

GARY CLARK - Just like those sentimental songs  
 ANN WYKE - Should I start singing?  
 MARY HENKINS - Something about Peter....  
 WELSH PRITCHARD - with her long blond hair, someone can't sleep  
 at night  
 JANE HOBBS - How appearing without crutches....  
 ANN LOVELL - our most voluminous advocate of the Welsh  
 language  
 BETTY JENKINS - my lover, honey and mine  
 RUTH - always handy with the melode and pitchpipe  
 ALISON WILLIAMS - the kind of girl to whom one should never say  
 "pardon"  
 SUE BARTLEY - Is it quiet without Sarah?

STEPHEN CHILDS - DAS IST EIN KOSTLICH DING, but who failed  
 to understand it?

JERRY THOMAS - THE ELIZABETHAN MADRIGAL SINGERS

MICK LEBERT - How's your head this morning? - Oh, yes, I meant  
 ON TOUR IN AUSTRIA

WILHELM WARDEN-THOMAS - I wrote it - you sang it

1970

ANN HICKS - I shall have more to sing

DAVID HICKS - our very own personal page

PETER HICKS - a wandering star

SUE BARTLEY - It is quiet without Sarah

GENEVIEVE HANCOCK - a most necessary person

THOSE TAKING PART WERE:

- CAROL CLOUGH - Just love those sentimental songs
- ANN TIMMIS - Should I start slimming?
- MARY PERKINS - Something about Peter.....
- HELEN PRITCHARD - with her long blond hair, someone can't sleep at night
- JANE MORRIS - Now appearing without crutches.....
- ANN LOVELUCK - our most voluminous advocate of the Welsh language
- BETHAN JENKINS - hay fever, honey and smiles
- RUTH - always handy with the meloids and pitchpipe
- ALISON WILLIAMS - the kind of girl to whom one should never say "pardon"
- SUE BARTLETT - Is it quiet without Sarah?
- STEPHEN CHILDS - Whose High German was excellent, but who failed to understand the Low German
- JEREMY TIMMIS - who decided to jaundice out
- MIKE LEGGETT - How's your head this morning? - Oh, yes, I meant your stomach
- GRAEME WARREN-THOMAS - I wrote it - you lump it
- JOHN HICKS - ebullient from start to finish
- DAVID HOPKINS - our very own paternal pappa
- PETER BOSZKO - a wandering star
- KIM BARTLETT - It IS quiet without Sarah
- GRENVILLE HANCOX - a most necessary person



Now since it was raining when we left Aber., this definitely meant that the tour had started. Apparently, for the past three tours it had always rained when leaving Aber., and so despite the fact that we were initially only off to sing in Wolverhampton, the tour was taken to have begun.

We departed from Aber. at 10.00 a.m. on Saturday, 27th June, for a 9.30 a.m. start. Gren, our recently acquired conductor who had a mere five months experience of us, (experience in conducting us) had arranged this concert which turned out to be a pleasant platform from which to spring into our new, temporary and stop-go way of life.

That evening the concert went smoothly and the audience were astounded by the way the "often banal" and inane literature was transformed by the beautiful music into something meaningful and impressive. I believe Gren thought it quite wonderful as well. Afterwards we were 'adopted' by our respective hosts and well looked after until the following morning when we were to head for Southampton.

Stephen had astounded us by informing us that 'his father didn't know who he was' and apparently I uttered the words "I am one of them". Obviously both out of context.

#### Sunday 28th June

We left Wolverhampton for Southampton. It was a long and arduous trip and light relief only came in moments such as when Jane informed us that she had the urge - to sing; or when we stopped by the wayside? Add to this Helen's remark to Carol that she let her dress down, because it was too long, and what more could one wish for. We eventually arrived without mishap (lost him somewhere) and with stomachs that required replenishment we hunted for a suitable establishment which would satiate our desires until we found the inevitable chinky and decided to have a meal instead.

After dinner activities were various - for example we now hold the world record for the most number of Elizabethan Madrigal Singers ever crammed into a telephone booth - it stands at five. We played football with a piece of rubber or were we playing Hockey Pete? and after lobbing bricks at each other Mike's shout of "Rats" involved the expected reaction from the girls. We were bored.

