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An explanation

This is my journal of my holiday.

I am sending copies of it to you at
Bampton, Clantfield, Aston, Shifford and Lew
who so kindly made the holiday possible,
but I wrote the journal for myself first of all
not for you.

This means that there will be some
bits of it which refer to people you have
never heard of or to sides of my life that
you have not shared.

I wrote it first of all so that I can
savour it again and again in the future.
I hope that you will enjoy it now.

Andrew Scott.

Sunday 9th When one starts from Plymouth in the far south west any journey needs to made full use of, so I planned on the way^{to} and from Gatwick to visit friends and relations not lately seen and to get my money's worth by seeing some the properties which I can visit free as a member of the National Trust for Scotland and English Heritage and as a Friend of the Historic Houses Association.

So, off after Sunday finishing-up lunch to Cousin Christopher Graham at Atworth. After tea, walked with him and the dog across several fields. Heard about his work and prospects at B.B.C., Christine's video publishing in Bath, and Marianne's G.C.E. and leadership of the Wiltshire County Youth Orch. I have never managed to get to any of its concerts. Too late now. Chris commutes daily to London from Chippenham, staying up there one night a week to be with David G.

Monday 10th Chris and Christine off betimes in their various directions, then I got off to leave Marianne time to revise before the French exam. To Bradford on Avon, where the historic church was shut, so looked at the town and drank coffee. On to Farleigh Hungerford Castle. Quite a lot of it left, and nicely explained. Ate my picnic amid the mediaeval ruins. Then to Amport to Oliver Sutton, my contemporary at Lochinvar. Just moved to a new home after retiring (for the second time) from his high-powered consultancy. Gay has also retired from ballet teaching. Immediate past Vicar and wife invited ~~for~~ supper to meet me. Turned out to be Roger Bennett, with me at Wells (although not then a crony) and subsequently a naval chaplain. Much talk of many things. Late to bed.

Tuesday 11th To Bepton (near Midhurst) for coffee with Tim Hollis, Dartmouth contemporary. He also has just moved, having retired from the work he was doing for L'Arche in Suffolk, and Marion has too. Now in a venerable farmhouse. Marion's brother lives next door and works for Richard Branson, and nephew is, I think, married to R,B's sister. All very jet set.

Then a little way back to Uppark, newly repaired and reopened after a fire. I arrived at an awkward time for taking a guided tour, so looked round the fascinating exhibition about the restoration and walked in the delightful gardens and had more coffee and a bun.

To Horley, where I checked the position of next week's bed-and-breakfast, on to Tunbridge Wells where I dumped my U.K. bag (so as to leave the car empty in the airport carpark) and had tea with Penny and the children, then back to the airport hotel at Gatwick. Hopes that I might just put the car into their care and be waited to the airport next morning by limousine proved unfounded. I have to park it (but not pay) and then catch a shuttle bus. My joining card was efficiently already made out and awaiting me, but said that I lived at Stockport. Was told to cross it out and insert my own address, but what happens when the other Mr Scott from Stockport turns up.

Wednesday 12th Early breakfast ordered, although it was only obtained partially and with difficulty, which seems strange in an airport hotel. The next bit was easy and I did not get lost, as I expected to, at the airport. Much hanging about. Had brought Les Miserables by Victor Hugo for just this moment, but sat with it on my lap watching all the people go by. Window seat in the aircraft and I could see everyone coming aboard and sat guessing which of them would be in our party. On arrival at Salzburg, found only two other members of our tour party, Tom and Betty from Hertford. To hotel, near airport but not near much else, where more of the group will come later. Nothing to do until then. Walked out in a huff, but it turned into a country walk among fields with rural smells and cheerful people working in the fields. Much "Gruss Gott-ing". Village war memorial with twice as many names for second war as for first, which is surprising. The village is called, rathr grandly, Himmelreich.

Thursday People arrived in drabs and drabs, so I ate supper last night and breakfast this morning with people who were all booked on a different tour, but also with Inghams. Comfortable hotel Good food, which we eat at large round tables in a separate dining room, just for the Inghams groups. Continental breakfast, in the sense of cold meats and cheese and so on, not what you would get if an English hotel offered you "continental".

