

March 2003

Welcome to the Spring 2003 SHOT newsletter, it's a bumper addition and hope you all enjoy it. Thanks to all those that contributed with articles, and photos. Sorry if I missed anything, it's either I forgot or the newsletter was getting too huge to send out with all the photos in! Anyway look forward too seeing you all soon
Nigel

Friday 21st -Sunday 23rd March 2003 - Cadair Idris, Snowdonia



Celebrate springtime in southern Snowdonia at Islawrdref, that well known location near Penmaenpool on the Afon Mawddach estuary. This is regarded as one of Europe's finest estuaries especially at low tide when colourful sandbanks are revealed to a backcloth of mountains. Immediately to the south rises a long mountain ridge culminating in the summit of Cadair Idris at 893 m. Superb views are achieved from almost anywhere along here towards the sea and the high

mountains of northern Snowdonia. Crossing the toll bridge across the estuary at Penmaenpool gives easy access to various peaks of the Rhinogs. Opportunities for lower level walks, including the short, but popular Precipice Walks, will appeal to those people slowly resurfacing from winter hibernation.

We are staying at Caban Cader Idris, a converted rural primary school, which SUHC stayed at several years ago. The sleeping accommodation consists of two rooms (10 and 6 beds respectively) with 3 extra beds in the lounge. Camping is possible for 3 tents on the lawn outside. The first 16 deposits will secure beds in the rooms, unless someone asks specifically for a lounge bed. The Caban offers the usual bunk barn facilities and, according to the info leaflet, 'an independent massage service is provided next door'!

The Caban is located at [Grid Ref SH 682169](#). It is best approached along the A493 to Tywyn from its junction with the A470 Dolgellau Bypass just west of the town. Follow the A493 for less than two miles south of the estuary past The George III. One mile beyond the pub turn left (south) up a minor road signposted for King's Youth Hostel. There is a steep hairpin bend at the start and then after 200 yards or so the Caban on the left. If you cross a bridge and see the Youth Hostel then you have gone wrong...

Send £5 deposit to [Gustav](#) to bag a bed or else.

Summer solstice weekend Fri Sun 20th-22nd June 2003



A chance to celebrate the summer solstice in England's craggiest landscape. The Bury Jubilee Hut is a fully converted building amidst the detritus of the former lead mining area of Greenside several hundred feet up a side valley on the eastern flanks of Helvellyn - a location that SHOT has been to on several occasions.

Little description is required for the abundant quality walking in the immediate vicinity. Suffice to say that the summits, ridges, tumbling becks and tarns of the Helvellyn range offer the best opportunities. On the opposite side of Ullswater the High Street range provides equally rewarding routes with undue difficulty. Amble opportunities exist for low level walks in the environs of Ullswater and boat trips on the lake itself.

Bury Hut has excellent facilities in a beckside location. Accommodation is in three rooms (1 x 12 beds, 1 x 10 beds and 1 x 6 beds). It may be possible to allocate the smallest room to two families if the fathers are prepared to relive their youth and share the larger rooms with the singletons.

Access to the hut is not obvious to first timers, so it is advisable to consult their website on www.buryhut.members.beeb.net

Glenridding is situated equidistantly between Penrith and Ambleside on the A592 at the southern end of Ullswater. The best plan would be to locate the dog kennel road sign for Hevellyn Youth Hostel near the car park and shops in the centre of Glenridding. This points into Greenside Road, which is followed uphill past the Travellers Rest pub on the right hand side and the last cottages. Beyond

a hairpin bend the road narrows and proceeds along two concrete tracks leading higher into what appears to be more intimidating terrain. After a few hundred yards Helvellyn Youth Hostel is passed on the left and shortly afterwards near a gate the Bury Jubilee Hut will also be seen on the left. Park your car sensibly in the enclosed parking area. The distance from the village to the hut is about a mile and a half. For those people in the aerospace industry with GPS's just punch in the co-ordinates for NY 436174, but make sure you are in the correct valley first of all.