Ann, the newly appointed "GROT - GIRL" did her duty and the coach was soon spick and span and ready for the ferry crossing.

The journey was fairly rough and drink was drunk as usual; beer flowed freely and most of the girls retired early leaving the rest of us to sing with the "locals" on board; Mike had one of the first experiences of the trip and lost an hour and a half due to circumstances beyond his control; on regaining consciousness he was jacketless and cold which was how he remained until the end of the crossing. The singing carried on until 3.00 a.m. and as the captain was in obvious control and showed no signs of turning up, we retired - the fortunate had bunks.....

#### Monday 29th June

Arrived in Le Havre early and eventually secured accommodation. It was an uneventful morning unless one can call sleeping a happening; however, the afternoon consisted in rediscovering what a great and fantastic place Le Havre was - but I don't think many of us were struck on grotesque grey rectangular buildings.

After dinner a few of us had snails - the doctor was surprised - and we were quite disgusted.

Election night was to-night.

### Tuesday 30th June

A very interesting day! And what a better way to start a day than with half a gallon of warm coffee and five foot of french bread staring at you from a table covered in wallpaper. Still, when in France.....

That afternoon, amid playing football, we practised singing. This was followed by a swift refreshing dip in the sea until it began to rain. An interesting spectacle occurred when an old fisherman, while clutching a length of string at the other end of which was attached a cat, inadvertently continued walking, after the cat had somehow caught its head in a parked bicycle. Its neck appeared to be made of rubber!

The evening rounded itself off with a racy party in the girl's bedroom, a regular feature of the tour - hum.

### Wednesday 1st July

To-day we left that oasis of concrete and clay for better things. At Ali's suggestion the girls prepared them and the boys got them down; hence the cases were more readily packed into Dai's bus, and we were able to get an early start on our journey to Paris.

We stopped in Gournay and lunched in the coach on bread, cheese, tomatoes and pate (with truffles apparently) which had been bought by the girls. It all went down well with a game of volleyball played right outside the local 'gendarmerie'; however, with John Hicks around there was no fear of the ball getting out of control! Then on our way to Paris we were accompanied for many a mile by the local population who had emerged in their hundreds, obviously to cheer us on our way - after all we had been in France two days and good news travels fast. We waved back to them heartily - mustn't disappoint them. Then there was some rumour about the Tour de France.

Arriving in Paris at about 4.30 we went straight to the Cite Universitaire where our accommodation had been arranged by Ali.

Our concert was in the American Center for Students and Artists, Boulevard Raspail, Paris. We didn't begin as best we could as somehow everybody seemed tired and irritable; adding to this the fact that the audience numbered a mere eighteen it wasn't surprising that the first half of the concert didn't go too well. However, after Mike had a swift half in the interval, and Gren had drawn attention to the banal words, we soon picked up and were well appreciated by the gathering. Afterwards we were all, as Stephen said, determined to enjoy ourselves. The two hour journey on the metro was a tremendous delight enjoyed by all and the twenty minutes we had available to see the Eiffel Tower and the surrounding fountains wasn't bad either.

Another day over and so we retired.

### Thursday 2nd July

We had a long journey to accomplish until we reached Metz. The roads became unexpectedly bad which necessitated the odd detour

but we made it eventually. "We'd done about everything else" remarked Ali as she continued working on her crossword. We had a brief stop at some little village and entered a small cafe where Pschitte was served with vengeance, much to our amusement. The woman had a jackdaw which would not speak and there were chickens and pheasant outside the you-know-where; very interesting..... One remark overheard: "I think I'll get mine out" - Stumpy.

We arrived in Metz and stayed at the Auberge de la Jennesse, where we had a lovely meal with a glass or two of the local wine. Also present were some Frenchmen represented by an Englishman who, while telling us of their appreciation of our singing, was suddenly interrupted by Ali exclaiming - "He's English!" This was, at the time, very amusing - but completely stupid. There was some rumour that our coach had been broken into so we all dashed out to find that the rumour was not true. Instead someone else's coach had been broken into.