The bus arrived and at last we viewed each other on the pavement clutching our bags. Only twenty-four of us, thank goodness (I had fears of being swamped among fifty or more). Mostly mature married couples, a mother and daughter, two pairs of women, and one other single, female. Necessarily I gave people imaginary names to go on with, because there was no official introductory session. Northerners in the majority. Fred and Dora from Edinburgh, Tim and Jane from Belfast, Letitia and her mother from Derby, others from Glasgow, Newcastle upon Tyne, Sunderland, Wirral, Ross on Wye, and Gwen was from Oxford. Attractive young Englishwoman married to an Austrian and living in Carinthia joined us as our courier. Her name really was Diane. Sit where we like, change about tomorrow, take turns for the front seat. Not all seats are filled, so easy to dispose ourselves. Off at 8, which is to be our usual pattern. I had bought expensive sunscreen in Bradford on A, and decided to use it, in case. Not accustomed to it and it made me feel mucky. In fact we started off in mist and a bit of rain. As we moved from Salzburg province to Upper Austria, we exchanged the wide eaves, balconies and geraniums in boxes for plainer, solid prosperous farmhouses. Very fertile countryside - wheat, barley, maize, orchards, commercial forests. Diane poured out information about politics, road regulations etc, while many of my fellow-passengers dozed. The sun had come out.

Stopped in Steyr, in what was called a market place but was a very wide street, like a north Yorkshire town. Substantial houses, all different shapes and colours. Diane alerted us to a too in the Rathaus (really meant, I think, for witnesses attending the Court), others all in restaurants. These actually was a market going on, and I was given free samples of caraway bread and, at another stall, goat's cheese and bought a punnet of delicious juicy strawberries, very cheap. Quick visit to the church by the bus stop, Unser Frau vom Siege. Lots of baroque angels.

On to Melk. Largest abbey in somewhere. I'm not sure if that refers to the buildings or to the community. Anyway, very massive and set impressively on a bluff above the Danube. Made me think of Durham, but it is quite different, all 18th century. Many visitors, but not swarming because it is big enough to cope with all. Monks not in sight. They run parishes and two secondary schools. We fend for ourselves for meals, but lunch had been booked today for those who'd asked for it, which was me, Tim and Jane, Letitia and her mother, and the couple from Glasgow. I had chosen to do that as a tactic, to get to know one or two of the party, but it didn't work because we all sat and fed ourselves quickly and silently. Mother intrigued me by twirling her spaghetti anticlockwise. I don't think I could. Lots of ecclesiastical and imperial history and people on display. Church very grand, every statue gilded. Not oppressive, but I wouldn't want it all the time. Had to leave before I'd had enough of it.

Short bus trip down to the river where we boarded the Prinz Eugen, motor cruiser of the Donau Dampschiffahrt Gesellschaft, together with many Japanese and Germans. I had felt a fool wearing or clutching my white sunhat from Ryde when I was at Gatwick and on the plane, but now it proved to be just what was needed. Lovely trip, sunny and breezy. The vineyards of the Wachau and woods and peaks above with castles on them. Durnaste in, where Richard the Lionheart was imprisoned. Very ruined now, but parish church below has a blue and white tower like Wedgewood china. Cargo barges passed and a cruise ship from the Ukraine

I found myself with a water engineer from Chicago. He and his wife had already come up river on the boat and were going back. He explained to me the unpowered ferries across the river which are attached by a wire to an overhead cross-river cable and use their very big rudders against the current, like a sail against the wind, to "tack" across the river. It seems too good to be true.

Rejoined the bus at Krems and drove to Vienna. On the way we booked the trips and evenings out that we wanted to take part in, and paid.

Hotel Harmonie in Vienna, sounding very romantic, but it is in Harmoniegasse and I fancy it took its name from the street. Much smaller than the Salzburg one but very comfortable and well-served. My room up in the roof with a dormer. Lovely view of Vienna's roofs and across to what I think is a sculptor's studio opposite, but cannot, because of a parapet, see what goes on in the street below where there are lively early-morning conversations.