It is not expected to be fully booked for the weekend so anybody who wishes to bring along a friend please contact Gustav when securing a place with the traditional £5 deposit.

17th-19th October Rhyd Ddu, Snowdonia

This small village will be turned soon into a mecca for train spotters as the Welsh



Highland Railway continues to reinstate Britain's longest narrow gauge railway on its coast to coast route from Caernarfon to Portmadoc through the western part of Snowdonia. Anoraks will be jostling with bobble hats for the remaining parking places in the village as the car park reverts back to its former function as Rhyd Ddu Station.

located for excellent walking on some of Snowdonia's quietest, but not inferior mountains. Indeed, one of the best routes up Snowdon itself starts from here. On the opposite side of the valley a steep pull up Y Garn gains access to the rather fine Nantlle Ridge. Further south above a tide mark of forestry are the rockier summits of Moel Lefn and Moel Hebog. To escape the crowds completely then Mynydd Mawr is the place to be. Low level alternatives exploring rivers and lakes are possibilities with the honey pots of Beddgelert, Caernarfon and Portmadoc just a short drive away.

'Ruff Duff', as some of us have been known to call it in the past, is centrally



We shall be staying at the Cwellyn Arms Bunkhouse. This is a recently refurbished stone barn owned by the Cwellyn Arms in Rhyd Ddu just a few hundred yards away. The accommodation consists of the usual bunk barn amenities. We have booked 18 places comprising of one room with 12 bunk beds and a room in the loft 'decked with good quality mattresses for 6 people'. There is an additional loft room of 4 mattresses which we can also have if our numbers exceed expectation. This has been provisionally reserved for any family with kids. However, if two families are interested then we can put all the little buggers in the same room, lock the door and raffle the key!

Costs will work out at £10 per person per night for bunk beds with a SHOT subsidy (yet to be agreed) of £1 for those on mattresses. Kids have been allowed in at half price by the owners. A deposit of £5 sent to Gustav will definitely secure a bunked and/or mattress.

There is an additional small bunkhouse next door called Bwthyn Bach (could be a former coal shed or something) which

sleeps 3 and has similar prices to that of the bunkhouse. There are also some self catering properties in the village owned by the Cwellyn Arms, and some not particularly cheap Bed and Breakfast rooms in the pub itself. If anyone is interested in these can they please get in touch directly with the Cwellyn Arms to check availability and not Gustav.

Rhyd Ddu is easily accessible 10 miles south east of Caernarfon on the A4085 and 4 miles north of Beddgelert on the same road.

Access the Cwellyn Arms web site on www.snowdoninn.co.uk for further information

and photos including a fine array of hand pumps. Or contact them by phone on 01766 890321



Notes for the Diary/Discussion

Christmas Dinner 2003

Mark has informed the following three destinations have been chosen for the Christmas Meal Trip, more info will follow shortly from [Mark](#) on prices/dates etc:

[Berlin](#)
[Budapest](#)
[Vienna](#)

New Year 2003

[Lynn](#) sent the following email earlier this year regarding options for New Year as far as I am aware nothing has been booked yet though, so its still open for discussion!

As far as I'm aware, no decisions have been made yet regarding the New Year trip for 2004. If anyone would like to volunteer to organise it then please step forward!

I've done a bit of initial research - based on the assumption that we're sticking to the tradition of going to Scotland - and these are my findings so far:

The first choice for this year was originally Strathpeffer YH, but we were unable to get it as a Rent-a-Hostel because it was closed. Other options considered were Ullapool and Inveraray YHs, but they were both already booked.

I've just checked the Rent-a-Hostel data online and Ullapool and Inveraray YHs are already booked over New Year 2004 too. Clearly you have to book more than a year in advance! In fact the only Rent-a-Hostels that are still available are Kirkwall (£275/night), Loch Ossian (£200/night) and Tomintoul (£250/night).