The evening took its toll and Pete and John promoted Anglo - Irish - with - a - touch - of - Polish relations. By the end of the evening we were quite inebriated which necessitated us having to be "indicated the way to our habitual abode" - of course some clot showed us into the girl's room. Then the delightfully cross-eyed landlady appeared in all her glory and began talking and waving until Gren swept her off her feet with a samba or was it a Cha Cha Cha and in the brief respite most of us escaped to our rooms. Some fell by the wayside.

In the morning the downstairs whatsit was completely flooded - of course the landlady thought it one of us and made all whatsits out of bounds to us - this caused us quite an inconvenience.

Discovery that Ali and Carol know more rugby songs than I do.

#### Friday 3rd July

Everyone in fine humour despite the previous night's occurrences. Bound for Augsburg. Spent thirty minutes at the French/German border. Then we stopped at our first German town, ready for a good meal; but we had a problem: no food nor sufficient marks. So there we were, stuck in this miserable little town, clustering on the street corner in the cold wet drizzle and staring at the bank which had just closed; but an obviously intelligent person suggested that we shelter from the rain in the bus and yet another suggestion came forth saying, with the few marks ye have, buy bread and cheese and do your trick; this was done and the food was eaten with relish which was in season.

For a two shilling piece some of us bought our first frankfurters Stumpy thought that the plate came with it - obviously not very impressed with his two bob's worth of frankfurter.

After 289 miles we reached Augsburg only to hear Dai Bus tell us that he could take us back to Le Havre if we wanted to go. Some kind-hearted postman took us to our accommodation but when we got there we found it was the wrong place. Undaunted we decided to stay where we were and knock the landlady of the hostel up, which we managed to do. We were even given a meal and this was at 11.00 p.m.

#### Saturday 4th July

Woke up and got out of bed; had breakfast. Real German bread for breakfast - what a treat. Then after a few quick camera shots of Augsburg and a talk to that doggy in the window, off again.



Arrived Salzburg at about 3.30 p.m. and having unpacked and changed at the Hefterhof, Chamber of Agriculture, we were off to change our money into Austrian schillings and to buy postcards according to our needs. Ann, the postcard kid, purchased a mere two dozen and that was without any free offer. Then our first Austrian meal which wasn't bad even though they drowned the steaks in mayonaise and tomato sauce. We soon discovered that coffee was fairly expensive at about 3/6 a cup.

That night we rehearsed in the Hefterhof for a good two and a half hours. We had not sung for sometime and our voices needed a good "de-gunge" which was soon done with the aid of "Meloids" from Ruth and fizzy water from the tap. Afterwards another expedition to the locals where beer cost 5/- a pint with music thrown in free.

### Sunday 5th July

Deer were spotted grazing outside. But they were only seen by a few. As we had an early engagement we had to get up early. For most of us it was the first time we had had breakfast in D-Js, but it didn't really make the breakfast taste any different - yes - in Austria as well as France and Germany, they have coffee and bread and jam for breakfast. At the last moment Ruth and Bethan decided to come and sing with us at Parsch. We must have been an unusual sight in our D-Js and long evening dresses at 9.00 a.m.; I think we felt unusual too.

After Mass we were taken into the care and control of Mr. and Mrs. Bratt, a British couple who were apparently on holiday and who looked after us for the next day or so. We were entertained by salad, mustard and frankfurter, with which our stomachs were becoming by now more familiar if not exactly delighted.

Then about mid-day we were taken to the main square in Salzburg, and while the sun scorched down at a probable 85°F we, in our long evening dresses and dinner jackets gave a brief thirty five minute recital for which our reward was seeing our picture in the paper the following day. We attracted a fairly large crowd who were very appreciative and the amount of photographs that were taken while we were singing was almost disconcerting. After our open-air lunch and Stumpy's discourse on how much taste one expects from a ham omelette - very interesting - we were whisked away to Hellbrunn where we were to sing. Our first song was sung, would you believe it, without Ruth and Bethan who seemed determined to lose us. Our audience was allowed one song before they were herded away so that another group of people could listen to us. This did not prove very successful so we decided to sing in the palace itself, and were shown to an octagonal shaped room, with a high dome. It proved a beautiful place to sing since the sound really filled the room and as the music reverberated around the walls one heard the music as one had never heard it before. Each part seemed to come through clearly and distinctly. Moreover, the audience came and went as it pleased which created a very relaxed and informal atmosphere. We sang well and were greatly appreciated by our audience.