Not far from where I stayed last time in Vienna so, after setting out with the Edinburgh couple who then didn't want to walk far, I went to one of the restaurants I'd been to before. Well, I think I did but it wasn't like I remembered it. Very good and welcoming nevertheless. As we sat waiting for our meals, three grey-bearded (but not old) gentlemen at three tables each with a stein of beer, it looked like the start of an operetta - chorus for us, waving beer mugs, and then a solo for the hero's best friend explaining the plot. It didn't happen. I had delicious beef soup with strips of pancake in it and then liver Tirolese style (not nouvelle cuisine). Walked back well satisfied by the nostalgic route past the prison and the Pension Andreas and the Dreifältigkeitskirche.

Friday Hot night. Solid duvet which I had to keep putting on and off.
14th No coffee-making facilities in the bedroom but a minibar with a price list calculated to deter. The driver has a stock of cool drink in the bus, which can be bought and smuggled in. We are in 4 star hotels and the rooms normally let for £70 or £80 a night, so there must be a big group discount. Very nice not to have to pack this morning. In fact I wholly unpacked yesterday the first time since Sunday.

Off by coach to the Schönbrunn palace. Diane over-optimistic and suggests guided tour of the palace to start with, then time to see the garden, Gloriette, zoo and carriage museum. Much to and fro on arrival and then we cannot have a tour until after $\frac{1}{2}$ hour. So garden first and Gloriette for those wanting to climb the hill to it but they only walked up it so we nearly missed the arranged tour - very well done - and then no time afterwards for the other things. I was glad I'd been before (but I hadn't fitted in those other things then either). Some a bit miffed at being rushed about. The gardens were lovely, with rose-laden pergolas at their best and smelling lovely. Palace very pervaded by Maria Theresa. Then a coach tour of the city going round the Ringstrasse past all the important buildings put up when they knocked down the city walls, over the river to the Prater funfair park and UNO City (what is it for?) and back to be disembarked by the Hofburg, the Hapsburg town palace.

Rushed back to the Opera House and got there just as a guided tour was about to start. Not backstage but all round the front of house. Not as ornate as I'd expected, but it was toned down in the postwar reconstruction. Many grand corridors and promenades, and large foyers for the interval. Quite outshines Covent Garden in that respect. I missed this last time, so very glad to have fitted it in this time round. Went and had kaffee in the Kaerntnerstr (Oxford Street equivalent) and watched the world go by and then had a plate of spaghetti beside the cathedral. Visited the Minoritenkirche (although it is not Franciscan now) and considered and rejected going round an exhibition of 1000 years of the Danube. There seem to be quite a lot of celebrations of the millenium of Austria first being called Austria. Back to the hotel and very briefly put my feet up.

Off in the evening to Grinzing, most of us. In a cellar under a wine tavern. New wine to drink by the tankard. Hearty meal of ham, pork, sausages, sauerkraut and potatoes. Two musicians. A guitarist with a sort