Strathpeffer isn't even listed on the SYHA site any more; it turns out that it's in the process of being sold and the sale is due to go through at the end of this month. I've spoken to the surveyors who are dealing with the sale, and they don't know whether it's going to continue operating as a hostel, but they've taken my number and said they'll look into it and get back to me if they can help.

Here's the information that's on the SYHA website for Strathpeffer (the page does still exist, it's just not listed in the index). Doesn't tell us much about the winter season, unfortunately, but it's better than nothing...

This unique Victorian spa village is well worth a visit. Don't miss the Highland Museum of Childhood in Strathpeffer's old station - whether or not you have youngsters! From May, there is a Highland dancing and pipe bands play in the square on Saturday nights. Go in June, and join in the village's Victorian Week. The Highland Games are in August. It's also an excellent centre for walking and cycling. Come and see a genuine pictish stone surrounded by mystery and legend. Ospreys can be seen at Kinellin Loch (near Hostel) and Loch Ord, or see salmon jumping at Rogie Falls.

So there's a slim possibility that we may still get the hostel that was selected as first choice last year, assuming that the majority of potential participants are happy with that, but if that doesn't work out then we're going to have to find an alternative location.

So, questions:

1. Any volunteers to organise it? I don't mind doing it again, but ideally someone else who hasn't done it before should take a turn.

2. Are you happy with Strathpeffer as a location? It's about 18-20 miles NW of Inverness and 5 miles west of Dingwall. The Rough Guide describes it as "a Victorian spa town surrounded by wooded hills" and "a congenial place to stop over". You can still use the central Water Sampling Pavilion (though apparently the sulphur smell can be a bit offputting), but unfortunately it appears that the Museum of Childhood is closed in winter. The main local mountain is Ben Wyvis, with its highest point at Glas Lethad Mor (3432ft). Other local attractions for walkers include Iron Age fort remains at Knock Farril, the Touchstone Maze (a geological arts project), Rogie Falls and View Rock.

3. What alternative locations would you propose? If we can't get the Strathpeffer hostel then there are a couple of suitable-sounding hostels in Inverness that we might consider: Bazpackers (<http://www.hostel-scotland.co.uk/hostels/index.asp?ID=47>) and Eastgate (<http://www.hostel-scotland.co.uk/hostels/index.asp?ID=48>). Alternatively, how about a return visit to Nethy Bridge (<http://www.nethy.org/nethyhouse/home.htm> - though they already have a group booked in for New Year), Inchnadamph (<http://www.highland-hostels.co.uk/cgi-bin/database.cgi?cgifunction=Search&Hostel%20Name=Inchnadamph>) or Grantown-on-Spey (<http://www.hostel-scotland.co.uk/hostels/index.asp?ID=44>)? If you want to stick with tradition then limit your suggestions to Scotland, but I suppose there's also the possibility of going somewhere more exotic, maybe combining the Christmas dinner trip with the New Year trip...

Ordnance Survey Outdoors Show, NEC (Birmingham) from 14th to 16th March

<http://www.theoutdoorsshow.co.uk/>.

On March 16th there's also a big St. Patrick's Day parade (only Dublin's and New York's are bigger, apparently) and a free concert, both in Birmingham city centre. In the afternoon the main theme is Irish culture, interspersed with events from the World Indoor Athletics Championships (in progress at the neighbouring NIA at the same time); featured acts include a U2 tribute band, some Irish boy band called D'side, and Malachi and Sinead from Fame Academy. In the evening there's a pop concert featuring such luminaries as Blazin' Squad, Girls Aloud, Sarah Whatmore, Mis-Teeq, Gareth Gates and Atomic Kitten. No tickets needed, but the square where it's being held will be closed when it's full to capacity.