A little fat Austrian fellow then offered to take us on a guided tour of Salzburg. This sounded excellent, although Mr. and Mrs. Bratt informed us that his interviews were, for some reason, not beyond reproach. Thus we declined the offer and were taken by the Bratts to a place in the hills where we were introduced to a Prunella Flatz, a most remarkable woman, who made sure we were well fed. In return we gave her and others a sample of our singing before we left to have a short practice, or rather experience, in the adjacent church.

Once again a wild night was had by all as we descended upon a local footstomping pub where ancient rituals - or were they dances - were being performed before our very eyes. This became too much for Mr. John Hicks to bear and in the frenzy that followed, he showed that he

too could do the local thing, man! Mary gained full marks for pertinacity in keeping with him all the way. We were all delighted to hear Stumpy exclaim: "Mine has an element of hardness" as he proudly displayed his stomach to us all. The evening finished off on the subject of Welsh Nationalism - well, well!

### Monday 6th July

Up early and a three hour practice. Then off to lunch, after which Jane, Ann, Pete and myself found considerable difficulty in paying for our meal - it appeared as though we were to be kept waiting to test our honest intentions - but we were in a hurry and had to leave because we were off once again to Hellbrun. We sang once again in the octagonal room where we were well received by the audience, some of whom were inevitably American. Our 16th century songs seemed really appropriate and fitting in the surroundings and one could vaguely imagine the kind of life that was led in those days in that palace.

For our singing we were given a private tour of the Water Gardens in the palace which were devised apparently to the specifications of some Archbishop who obviously had a sense of humour. In the garden there was, for example, a stone table with eight stone seats on either side of the table. In each seat was hidden a fountain, capable, I should imagine, of creating quite an experience at unexpected moments for the Archbishop's guests, although the Archbishop's seat was unaffected by such devices. As we discovered later on, there were many more of these unexpected and cunning devices designed to soak one. We were shown into a series of rooms which were filled with the sounds of hundreds of birds; it really sounded like an aviary - fantastic. We tried to emerge but our way was blocked by a line of fountains, in action, on the threshold of each door. We were forced to jump through them which must have been fun for some. There were many other little gadgets all worked by water, and too numerous to mention; but the cross-section of village life at work was truly amazing: each little model was doing something representative of a typical village - it was incredible and apparently took three years to complete. We eventually ended up fairly wet and soaking from the unexpected water-jets and our guide somehow gathered that any more unexpected water jets of water up the backside would have resulted in him getting an unexpected dip in the nearby stream. However, we soon dried off in the heat - even Ali who had been caught several times and was literally dripping.

Despite all this water we had worked up a fair thirst so it was just fortunate that we happened to be going to the Beer Gardens. There we could choose our own food from the vast selection displayed in the many indoor shops. There was a slight drawback in not knowing exactly what one was buying until one paid for it - which merely told you how much you were going to enjoy it. Nevertheless we ate and drank in the huge garden with Mr. and Mrs. Bratt and Frau Platz and her son Michael. Then a few hours and litres later we said goodbye to them, thanked them for their hospitality and guidance, and with a few litre mugs tucked under our arms went back to the Heferthof in Dai's bus.

Another drink in the pub up the road and after a little spot of leg pulling (which left John's leg some few feet longer) we discovered a set of continental playing cards and as Mary pointed out, while holding up the Queen, one suit appeared to be balls - very peculiar. Another excellent day - Gren and Jeremy stayed behind to drink with the locals - until they were kindly collected by Stumpy at about 2.00 a.m., and shown the way home.

Tuesday 7th July

To-day we were journeying onwards towards Linz. Gren and Jeremy appeared a little worse for wear after the previous night. A really boiling day and we soon reached our destination when we had a quick meal of Wiener Schnitzel and salad which was very welcome if not altogether a surprise. In the afternoon we did as we pleased - within reason of course. We were also introduced to a person by the name of 'Mops' who was to surprise us quite a lot in the time we were with him. He had also known the last load of Mads who came to Austria and had arranged their concerts as well.

