops aplenty both on the narrow Main Street and down numerous little alleyways with restaurants and cafes tucked away in quaint little corners with just one or two tables outside to signify their existence and to attract custom.

At midday we all met again, and continued to the Melzi D'Eril Gardens. We all had to go together into the gardens as Julia had only been given one ticket for the group.



The view from the Melzi d'Eril Gardens with snow on the mountains

Once inside the group split up and some took the high road, up on the hillside paths while others strolled along the lakeside promenade. It was a pleasantly relaxing 50 minutes spent exploring, viewing the rhododendrons, japonicas, camellias and azaleas to name but a few of the plants on show, and imagining the display of flowers there would be in spring and summer. The beds and pots of pansies and violas provided a focal point of colour to the autumn greenery. The panoramic views from the hillside were stunning and it was made more enjoyable by the appearance of the sun and patches of blue sky just before we left the gardens for lunch!

We left the garden at the other side and we were at our destination for lunch - Alle Darsene di Loppia. Here the lunch was excellent and different from the ones we had had recently, with a fish starter followed by Guinea fowl and a beautiful chocolate pudding with a liquid middle!



The intrepid band of travellers at Alle Darsene di Loppia

We had noticed that our boat was moored, close by prior to the lunch, but we were not too sure how some of our party would be able to get on board where it was moored except by jumping, luckily when we emerged from the restaurant the boat has moved and all could board easily.



Balbiano Villa, with the snake vine, based on snakes that were on the insignia of the owner.

We headed down the lake for our final place to visit, which was Balbianello Villa, which had some interesting history and some unusual features. We had an excellent guide who told us about the original owner who was a Cardinal at the time of Napoleon, but most of the visit was based around on the last owner, who had, on his death given the Villa to the Italian National Trust. He was an explorer and had climbed Everest, although not made the summit due to heart problems and had also gone to the North Pole. Many of his trophies and memorabilia were displayed in the villa. The villa had secret passages and views from every window of the lake, and some of the trees in the garden were pruned and shaped each year to maintain the lake views.

On the day we went there were a number of men in suits around, and we were told that they had been friends of the last owner and were there to mark the anniversary of his death.

A weary group returned to the boat for the returned to the boat and so back to the hotel, where we were invited to John and Clive's room for tea, coffee or something stronger. While we were there Mike Christie made an unscheduled call to Allan, so we sent him all our best wishes!

Wednesday 12th October

Another free day.

Tom was not feeling too great, so he and Beryl had a quiet day. Feeling unwell had just got too much for Pam; she had not been her usual cheery self for a while. Pam and Alan decided to try and return home early and with Julia's help managed to get a flight for the following day. They too had a quiet day resting and packing.

The rest of the party at varying times caught the ferry from the ferry stop close to the hotel and went to Como. Once there people reported that they had gone up on the funicular to the top of the mountain. Others had done the steep climb to the lighthouse and seen the splendid views of the lake. Others also went to the silk museum and we all did some window-shopping and sightseeing.



View from the lighthouse of Lake Como, near Como town.

A group including John, Clive, Mukesh and Neeru stayed on to have a meal and returned on the last ferry.

Those who had returned earlier set up the card school again and Julia joined them, nominations was the name of the game but Julia knew it as "oh hell"! This was the day that Mike and Christine Heywood left us to return home via Switzerland.

Thursday 13th October

Moving day again, but this was completed at a more leisurely pace as the bus was not due until 11.00 am.

Julia took the opportunity to spend the "thank you" money she had been given for organising the trip for the ABs and put a little extra to it to buy herself a cream bag displayed at the hotel. She had been looking for a bag like this for 3 years. The handbag was doubly good as it had been designed by her favourite designer Roberto Cavelli.

We left the hotel on time for the relatively short drive to Milan. We headed straight for the bus/train station where we dropped off Pam and Alan after saying goodbye and wishing Pam all the best for her Chemo as well as hoping that her other problems would ease soon. Clive helped them with the luggage and saw them onto the bus, sneaking a crafty cigarette on the way back to the bus! Julia had made it easier for them by booking them on a flight to Birmingham where their daughter said she would pick them up.

The party of 9 carried onto the hotel and some people were able to book in as their rooms were John, Clive, Tom and Beryl were not so lucky. It was a quick turn around and we set off for our lunch at Don Lisander, another good meal with risotto and beef on the menu. We did think that we may be sitting under the awning rather than inside, but luckily they took us inside as it was cold and wet outside!

The toilets of Italy!

These varied from town to town as well from establishment to establishment.

They varied from the hole in the ground in some cases with accompanying yard brush for cleaning purposes! We came across a few of those! Some of others of note were the foot flush, the button on the wall flush. This was sometimes set well away from the toilet itself: the sink taps with foot pedals to control the hot and cold water; there were also toilets where you had to sit on the seat to keep the seat down, as you rose so did the seat and finally the self cleaning seat which also had a self flushing component which was not always in sync with the occupant, the most expensive at 50 cents per visit!