If anyone's interested in going to either or both of these events then let me know and maybe we can get together. There's plenty of space in my house for anyone who wants to use it as a base. I'm about 20 minutes' drive from the NEC and a half-hour bus ride from the city centre. [Lynne](#)

Christmas Dinner in Lisbon – words [Lynne](#), and photos by Julian

Monument to the Navigator's



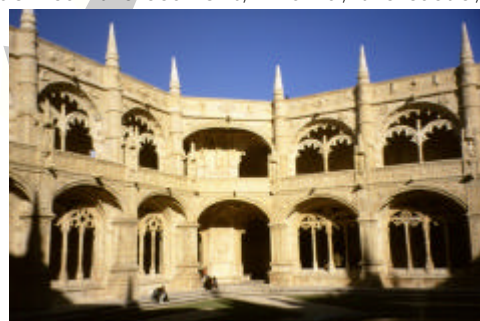
A total of 15 SHOT members descended on the Lisbon for the weekend of 7th-8th December, plus a day or two either side depending on whether we'd gone with the group booking or booked independently for the original planned dates. While central and northern Europe froze in temperatures of around -15°C , we enjoyed beautiful weather, warm enough at times for T-shirts.

Having negotiated the AeroBus into the city centre we checked into the hotel and then went to buy travel passes. The hotel turned out to

have sent us to the wrong place for the passes we wanted and had also kept our passports, wrongly assuring us that we didn't need them. Fortunately there was more than one kiosk (Curly Chris' previous experience of Lisbon was a big help) and eventually we all ended up with passes, even if they didn't necessarily have the right names on them!

Over the three full days we had in Lisbon we walked a good few miles and got round most of the local sights: Baixa and its outdoor elevator; Chiado near the seafront; Alfama; the castle; the cathedral; the Cristo Rei (giant Jesus statue on the other side of the estuary); Belém, with its

magnificent
Jéronimos
Monastery
(where Chris T
and Gus spent
over an hour
waiting for the



Cloister of Mosterio
(monastery) dos
Jeronimos Belem



Torre de Belem

sun to come out for their photos), the Monument to the Discoveries and Bélem Tower; and the site of Expo '98, not far from the airport. At the top of the Cristo Rei we were ambushed by a troop of hyperactive 8-year-olds who kept waving what looked like home-made Christmas cards in our faces but gave up and left us alone when we said "Inglês". The number 28 tram proved to be a good introduction to most of the interesting parts of the city. There was also a tourist tram that took largely

the same route, but we took the advice of the guide book and stuck with the scheduled service. And of course there were several funicular tramways to be bagged!

Everyone also managed to fit in a day trip out to Sintra (though not all on the same day), with its amazing hilltop palace that looked like something out of a Disney film. The toy museum there got positive reports too.

Torre de Belem The food was a bit of a mixed bag. On Friday night, after a substantial amount of dithering, we all ended up in a place that served omelettes and not much else, and couldn't even get the orders for those right. The big night out was the Saturday, and we fell on our feet with that one, finding a traditional-style place that was able to accommodate us all without a booking and turned out to serve very good food. The incredible bread, egg and garlic soup, containing half a dozen whole garlic cloves, had to be one of the more memorable dishes! On Sunday night we went to a Fado restaurant, which Gus had been organised enough to book ahead. Unfortunately some of the others in the group were less than impressed with this choice; they didn't object to hearing a bit of the local Fado music, but weren't so keen on the idea of being held captive for a whole evening without consultation. The feeling of dissent was compounded by the fact that they got the orders mixed up (just about everything was described as "steak" and there was very little effort made to match up each dish with the person who'd ordered it), and then we were told off for chatting over our food while the music was being performed. After the desserts (one of which was appetisingly labelled "dribble of camel") we split into two factions, a small group staying on to hear the rest of the music while the rest went and found a pavement cafe in Baixa which served beer by the litre and hot chocolate in bottles. Let's hope we're as lucky with the weather for this year's trip!



New Year Trip to Harris – words and photos by Julian



Beach at Losqaintir, Harris

On December 27th last year a few intrepid SHOT members started the long trek to the Outer Hebrides. By that night 9 of us had made it as far as Portree Independent Hostel on Skye. The next morning Darren & his friend Neil (an Aussie academic from Southampton University) decided to enter the Portree Christmas 10k race. Neil came in 16th out of 40 & Darren 19th. Darren afterwards displayed a somewhat illogical contempt for the winner's performance:-

"He came in 5 minutes slower than my personal best for 10k"

"How much slower than your personal best were you then Daz ?"