That night we had a pretty large audience of about three or four hundred. We were quite nervous but they soon disappeared once we started singing - the nerves didn't trouble us much either. Jeremy managed to hold out till the interval when it was apparent that he was really ill and a call went out to see whether there was a doctor in the house. Mike too wasn't feeling very well - in fact he never seemed too well unless he was near a litre or two, but he managed well and stuck it out till the end. Coming back on stage for the second half Gren was handed a piece of paper - apparently we were well appreciated by a group of Americans who thought it swell to hear some English. A light note of humour occurred when, half-way through Little Bornin, the clock-tower began to strike - too much and we had to stop - then amid chuckles from the crowd we started again.

After a meal we drove back to our accommodation, which, by the way was at the Jugendherberge des Landes Oberosterreich - very nice too - and we learnt that Jeremy had probably contracted jaundice. In any event it was necessary for him and Ann to travel back to England as soon as possible. This was obviously a great shock to us all and must have been a big disappointment to them both because the tour was only half-way through, and we hadn't even reached Spittal to which we were all looking forward.

So dejectedly to bed.

### Wednesday 8th July

We decided to leave Linz early and thus travel as far as we could towards Spittal. Jeremy and Ann left early and a few had a brief view of their waving hands as they were whisked away by car on their journey back to England.

However, unforeseen circumstances loomed ahead when 'Mops' insisted that we should drop in at his 'penthouse suite' for a drink. There we were introduced to his bears - no not real ones - teddy bears. He had a fair variety - Mother Bear, Father Bear and even a ghost bear of which he appeared to be quite proud. Apparently it was family tradition to be called something ..... The soda water and apple juice ran freely as we chatted. We signed his visitors book which was filled with many a reference to bears and then we were off, after a brief chat with his parents while Mops changed into his boy-scout gear: man, he was really cool!

We stopped at a cafe where we ate and drank; finding a proper whist proved once again to be a problem - this time for Ann; however the riddle was soon solved and we were off on our way - after, of course our after-dinner game of foot/head/volley and how's your father-ball.

We were all panting together - shirts came off but still it was no good - we had to admit that our air-conditioning had failed - we were dying for a swim. 'Mops', who must have had a sense of humour, directed us to this beautiful mountain lake, where it was possible to swim. It seemed just the job. We hastily ran around the perimeter



looking for a suitable spot to jump in and in the process Mike had to put his foot in it - in fact half a leg went into it. But he was not alone as it seemed that before one could get into the lake it was necessary to put both feet into it. But it was worth it - the lake was cool and clear - until one had kicked the mud around at the bottom when it became cool and muddy - add to this horseflies and a great time was had by all - no wonder 'Mops' didn't go in.

We reached Knittelfeld fairly early and booked into this hotel; 'Mops' had left us earlier to go and join up with his scouts. After a good meal we retired fairly tired. Ali informed us sometime during the day "I tried it once but found it very difficult" - this is obviously taken out of context folks - and the context must have been very interesting.

#### Thursday 9th July

No breakfast but a stop for a coffee, cake and/or frankfurter at about 11.00 a.m. A slight difficulty encountered in discerning the men's from the ladies'. Another hot day. Shirts off. Scenery continued to be the same beautiful rolling hills and mountains covered with many many pines that we had encountered throughout Austria.

Arrived at Spittal mid-day. Ali goes off to find a guide and we find that there are not enough places for us, but this was soon rectified. Lost the coach for a while. Then the boys were shown to Hotel Salzburg while the girls were in some kind of house down the road. We had a quick practice but the heat proved too much and before any more fell by the wayside we decided to call it a day.

The evening was spent listening to the town's resident choir in the Schloss Porcia. They sang one song for each of the competing choirs - for us it was 'Now O Now'. An early night. It was whispered in our ears that after the last load of 'Mads' stayed in Spittal, the local population was increased by a young child of Austro-Anglican descent. Mere hearsay of course.