Anyway back to the report!

Our guide came to collect us from the restaurant and took us on a walking tour, despite the rain still falling! We all had our own radio link with the guide so we could wander a little!

We went to see the outside of La Scala and onto a magnificent shopping arcade where some of the big names of fashion have their shops, and also the bar where Campari was first served to customers.

Our guide who was Milanese wanted to show off his city and most of all, the cathedral known as the Duomo Cathedral. The outside and the inside were very beautiful. We went in after being body searched and having our bags checked. The guide kept us on the move, which did not suit everyone.

While we were there, a rehearsal was going on of some oratorio, again not everyone's choice of accompaniment to the tour! Once we had done the outside we were taken out of the Cathedral to go up onto the Duomo terraces (the roof). Beryl and Tom decided that they didn't want to go, so the guide directed them to a cafe where we would pick them up, now there were 7!



In the Galleria Vittorio



The Duomo Cathedral, Milan

The rest of the party continued and tickets were required to go to the terraces. Sue, while trying to find her ticket did not see the verb abs went flying across the pavement, in the rain. A rather bedraggled Sue was helped up, a little worse for wear but nothing damaged except her pride and one or two bruises. Clive and Sue were directed to another cafe by our guide to be collected later - now there were 5!

Clive was glad he had not gone when the others returned as the guide had said 30 steps to climb to the terraces, which turned out to be 100 steps!! All the stranglers returned to the fold when the terrace walkers returned and we returned to the bus, which took us through dense horn

blowing traffic back to the hotel where the last people booked in and we all went to our rooms to get sorted.

An intrepid group set out from the hotel later to find a bar and a bite to eat -cheaper than hotel prices!



The lunch at the Cavoli a Merenda, only 11 left!

Friday October 14th

The day was changed round so instead of setting out in the morning, we had the morning free and gathered for the bus to take us to lunch at 12 noon.

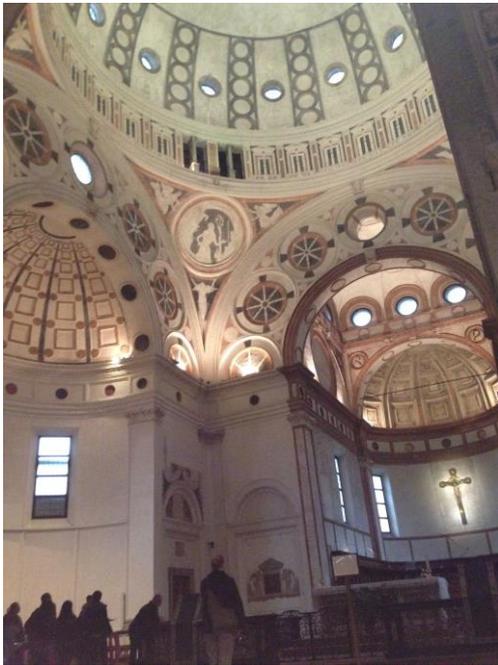
As the restaurant was unmarked, the bus driver found it difficult to find but thankfully one of the contacts for Julia in Milan was outside and directed him there. We had a lovely meal, but there was some dispute as to which wine, if any was included in the price! The red wine drinkers benefitted from the mix up!

We tried to spin out the meal as much as possible as we still had 4 hours to waste when we had finished the meal and it was still raining! A very genial Maître d' who told us not only about the courses cooked by his wife but about the building and their connection to it. The tables were mirrored, and each place had a silver plated charger as part of the setting.

After the meal Mukesh offered to take John and Clive with him and Neeru on a sightseeing trip of Milan until we met again at 6.00pm at the church across the square. The rest of us went to look round the church and the cloisters.

Once we had exhausted the church, we went to a lovely café across the road.

It is surprising how long a coffee can last; they also had some excellent cakes and a very understanding Café owner!



Santa Maria delle Grazie.



The Church Cloisters

We emerged from the café to meet the others, we had put the world to rights while we drank our coffee, it was still raining! The others were a little late for the appointed time, and Julia went off to get the tickets for us to go and see the Last Supper by Leonardo Di Vinci, as we were due to go into the room adjoining the church at 6.30pm. Julia had been given the wrong information yet again, as we should have been there for 6.00pm despite our tickets being for 6.30pm! We were rushed in and out in about 10 mins. The painting of the Last Supper was painted onto a wall of the Monastery as it was at the time of Leonardo. Some monks later did some adjustment to the door below the painting and cut off the feet of Jesus! The white arch of the door way is visible on the photograph at the bottom of the picture.

Once the picture was cleaned the colours are quite pale and this is because Leonardo used a different technique than on frescos and the paints did not last through time as well.

Julia was far from impressed with our treatment and the behavior of the people in charge of showing people round. Julia was exasperated with proceedings and the arrangements generally in Milan but we had done and seen everything on the itinerary.

A rather tired and bedraggled group met the bus at 7.00pm and came back to the hotel for a quiet evening.