"Er, about 15 minutes"

"Why was that then ?" "Er, well the course was very hilly....".

There obviously wasn't much going on in Portree (or the rest of the Western Highlands for that matter) as a picture of Darren, Neil and some of the other runners made it onto the front page of the West Highland Free Press together with a long article. The rest of us were a bit less energetic, Gus went for a short walk near the Quirang, Mark & Anna went trying to spot Sea Eagles & the rest went to Dunvegan Castle. 3.00pm found us all at Uig waiting for the ferry to Harris where a crestfallen Mr Musson discovered that the Isle of Skye Brewery's shop was very closed.

A smooth crossing on the almost new M.V. Hebrides III brought us to Tarbert on Harris where the Rockview Bunkhouse was to be our home for the next 6 nights. On arrival Lynne

banished "the snorers" (the majority at this point) to the smaller upstairs dorm. First impressions were that although the accommodation was intended for 30 it could only take about 12 comfortably as that's all the space there was round the dining table and that the top bunks in the upper dorm, having only 2ft of headroom, were unusable. Fortunately there would only be 11 of us.

The next day myself, Gus, Chris & Mark went out to tackle the Clisham Ridge, the most obvious walking route on Harris. We reached the top without too much trouble & thus bagged the only available Corbett on the trip. The rain kept off but the views were intermittent. The combination of cold, cloud & low sun did however mean we saw Brocken Spectres on a couple of occasions. Chris started to tire so Gus & myself set off to collect the car while Mark, selflessly giving up the opportunity to climb near-vertical heather in the twilight, stayed with Chris. We reached the car in the darkness & drove back the 3 miles to collect the stragglers. "Taxi for Hows?" said the clearly freezing figure by the roadside. "Have you any plastic bags to sit on? We've fallen down in the mud." Our eventual return was greeted with much relief, as me & sous-chef Dobrzynski were cooking tea.

Monday dawned cold, bright & sunny & Neil had completed a cycle ride before some of us had even got up (Neil & Darren had rented bikes from a shop in Stornoway for the duration of the trip - guess whose didn't get much use). A car load of us set off for Leverburgh on South Harris. Chris, Lynne & Anne (a friend of Lynne's from her National Trust weekends) to do some low-level walking on the coast & myself & Gus to tackle the ring of low hills that surround the village. It was a magnificent day with views south to Berneray & North Uist, west to the offshore islands, north to the Clisham Ridge & east to Skye & the Scottish Mainland. We then compounded our late start by stopping to admire the view & take lots of photos. On the way down from the first hill we met 2 local ladies "of a certain age" who informed us that we were the second and third people they had met walking on that hill in 15 years! By the time we'd reached the far end of the second mountain it was becoming obvious we weren't going to complete the route. We decided to descend to the nearest road. We reached it as night was falling.

"How far back to Leverburgh then Gus?"

"Er, about 4½ miles - I think we better start thumbing a lift - Curly'll freeze waiting for us"

"There's always the bus - I saw one this morning"

A car passed by and Gus made a half-hearted & unsuccessful effort to thumb a lift. I looked behind us.

"I think I can see a bus coming Gus."

"Naaa..."

"I'm pretty certain it is."

"Naaa.. it's a lorry."

"I can see the destination board in the windscreen."

"Naaa..."



View from Roneval near Leverburgh

I stood in a passing place, put my arm out, & the bus stopped. The driver relieved us of the best value pound we spent on the entire trip & returned us to Leverburgh. Lynne & Anne having got a lift back earlier it was a soon to be hypothermic Mr Musson who greeted us when we got off, having found an open pub on his walk. We returned to find that Andy & Bernie had arrived (by air from Manchester to Stornoway) & were already in the pub. Less welcome arrivals were two men the warden's husband had allowed to stay - they spent the entire afternoon & evening in the pub returning past midnight to the "quiet" dorm downstairs which they then proceeded to keep awake with a spectacular display of snoring - some might say that this was poetic justice but I wouldn't be so mean. Meanwhile Mark &

Anna cooked an excellent sweet & sour chicken before we descended on the only salubrious watering hole in Tarbert, the resident's bar of the Isle of Harris Hotel.