And so to bed, yet again.

#### Friday 10th July

Another glorious day, but we had work to do. We practiced all morning at times and places which had been arranged for us in order to give us a chance to test the acoustics. As we had the afternoon off, we decided to try and dispose of some of our accumulated dirty washing. Setting off due east, we spent an hour and a half in search of a washeteria, but four dry-cleaners and one dress-makers shop later we made the helpful discovery that "nein vasheteria in Spittal". We found some soap suds quite easily though and then the girls very kindly offered to do it -

Useless items such as hats and souvenirs were bought; Jane had a visit to the doctor to be patched up since her leg was playing up.

Tonight was the start of the folksong part of the competition, but unfortunately we were not to sing until last, which turned out to be in the region of eleven or eleven thirty that night. We had chosen 'Y Fwyalchen Ddu Bigfelen' by Charles Clements, 'I Will Give My Love an Apple' by Mullinar and 'Morfa Rhuddlan' by D. Evans. We were told later by the judges that they were all a little on the sombre and sad side. However they went down pretty well, especially Morfa Rhuddlan which went down a couple of octaves I would say. But

having restarted it, we managed to keep it up quite well till the end. After this star performance we somehow gathered that we were not going to win the Bewarb Kategorie B. In fact we didn't - we came last. Although the rules stated that the songs must be sung without copies and that they should represent the country from which one came, it turned out that we really had a free hand - for example the Hamburg choir sang their well-known folksongs: "What shall we do with the drunken sailor" and "Johnny come down to Hilo", and I believe the winning choir sang one song with copies. Still there were no hard feelings because there were other things to do, like have another rave party.

### Saturday 11th July

We rose fairly early (6.30 a.m.!) as this morning we had to sing the two set pieces: 'Das ist ein Kostlich Ding' by Kubizek and Gesualdo di Venosa's Madrigal, 'Luci serene e chiare'. We sang these fairly satisfactorily. The experience of the morning came when the Finnish choir began singing. Apart from sounding like a load of ducks, their interpretation of the two pieces was incredible and it took considerable versatility and ability to fit their singing to the corresponding music.

At lunch, Ali, who always chooses her words with care, exclaimed, "I'm looking forward to being Pregnant" to which Pete, the perfect gentleman remarked, 'anything to oblige! After this we had to sleep.

That evening we did not have too long to wait before we went on stage as we were on second. After singing another compulsory song, 'Ecce Quomodo Moritur Justus' by Gallus we continued to sing extremely well. Our programme consisted of 'Fire Fire' by Morley, 'Tu es Petrus' by John Coath, a 'Madrigal' by R. R. Bennett and finally, 'As Vesta was from Latmos Hill' by Thomas Weelkes. Unfortunately mid-way through this last piece a thunderstorm had developed and we continued amid a background of incessant noise as rain pounded on the roof and thunderclaps showed their appreciation. We were well pleased with our performance even though Mike and I, who were singing the same part, revealed that we had lost the last page.

As the noise was so bad the next choir did not perform for another half an hour or so; meanwhile, as the rain dripped in through the makeshift roof, the audience was entertained extremely well by an impromptu performance of negro spirituals sung by the conductor of the local choir and some of his friends. It provided a welcome relief.

Then the adjudication; and rather a shock to find that we had been placed fifth out of the seven competing choirs. But this was not as bad as it may seem for in the last section, that is our own chosen pieces, we had been placed second; apparently the set pieces let us down somewhat but even so the marks were very close. Feeling therefore a little dejected we made our way back to our hotel where after a quick drink or two and during a 'canu', we soon cheered up. We were soon joined in our singing by some members from the Munich choir and even a couple of the judges. During this time a great and wonderful revelation happened. On comparing pitchforks, it was discovered that Gren's was half a semi-tone higher than that of the adjudicators. No more need be said. In the immortal words of Stumpy "very interesting but not very funny".

We went to bed fairly late; some continued drinking at the nearby country club where beer was a mere 8/- a pint, and went to bed very late; others were glad they went to bed fairly late!