of double guitar. About twelve strings, but half of them he plucked but never stopped. His partner was an accordionist. We had waltzes, polkas, Landlers, Strauss (of course), Lehar, Kalman, White Horse Inn, Merry Widow. Roll out the barrel (which my neighbour was incensed to be told was originally a German song), Ramona (by request and we sang it, but we only knew the one word), various yodeling numbers, and then others which we managed to join in. So much noise by then (we had each two tankards of wine) that some came down from upstairs to see what they were missing. A very good night out. I discover that Tim and Jane are really Rodney and Yvonne. Tom and Betty are George and Enid, and he has a good baritone voice. Saturday A churchy day. Long, rather tedious drive. Out through the industrial suburbs of Vienna, then over the Pannonian plain, wide fields, farms sparse. 7/8 hour wait to cross the frontier into Hungary. Buildings look rather dilapidated, tiles, windows, stucco showing signs of wear and tear. Some newer houses are built with square bricks not rectangular, and the tiles have a mottled look, by intention not from age. Most of the village houses are one storey, some with a room in the roof. Stopped at ESSZTERGOM, seat of the Cardinal Archbishop. Large, not very lovely, 19th century cathedral on top of a hill. A one-horse village straggles down the hill. The guide book spoke of elegant terraces, but goodness knows where they were. Cathedral better inside than outside, and those of us who went straight to it arrived towards the end of an ordinations service. Good to see it in action, and the archbishop in his glory. Seven new priests with hordes of friends and relations and parishioners. Bouquets and kisses and photographs. Went onto the rampsarts and looked at the view. Forwent a visit to the treasury in favour of dashing down the hill to get a hamburger. On then to Szentendre (which it took me a while to recognise as St Andrew's). Centre of Serbian Orthodox Christianity in Hungary, but there was little to show for it apart from some locked churches. What was most visible was a horde of tourists and many houses selling local embroidery, pottery, carvings, marionettes, and so on and so forth. I did find a marxian museum and one open church (with a young man practising the organ) and I briefly fancied myself in an embroidered shirt with billowing sleeves but fortunately didn't find one. NOT my sort of place, and I'm sorry St Andrew got caught up in it. Reached hotel in BUDAPEST at 5.30, on the Buda side of the river (i.e. the right) behind Castle Hill. Realising that we'd be out tomorrow morning, I'd been trying to spot churches where there might be an evening mass. Saw one within two blocks, so set off for it with Gwen. Benediction first at 6, then Mass. All in Hungarian, of course, but fairly easy to know where one had got to. Interesting to guess what the notices were about from the tone of voice. At the communal bits Gwen came in firmly (and defiantly?) in Latin and I tried to emulate. It was Kristina Church and we tried to think who Saint Kristina was. It turned out to be called after one of the many daughters of Maria Theresa (and dedicated to someone else). Back in the hotel joined mother and daughter in coffee bar and had a nice plate of turkey and veg. They are called Grace (mum) and Andrea and Andrea works in a bank in Melbourne (England). Went across the road for a walk in the park. It is called Field of Blood because some (of many) Hungarian rebels were executed there. These ones were Jacobins. Rather grand hotel. Receptionist, concierge, cashier each esconced behind long desk. Smart people in cocktail dresses sit at the long bar. Not the sort of hotel one would walk into carrying ones own suitcase. (but it has no plugs in the basins) My room about the size of the Bampton vicarage sitting room. View across to the Castle Hill, very impressive.

SUNDAY Card provided in room for ordering breakfast in bed, but did not
 16th use it. Very good spread for breakfast, self service and you had to find your way round like in a supermarket. Staff not really so friendly and helpful as at Harmonie.

We don't really know each other yet. On my past tours, to Assisi and to the Holy Land, we were supposed to be a group and so there was a general introductory session and we did nearly everything together. On this occasion it is much more bit by bit. Americans would probably be more brash about it. I discover that the couple from Edinburgh are Fred and Marjorie (or perhaps Margery). Gwen turns out to be Loretta, but she is much more like a Gwen.

Had time for another little walk after breakfast, although there was nowhere much to walk to. Bus then, and guide Idilco (Hilda), and up Gellert hill, named after the bishop missionary to Hungary. It is the next hill downstream from Castle Hill and has a lovely view up the river over the city. Then to the new tennis stadium and on to Heroes Square (on the Pest side of the river now). Large statues of Arpad and the other ~~eleven~~^{six} Magyar chiefs who came and took over Hungary, way back. Also twice-lifesize statues of 14 Hungarian heroes. After 1918 five Hapsburg were melted down and replaced by heroes who were more Hungarian. Tomb of unknown warrior in front. Nice park behind with a cluster of bogus castles representing successive stages of Hungary's history. Then on past the Parliament building and some ancient Turkish baths, up to Castle Hill, where we disembarked and were walked round the palace (viceregal) and associated buildings. Idilco very chatty. Refers to Hapsburgs in quite a different tone of voice from that used by our guide in Schönbrunn. Matthias Church (king not saint) inaccessible because of Mass. Two bands playing, competitively, in the square outside, but I patronise three brilliant boy trumpeters. Fisherman's bastion, very grandiose but is only a belvedere. Idilco at last stops chatting and releases us.