Next day, New Year's Eve, Gus, Andy & myself set off to see Sron Ulladale, a mountain with the biggest overhanging cliffs in Britain at its northern end. Gustav's plan was simple :- take the road to Hushnish, park the car at the start of a north-south ridge with a Graham (2000ft



summit) on it, walk the ridge, drop down to one side off the last summit, view the cliffs & walk back on a track by the side of some small lochs. All went well till we got to the end of the ridge & dropped off to the left to avoid the cliffs. There were some cliffs but these could best be described as "unspectacular". As Andy & I pointed out to Gus, we could see much better cliffs on the way out. Gus claimed these were "craggs". Next morning Andy came up to me & asked "Has he told you yet?", "No, what?", "We went up completely the wrong mountain yesterday, that's why the cliffs were crap."

It turns out that there are 2 north-south ridges with 2000ft summits on the Hushnish road, both with tracks & lochs to their western sides.

Having persuaded Lynne by our total lack of enthusiasm that fancy dress wasn't a good idea this year (or any year for that matter) we spent a blameless evening in the Harris Hotel before they chucked us out at 11 when we returned to the bunkhouse. Anne did her best to win the Andy & Mandy award for being fast asleep come midnight but was dragged from her slumbers just in time. 2003 dawned with the sounding of ship's hooters in the harbour & myself, Lynne and the re-invigorated Anne ventured to the ceilidh in the Community Centre. Darren came too but the apathy which had lifted earlier to see him climb Clisham descended again when he discovered it cost £7 to get in & that he'd have to wait a few minutes to see if they had space. Meanwhile the local lush (giving the lie to the view that all the residents of Lewis & Harris are teetotal Presbyterians) was looking to kiss any young lady who entered the place. Lynne, feeling generous & expecting a chaste peck on the cheek, was somewhat surprised to find herself being mauled. I, in the manner of the World War I conscientious objector, attempted to "interpose myself between them", fortunately successfully. The only other item of note after this was you correspondent's unfortunate tumble to the floor during the Canadian Barn Dance; a result, I'm sure, of a highly polished floor & leather soled shoes & nothing at all to do with the consumption of alcohol (honest Guv).

New Year's Day dawned dry & pleasant & without significant hangovers, a sign of how old we're all getting methinks. I decided to pinch one of the bikes & ride to Scalpay, one of Harris's offshore islands now connected by a recently opened bridge. Planning bike rides without proper reference to a map with contour lines on it is a bad idea, as I was soon to discover. What was intended to be a pleasant diversion turned into a test of endurance especially as I had got stiff legs as the result of the previous day's walk. When I got to Scalpay (where all the locals seemed to be at church - not something I've come across before on New Year's Day) I decided to go to the end of the road especially as it promised a view of a wrecked ship. I reached a steep uphill, got off and started to push. A few seconds later I heard a car behind me & moved over to let it pass. The car drew up beside me & stopped. A maroon Cavalier :- Mark, Anna, Andy & Bernie out for a stroll & a spot of birdwatching. Cue embarrassed cyclist.

After a few minutes of chat at the end of the road I set off back, just about making to the top of the slope out of the car park in bottom gear & marginally improving my credibility as a



Callanish stone Circle.

cyclist. On the road back I reached another stiff gradient & two-thirds of the way up gave up & started to push. At this point another car drew up on the opposite side of the road, a silver-blue Almeria containing Darren, Gus, Chris & Anne. They'd decided that Scalpay was the destination for them too. Cue humiliated cyclist. They did however give me a key to let myself back in, for which I was grateful.

