

Tour de France by Anton Pinschhof

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The effects of the *Tour de France* are all over the place. My wife decided ahead of time to avoid the traffic jams and stay overnight at her workplace. Our local race is the *Criterion de Callac* which, one year, quite surprised me by passing right by Kergroaz-Vraz leaving a paper trail of publicity all along the road and nobody knows (but Jesus) how long it took us to pick it all up, along the half-mile of road that passes our land.



I must be the only person around who pays no attention to cycle races and cannot see 'em coming. Two years running, I had trouble getting to Morlaix on what I supposed were going to be ordinary Saturday mornings, running late. It took all of twenty minutes and a lot of revving-up & horn-blowing & headlight-flashing & steward-upchatting, just to get past Callac on the way to market.

There was a historian on the radio the other day explaining how the *Tour de France* plays a role analogous to that of the *Royal Progress* in the olden days, when the monarch would tour the country continuously with a retinue of hundreds and their horses, preceded by a fanfare of trumpets, holding parliaments & arbitrating disputes & collecting tribute, thus marking his territory and creating national consciousness.

This was, however, probably an unintended side-effect, the main reason being that he had to keep moving because all the king's horses and all the king's men & women ate & drank so much that it was never long before they exhausted the whole region and the local barons moved him on as tactfully as possible ('we would not stop progress milord').

Then the peasants revolted anyway and it became all too bloody obvious that the whole hierarchy (including the local barons) was nothing less than a costly protection racket. So what's new.

Callac has a huge oval town centre on the hilltop. Well, that there was a huge stone fortress, destroyed in 16-something after the

failure of a revolt against the King in which Callac supported the revolting losers. To this day, Callac is one of the last rural bastions of the *French Communist Party*.

The locals played a major part in the resistance during the German occupation. My father-in-law sat in the bushes for weeks, helping to keep German forces from breaking out of the '*Lorient Pocket*' before the cavalry arrived.

It never occurred to me to go and watch the cyclists pass. I spent most of the day loading a trailer with manure and have arranged for a neighbour to help me unload it again onto the field. That gets ploughed then, for better late than never planting out of leeks & cabbages. That's quite enough sport for me, what with my bottom L5 vertebra & my hip & my knee & my hernia...

Our 16m² of photovoltaic roof are installed but not quite functioning for technical reasons, so that I have to keep phoning the company. Paid 'em far too soon.

Apart from that, everybody's fine here. My eldest daughter is in East Germany for several months; My son away with his caravan on house-building jobs; My youngest daughter moving house to a place closer to here; and nobody pregnant as far as I know.

There are two goatlings blissfully awaiting slaughter. Oh yes, that reminds me, the only she-goat presently lactating gives us a cheese a day, so...perhaps I should ask for a Geiger Counter for Xmas... apparently there's a long waiting-list because of rocketing demand.

These photos are from a recent meeting near Budapest. I'm off to meetings in Austria (Krems) mid-August and...in South Korea end of September (crumbs!)