Lunch on goulash soup in a courtyard cafe recommended by Idilco, with Fred and Margery and the Cheltenham couple, ? and another Margery. Then down the hill and across the Eliza Beth Bridge to St Stephen's cathedral. Like most of the major buildings in Budapest it was built in the second half of the 19th century. There are few really old things here. Puzzled by signs to the shrine of Szent Jobb, I wondered who he was, but it turned out to be the shrine of the holy hand, namely the hand of Stephen, the King who brought Hungary to Christianity. Went on to the great synagogue, outside only because it closed at 1. Very impressive. Striped brickwork, rather like Keble College. I realised at this point that I'd brought the map supplied by the hotel (showing restaurants and nightclubs) instead of my own (showing the sights I'd decided to see). Still, I found the ethnographic museum because I knew it was near Parliament, and viewed a very interesting display of costume, farming methods, village life and festivals and so on. Taped guide provided, but it kept going back to the beginning every time I stopped, it, so I gave up on it.

Decided to take the metro back (carefully planned so that I would end near a metro station) but had no correct coin for the ticket machine, the booking office was closed, one family I approached for change were trying to get some from me and the next couple thought I was begging. So I walked back over the Chain Bridge, built by a Scotsman, up the funicular and down the other side of Castle Hill to the hotel. Nice walk, but I wanted a ride on the metro. Wished too, afterwards, that I'd gone the other way to the National Museum and seen the crown jewels. Too much to fit in.

Evening excursion is to a Czarda (pub, not dance) for a Magyar Gypsy evening. Open air in a courtyard, but roof over the tables. Booking mix-up so some had to stand while another table was brought. Ildico had advised lunching sparingly to leave room, but meal was nothing special - goulash soup, turkey with Russian salad and pancakes with sickly chocolate sauce. Large German party at neighbouring tables observed to be getting a better meal. They had a better view too. Dancing was a presentation of various wedding dances, mostly by young people who seemed to double as waiters. The Hungarian commentary translated into German (only). Some diners invited into joining the dancing, but only to have practical jokes played on them, which made my blood boil. Passenger dissatisfaction on the coach back. However, they did mark Rodney and Yvonne's wedding anniversary by coming and playing the Lohengrin bridal march and we shared champagne. That moment a bit spoiled by Ildico joining us at our table just then and Loretta becoming very argumentative. Not one of the better evenings.

Monday 17th A travelling day. Set off at 8. We are very good at being there in time for the bus. Left Budapest over hills that we had detoured before to get to Szentendre. Lovely view of the Danube plain (not the Great Hungarian Plain, which is the other side of Budapest). Crossed the Danube and the border into Slovakia at Ratca. Problems about how much Slovak money to get for our short stay in the Republic. Should have got rid of my Hungarian forints, but they had got to the bottom of my haversack. Haversack very useful. On travelling days it holds all the books - guidebooks, Bible and prayer book and Les Miserables - and documents, so is weighty. On days out is my Swiss Family Robinson bag, with anorak, street map, sunglasses, journal and alternative currencies, and sunhat tied on outside. At night I pack it as my emergency bag to grab in case of fire. But I hanker for my slightly larger former one that I gave to one of my tramps and could never exactly replace.

Came to BRATISLAVA for our lunch stop. Castle standing grandly on hill. Cathedral up many steps. Ignored both and walked the streets with Fred and Margery. Solid Hapsburg houses and lots of former noble palaces (Esterhazy, Schwarzenberg etc) built round large central courtyards and now turned into law court, offices etc. Now that it has become a capital city it is being done up to match its status - cobbles relaid, stucco reapplied, house fronts repainted. Scaffolding everywhere. Town square with statue and trees and an old Town Hall with attractive tower. Up hill to old town gate. Found a restaurant with a delightful shaded garden in which to eat. Fork in potato pancake for me. We underestimated the cooking time and the cost. Fooled all our Slovak cash (I think they subsidised me) and were glad it was downhill to the bus. Margery was forced to resist the temptation to buy Bohemian crystal.