Neil, taking no notice of our protestations that Harris was somewhat colder than Bondi Beach, had decided that a dip in the sea was the ideal start to the New Year. Lynne went along with him as witness but returned disappointed as he had managed to select a beach (off a map) surrounded by cliffs through which there was no obvious route of descent. The evening brought Darren's much vaunted (& over-budget) chilli-con-carne. This was on the hot side of acceptable & was disqualified from the contest for best meal of the trip (promoter :- D. Bagnall) when it made Anne violently sick overnight.

Callanish stone Circle, Lewis Thursday saw myself, Gus, Andy & Lynne follow in Mark & Anna's car tracks & pay a visit to some of the stone circles, unusual post offices, & other monuments Lewis & Harris have to offer. A drive down the "Golden Road" (so called because of the

St Clement's church Rodel.



amount it cost to build) to Rodel & St Clement's church, back up through Tarbert, on to Lewis & then Great Bernera (another island with a bridge ticked off successfully), the stone circle at Callanish, the Broch at Carloway & the nearby village of Black Houses at Gearrannan by which time it had started to rain for the first time on the entire trip & my car's tyres had been urinated upon by local dogs twice. This didn't deter us from driving to Stornoway across the middle of Lewis along the single track Pentland Road through what

was by now snow to view the war memorial set on a hill outside the town.

The Harris Hotel was the venue for our final meal together, a meal that was, for some of us, both literally & metaphorically, brill*. Lynne was presented with a copy of the Rough Guide to the Highlands & Islands &, in place of the usual bottle of Malt, six cans of Tango as a token of our appreciation of her efforts in organising the trip. Modesty precludes me from mentioning the identity of the winner of the best meal award. Next morning Lynne didn't receive our thanks for waking us at 6.00 am to make sure we made it to the ferry on time but I'm sure she didn't expect it. I drove Chris & Gustav home at this point. Darren, Neil, Lynne & Anne went to spend the afternoon & night in Glasgow. Mark & Anna disappeared I know not where while Andy & Bernie had a leisurely breakfast before catching the bus to Stornoway & the flight home - arriving back before any of the rest of us.

Thanks once again to Lynne for organising the trip. I hope I haven't missed out anything important but this article is far too long already.

Julian

* For those who don't know brill is a type of fish.

Marathon Man

I am running the London Marathon in April (Sun 13th) to help to raise money for a specialised unit for treating children with neuromuscular disorders at the Orthopaedic Hospital in Oswestry (where I now work). Anyone who wants to sponsor me can send me an email, or phone, or write.

Here is my address, phone, email (just in case you don't have it)
93 Cophorne Rd

Shrewsbury
Shropshire
SY3 8ND
01743 270 376
email Neil@npostans.freemove.co.uk

A devious route to the Maldives from Kos? Words and Photos from Gus

Sweltering under a hot midday sun on the island of Kos earlier in 2002 Jo asked Ian if they were going to get married. Dulled, relaxed and thinking that the only obvious question for such a day would be for yet another glass of cold beer he naturally said yes. Tricked into giving a positive reply, or so he says, Ian had unwittingly unleashed a chain of events in which even he was surprised at its speed. By the time that they arrived back home Ian had found that super efficient Jo, armed with a massive pile of lists outlying tasks and an even larger phone bill, had mobilised her mother and a task force of friends so that a November wedding was now definitely a date for the diary.

On the morning of the wedding itself Ian exuded an air of calm and nonchalance. However, beads of sweat quickly appeared on his brow once he consulted the next item on Jo's list and realised it was time for him and his best man to put on their monkey suits. The moment had arrived. Was Kos only a few months ago he thought to himself?

The congregation arrived at the Methodist Church in Hesse where Jo had cleverly arranged the wedding to coincide with one at the C of E establishment next door. This meant that her wedding day would benefit from the neighbouring bells free of charge. A cunning plan indeed!

Jo arrived late, because it had said so on one of her lists. The lady vicar dressed in snazzy bright blue vestments contrasted nicely with Jo's ivory dress and the lilac that ran like a leitmotif elsewhere throughout the church. A simple and meaningful service was punctuated by the lady vicar's sermon which included comments from her Sunday School. Being in love from one child was 'always holding hands so that the rings don't fall off'. Judging from his exertions, Ian made sure that Jo's ring would never fall off.