Sunday 12th July

At last no more competing - only an informal engagement to sing a few songs at Millstatt am See. The Finnish and Czechoslovakian choirs were also present, the latter being forced to sing by the appreciative crowd twice as long as anybody else. They were really excellent as they had been throughout the competition and even the Finns sounded much better than they did the previous day. We sang a few pieces before Gren was presented with a beautifully framed giant postcard by someone important.

As it was so hot, some of us returned for a swim in the 'sea' at Millstatt. Of course on our first real opportunity to soak up the sun and achieve our longed-for sun-tans, the sun decided to stay behind clouds - it even began to rain. But at least it must have pleased our Lily of the Valley, Ann Loveluck, the white wonder from Maesteg.

In the evening was the concert-winners concert, again in the Schloss Porcia. There was no doubt as to which choir was the most popular and well appreciated - if they had been judged on a clapometer, the Czechs would have won hands down. I believe they came third in each competition though. Then two of the choirs, the above mentioned and also the Hamburg choir, entertained us at their respective places. Those who went with the Czechs had a hair-raising if not frightening journey when their coach driver insisted on travelling slap-bang in the middle of the road and at a constant speed of 80 kilometres per hour, whether the road was straight or whatever. How we reached our destination intact seemed a miracle; anyway once there we were taken along this half-mile pathway to their 'pad'. It was pitch black and no-one understood a word they were saying. However, once inside we sang, talked, swapped addresses and drank until about three and four in the morning. Gren conducted the forty or fifty members of the Czech choir in several pieces - 'Ecce' and Gerualdo's 'Madrigal' - which he later admitted was a memorable experience. It was a memorable experience for all of us in many respects; for example those couple of basses who would drop an octave at the wink of the conductor; the way lesbianism was openly tolerated and even respected; the way they were genuinely interested in us and tried to make us feel at home, despite the fact that very few could speak English; not to mention the fact that our glasses were never empty. We were given superb displays of singing from a couple of brilliant tenors who each sang extremely difficult arias. And their star bass had such a powerful voice that even at twenty feet it was necessary for one to cover ones ear. Incredible. It was a kind of rude hospitality which was tremendously touching. But it was time to go and although it took another hour to reach the coach - people singing and so on - we were soon whisked back to Spittal. Arriving at the crack of dawn, fond farewells were profusely and sincerely made to our respective 'hosts'.

As it was a new day, then apparently it was time for breakfast - or so thought a few individuals - namely Ali, Ann, Gren, Stephen, Mike and Pete - maybe others. Coming across this wayside inn, they espied the Finnish choir having an early breakfast (4.30 a.m.!) It was too much so they joined in and managed a free breakfast - no-one said a word, you know, no-one said a thing. Coming back, we discovered that Stumpy had missed all the entertainment - or so we thought (we all wonder what he and "Grundig" were up to).

Monday 13th July

A short journey of a few hours and we arrived at Klagenfurt. After the usual, inevitable and even enjoyable muddle as to who sleeps where, we settled down to our accustomed afternoon 'festa' - or siesta.



We gave a concert at the Festsaal Head Office - something to do with the largest suppliers of electricity in Austria. In a smallish room, with a smallish audience, we gave a mediocre concert to an unresponsive audience. Mike again showed signs of illness but managed to stay the distance. 'Meloids' from Ruth proved very helpful to many a voice. Then we found some restaurant, ate and went to bed - whacked.

### Tuesday 14th July

A big surprise - breakfast in bed. Then last minute souvenir hunting in both the morning and afternoon. It's surprisingly hard to decide what rubbish to buy for what person but most of us managed it fairly easily.

After a "meal on Mads", the afternoon was taken up with a general meeting where elections for the coming year were held, and alterations to the constitution were made, after which there were many, many, many, many "thank-yous".

Then off to the Steam Power Plant - Osterreichische Drankraftwerke. A fairly heavy concert consisting of motets and so on had been arranged but this had to be changed to suit our expected audience who were mostly the employees of the plant, which produced the electricity. The overhead cables outside produced the noise of a thousand rattlesnakes - as well as carrying electricity - something to do with ionisation of surrounding air - anyway we sang inside a building so we were not disturbed by the noise - piece of luck, ye Gods. During the interval soda water and applejuice was consumed accompanied by the Maybugs. We seemed to be quite well received by our audience and then in the second half John Hicks had to make his exit because he was feeling very ill - but at least he made it in a characteristic manner as he walked off slap bang through the middle of our audience who were sitting at various tables in the hall.