Over the Marava and another frontier into the Czech Republic. Not too long a wait. Moravia presented a farming landscape, potatoes, wheat, maize, people hoeing in the sun, fruit trees and vines. Tall things looking like onion plants gone to seed turned out to be water towers. Eastern Bohemia more hilly and wooded, with meadows in between. Arrived at last, 6 pm, in Prague. Our hotel Olympic, again out of the centre in a rather industrial suburb called Karlín (Charlie) after one of the sons of Franz Josef (or perhaps Maria Theresa). Twin hotels, in fact, and we can eat in either. Buffet supper available at our part of the hotel and no one has any inclination to try to get into town to find somewhere. Tables for four, which presents a problem for a single. John Diane and Martin (our driver) and wonder afterwards if I have breached protocol and breached their privacy. However we have lively conversation, as far as my vocabulary will stretch, and end up exchanging symptoms of my knee and his ankle which ends

with him suggesting (I think) that I should rub horse liniment on it. Evening stroll afterwards down a rather tatty backstreet with glimpses of an unattainable wood.

Tuesday 18th Breakfast laid out in an unaccountable way, but including for the first time some elements of cooked breakfast. Have mine with George and Enid. George very surprised to find that I am a clergyman. Why? Eva turns up to be our guide. Billed as "a large blond", which she is, but a middleaged one. We are warned that she will talk a lot about Karl IV, which she does but just as much about Charles P of W, who obviously has fingers in several charitable and refurbishing affairs over here. Drive across the River Vltava (or Moldau) and up the back of Castle Hill (Prague), also known as Hradcan. Visited the Strahovsky monastery, newly repossessed by Praemonstratensians. It has one of the largest libraries in Europe because it was one of the few not closed down by Josef II (and got the books from the ones that were). We looked down from there at Mala Strana, the district between it and the river, where most of the embassies now are. Thence past former noble residencies and the archbishop's palace to the Royal Palace, built pre-Hapsburg but altered and added to by them. Carl IV was involved with this (father of Anne of Bohemia Richard II's wife and son of John of Luxembourg killed at Crecy). Also Matthias, but not the same Matthias as in Budapest. Czerny Palace is now the Foreign Ministry and was where Jan Masaryk fell or was pushed from a window. President now lives in part of Palace and sentries mount guard, looking tidy but not impressive. St Vitus cathedral (why is he so popular?) fairly new and well kept. Glass pre- and post-war and very attractive but I couldn't find a guide to it in any language. Book of remembrance in the War Memorial chapel has names of people buried (or serving in) East Anglia and other parts of England. Shrine of Sv Vaclav (Wenceslas to us). Oddly decorated chapel, great press of people peering in. He was Regent but not King of Bohemia. Small street where gunsmiths and alchemists worked very packed with tourists. Maria Thersa's name on a building, but she never came her. It was an institute she founded for distressed noblewomen.

Eva kept us briskly moving, sometimes saying comfortingly (and falsely) that it would all be downhill from now on. Saw the window from which the defenestration of the Hapsburg ministers took place, leading to the 30 Years War. Down the hill and past St Mikulas Church (highly commended by Eva but no one wanted to stop and look). On to Charles Bridge, just like the postcards. Many saintly statues, musicians, stalls selling paintings, postcards, jewellery, dolls, china, but not aggressively. Lots of strollers, but plenty of room. Views up and down stream and up to the Castle Hill and across to the Old Town with hills behind. Very good.

Only ten minutes allowed, then on to the Old Town Square - two churches, Rathaus, lots of very picturesque houses, nearly all rebuilt after war damage as in Warsaw. Eva departed. I lunched in the Square with Fred and Margery on a substantial salad with egg and tuna and cheese, and Pilsener, of course. Beer is cheaper than coffee and goes farther.