The wedding party left the church and as if responding to a secret signal from Jo the bells next door rang on cue. It was all good stuff. As the wedding was held in Humberside the cortege had to leave in two stylish Humber cars of a certain vintage for the reception at the nearby Willerby Manor Hotel, where the autumnal colours in the gardens were especially stunning for the photos.

The evening reception at the Duke of Cumberland got off to a fine start with Jo and Ian performing a very presentable Salsa on the dance floor. Jo's preparations had even extended to having an origami wedding dress which could quickly turn the long train into part of the gown.

Their honeymoon was in the Maldives. This little secret was revealed prematurely when Jo had forgotten to include just one final thing on her last list - not to leave the 'Guidebook to the Maldives' lying in the lounge in full view of the house guests! Perfect for neophytes it said in the guidebook and a perfect start for the Houldridges of Hesse it proved to be. We wish them well in the future.

Father Christmas & Red Noses in Köln!! Words and pictures by Yvonne

Despite it being the first weekend in March it has been reported that Father Christmas was seen frequenting the beer halls and bars of Cologne.

No people weren't on drugs – it was Carneval in Cologne and the SHOT contingent who made it over there had never seen anything so surreal before. The party who witnessed these amazing events were – the hosts Steve & Lisa along with Gus, Cat & Martyn, Yvonne and honorary members for the weekend in the form of Kate (Lisa's sister) and John (Steve's brother).

If you were present in Cologne and not wearing fancy dress you were the ones that stood out in the crowd. Costumes ranged from the plain and simple (silly hats) to what seemed to be the full cast of Lord of the Rings (Cat became rather excited at that point nearly falling off her bar stool whilst screaming at the top of her voice "It's Gandalf, look look Gandalf. Elves, Elves. A Hobbit" and so on and so on!!).

For those present on the Friday the weekend commenced in a very relaxing way – down the thermal baths for several hours. This was apparently essential preparation for what was to come. Saturday was spent doing a grand tour of closed museums and churches – the Germans don't trust the million or so people present for Carneval. Are they afraid that the place will get trashed?!! So all that was left was for the beer halls and coffee shops to be sampled – what a shame. This was followed by an inspection of the boarded up shops (Steve assured us it was for safety reasons and not because a riot was expected) before heading back to the flat for a power nap in preparation for the big night ahead.

Then at 9pm 3 Father Christmases, 2 women with very strange coloured wigs, a clown, a drag queen (known as Martyna!!) and 'Wee Willie Winkie gone wrong' along with 7 Comic Relief Red Noses departed Gladbacher Strasse. The night started off quite quietly with a meal and then moved

on to the riotous scene of a beer hall with all in fancy dress singing and dancing quite merrily whilst standing on the benches and tables. A bar crawl commenced once the beer hall closed and all had returned to the flat by 4.30am (we think!!).

Sunday was the day of the small Züge (Parade) around town – all different bands, schools and clubs parading round the streets of Cologne throwing sweets and flowers into the crowds. There was definite competition amongst the Germans as to who could gather the most! Apparently, as usual the weather was not it's best for Carneval weekend – it rained for the parade but all seemed to have fun.

Sadly most had to leave on Sunday evening to return to the calm and serenity of the UK whilst others were able to stay for the even more manic 'Big' Züge on the Monday. Steve and Gus decided it would be a good idea to go out for a quick, quiet, last night drink on the Sunday.



You'll have to ask them for the story but it goes along the lines of: 9pm left flat to go for drink; 4.30am whilst returning to flat start talking to couple in street who turn out to be the next door neighbours. Go to their flat for a drink (Steve's 17yr old malt whiskey!!); 7am eventually go to bed as it is getting light. And yes they did manage to see the Züge in the afternoon.

New Year fancy dress will never be the same again!!!

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