This was to be our last concert; it had been decided that to sing at Igls the following day would entail travelling all day; add to this the fact that the choir would be reduced to fourteen because Kim and Sue were leaving early, and the fact that John was ill and a few others also under the weather, then it was obvious that we had to call it off. So we called it - off.

Anyway, we were given a great meal consisting of some kind of kebab, and while John slept on the coach, we enjoyed free beer.

### Wednesday 15th July

Rain greeted us this morning which was really very pleasant since we had a lot of travelling to do, in order to get to Le Havre by Saturday. When we reached Villach so that Kim and Sue could make their way back to England, we thought we may as well send a telegram to Igls to let them know that we couldn't make it.

Now as we had a long way to go we thought we might try and beat some of the traffic and also take a short cut here and there by using the minor roads, otherwise known as "yellow roads". They proved too much for us and we had to retrace our steps to the main-road. We even had to ask one of the locals whether a bridge was strong enough to support us. On the way back, we saw the way the bridge was built and wondered how we had ever made it. It appeared to be a matchstick bridge - but having gone over it once, we held our breath and made it back.

Still raining and we stopped at a little cafe where open sandwiches were served. Then back to the coach and after a tot of whiskey we all huddled under blankets or sleeping bags. Reached a place near Salzburg

where after third attempt we found accommodation. After a pretty rotten meal we went to bed - after our usual party - of course!

### Thursday 26th July

Still raining. It was unanimously decided that we did not have enough time to spare to be able to go and fetch from Salzburg Stumpy's old socks and underpants which he had left in the Hefterhof. During a swift 'canu' at the Austrian/German border, the Welsh Dragon was mistaken for Lochness monster by some idiot border guard.

After buying food and changing money at a town, we travelled onwards on the Autobahn until hunger became unbearable when we stopped. Again bread, cheese, tomatoes and folks, liver pate!! Apples and crisps with cake were an added luxury - you could tell Ali had taken over Kim's job as treasurer. Then Mary asked us whether we had all had it because there was still some more cheese - with-holes-in left. We drove on and on ..... Then unable to find accommodation we ended up in a little village a few miles from Saarbrücken. Another meal on Mads in a little inn where Dai Bus and a few others were fixed up with beds. Dai was feeling and looking ill and we all felt tired - he didn't mind though. The rest of us slept on the coach which was parked right outside the inn - this necessitated the obvious and after singing a few rugby songs to the locals who gave us the odd litre or two of free beer in return for our splendid noise - and singing - a minor incident occurred when thinking it a local custom, I threw back a cigarette packet which had been lobbed to me. It turned out not to be a local custom and a battle of "fisticuffs" was narrowly averted.

Stomped back to the coach to find people sleeping in all sorts of weird positions and there we joined them.

### Friday 17th July

On and on. Breakfast at the French/German border. Mary left us at a little French town where we all had a bite and a drink. Lunched in a grotty restaurant on French bread and slabs of sausage. Rouen and accommodation. Then for a meal. The owner of the restaurant turned out to be an ex-professional singer who had retired five years ago and gone into catering. Nevertheless his voice was great to listen to.

### Saturday 18th July

Dave Hopkins said a fond farewell to us before we were on our way to Le Havre. Arrived there with about four hours to spare. On the ferry those with money bought last minute gifts and things. A fairly smooth crossing and it was good to have a pint of draught beer - English. But the English food was not up to much but nevertheless enjoyed. A soporific crossing and a real effort to do anything.

Of course through the customs the coach was searched for the usual but they didn't find any because we didn't have any of the usual.

After a few phone calls, and a farewell to Ali whom we left at the station platform surrounded with luggage, we were off to Aber. Gwyn, Ruth, Bethan and Ann alighted at Cardiff, myself at Brecon, and the remaining few reached Aber. at 4.30 a.m. Sunday, very tired and exhausted after an eventful three weeks.