Saturday 15th October

Our final day in Milan was a free day, and after breakfast we broke up into small groups to enjoy it. When we went out, if we thought it had rained a lot the previous two days, it was nothing to the rain that fell today!

Tom and Beryl took the sensible approach; they had a quiet day at the hotel and caught up on some sleep.



The Last Supper by Leonardo Di Vinci

Julia went on a tour of La Scala. She watched some of the rehearsals for their next production, as well as doing the tour of the Opera House.

Peter and Sue went on an Olive Oil hunt for their daughter!

Mukesh went with some of the others round another part of Milan. His and Neeru's daughter had lived in Milan for a while and they had got to know the city while visiting her, and passed on their knowledge to the rest of the group.

We all came together for the End of Tour meal in the hotel and along with the excellent meal, the conversation got quite animated and Beryl acted as chair person as the conversation got a little more heated. The meal broke up at about 10.30pm and a group headed out of the hotel to a bar for a night cap, while the others made their way to bed.

Sunday 16th October

We set off to Milan Airport at a very reasonable time – no early start!

Cases were packed and we got onto the bus, which ran us to the airport.

The flight was virtually on time. Peter had a bit of a scrape as he had brought the rest of the food he and Sue had for snacks from the hotel to eat for lunch at the airport once we were through security! In security he was called to one side and his picnic bag was checked, where they not allowing us to take food through? Was there some liquid in the bottom of the bag? As the checker reached the base of the carrier bag Peter remembered he had a sharp knife in there that he had not put into his case!! Sue and Peter had bought it at the Market in Turin for

the grand total of €1.50. There ensued a short debate as to whether to return to check in and put it in his case or to ditch it! It was ditched!

The plane journey was uneventful except 2 girls who came to sit in front of Tom and Beryl who were very rude to them both in the plane and also once we had arrived at Heathrow. They had been drinking.

At Heathrow we said our goodbyes and went our own ways. Six of the party took a taxi to John's house where they had parked their cars to go to Gatwick. The taxi, on the way back to Hook, parked at a garage so that John could buy some fresh milk! John had kindly issued cups of tea to those who wanted them.

Good byes were said again. Until we all meet again!!

Part 2 created by Peter and Sue Danson.

Richard Boutcher, Clive Kendall, Mike Handley, Allan Sutton, Lee Baron, Brian Hopkins, John Peirce, Mike Heywood, Peter Danson, Paul Sharratt, Frank Colwill, Mike Christie, Jon Beale, Tom Ettling.

Umpire: Tom Darlington.

Supporters: Diane Boutcher, Julia Greenhough, Lou Handley, Pam Sutton, Beryl Darlington, Chris Heywood, Teri Baron, Hazel Hopkins, Sue Danson, Jackie Colwill, Marilyn Beale, Lynne Christie, Chris Ettling, Charles Cooper, Anne Cooper, Karen Daly, Trevor Davies, Angela Davies, Neeru Phakey, Mukesh Phakey.

DATE	Man of the Match	OPPONENTS	VENUE	TOWN	F	A	SCORERS
01/10/16	Paul Sharratt	Italy Over 60s	Viale Madonna dei Fiori	Bra	3	0	Paul Sharratt (3)
02/10/16	Peter Danson	Italy Over 65s	Viale Madonna dei Fiori	Bra	1	0	Peter Danson
02/10/16	Mike Handley	HC Bra 1960	Viale Madonna dei Fiori	Bra	2	1	Paul Sharratt Tom Ettling
07/10/16	Mike Christie & The Team	Rassemblement HC	Corso Enrico Tazzoli 78	Turin	3	1	Paul Sharratt John Peirce Peter Danson

Paul Sharratt was HOT SHOT OF THE TOUR and Peter Danson was named Player of the Tour.

Clive's Comments:

My appreciation & observations during the main Tour Dinner at the end of week 1 were as follows:-

- ❖ **Julia Greenhough for her efforts in again setting up what has to date proved to be a very successful & enjoyable tour. I know from our many conversations that this has not been an easy tour to set up & numbers have been impacted by health issues of members.**
- ❖ **Trevor & Angela Davies; our long serving unsung heroes who ensure that our tour finances are kept in good order & that all the important everyday matters proceed so smoothly. I am particularly grateful to Trevor for his encouragement, support & words of wisdom in my role as tour captain.**
- ❖ **Tom Darlington for his unbiased umpiring efforts. It is much regretted that Tom was subject to inappropriate & unwarranted abuse of a Latin nature.**
- ❖ **Mukesh Phakey for his valuable assistance on the sidelines.**
- ❖ **All match note takers & match / tour reporters.**
- ❖ **Our numerous supporters who spurred us on to achieve great success.**
- ❖ **A special thank you to all our new tourists, who fully entered into the spirit of events both on & off the field.**
- ❖ **And finally to all our squad members for their commitment & flexibility in adapting to a system that best served our playing resources. This ultimately gave rise to our set of great results & some very stylish hockey.**

Clive Kendall (Captain).