Solo excursion in the afternoon. Back over the bridge and went to the bypassed St Mikulas. Very baroque, but the "marble" statues are of wood covered with powdered and polished chalk. Mikulas turns out to be Nicholas, and there he was over the altar being handed his three bags of gold on a salver by a cherub. Apotheosis of Nicholas painted very beautifully on the ceiling. This was a Jesuit tool to help catholicise the Czechs after the 30 Years War. Then the gardens of the Ledebour palace on the slope of the Castle Hill. Baroque and elegant but with a great many steps. Glad of my hat. Afterwards the gardens of the Wallenstein palace, larger and flatter but not so attractive. Mostly ponds and clipped beech hedges. Large palace now the Ministry of Culture. Wallenstein was a sort of Thomas Wolsey. Rose to great eminence during the 30 Years War, knocked down several

city blocks to build his palace and was then suspected of treachery by the Emperor, who had him assassinated. By an Englishman an Irishman and a Scotsman.

Back very slowly over the bridge, wondering whether to buy a picture but I think I am short of cash. Pickpocket? No, miscalculation. Past the Clementinum and Carolinum (academies of some sort) and up to the Wenceslas Square which is quite unexpected. It has a Piccadilly feel. New buildings all round. Wenceslaus on his horse right up at the top end (it is a very long "square") and the memorial to Jan Palach, with children sitting almost on top of it. Right at the top is the impressive National Museum. Guidebook said the building was better than the collection in it, so I went in and gaped, wandering a bit as I seeking the pay booth, and then went and had a Coca Cola on the terrace looking down the square. Back by the metro, which has a station close to our hotel.

Many of us out that evening for a special Czech dinner. Another booking muddle when we arrived and not spaces for all of us. Diane hauled me out of my seat at a table for seven and I idled in the foyer with the Newcastle and Wirral couples while we had a conversation and waited for one of the tables to clear. Then Diane realised that I might as well go back to where there was a place, so I had to try and catch them up. A table came free just then, and indeed almost everyone else in the restaurant left and we had the place to ourselves. Very good meal. Cabbage soup (but it had much more in it than cabbage), pork stew, and a sort of syllabub to finish. Sat with Rodney and Yvonne, Fred and Margery, Grace and Andrea. Talked of papermaking (Fred), church organists (Rodney), Sunday School children (Andrea) and much else. Then it was realised that we had been done out of the second drink in our contract, so that was brought and we started all over again. Drive back through "Prague by night". Walked into the Palace yard just before they shut the gates for the night. Walked through the Strahovský Convent and looked at the view. All of us mellow. A good day.

Wednesday Our free day IN PRAGUE. I sat over breakfast chatting, so left later than I meant. Metro to Václavské náměstí, the original royal

citadel, further up river. Walked through a park, round an unbeautiful Palace of Culture, to reach the fortress, mostly rebuilt last century. Princess Lubise grabbed a hunky ploughman called Freymysl and, with him, founded the Freymysl dynasty, settling here. No foreign tourists. Plenty of school parties. Large baroque statues of Czech heroes in a park and mausoleum of the illustrious dead. Coffee very cheap. Drank it with the gardeners having their mid-morning break.

Metro again and went to the Police Museum, inconspicuous among hospitals and university medical schools. Interesting display of the development of the police force through all the political changes. The "Investigation" section started with torture instruments and ended with DNA testing. The brief English explanations were all very low down. Metro to Nemetská Republika where I lunched. Gammon and spinach and solid dumplings, followed by pancakes with the whortleberries that I had ordered but also whipped cream and chocolate sauce.

Spent a little while struggling with cheque-cashing and currency-changing. Bewildering. Then the City Museum (I had chosen a damp weather programme) showing the development of the city, portraits of eminent men (mostly academics) and a model of the city at the turn of the century. Then the Powder Tower, which I climbed, the Franciscan church, which was shut, and the Obecní Dum (art nouveau), which was covered with scaffolding. Finally the Jewish museums, in several synagogues now redundant. One has some of the treasures assembled here by the Nazis from all the other synagogues that they'd knocked down. One has the names of all the Czech Jews who were exterminated. I had come out without my beret so had to

borrow one of their paper yarmulkas. Without a kirby grip it kep float⁹ing off, which was embarassing, but it was only needed in that place. The last museum had a display of art from the concentration camp Terezin (Theresianstadt) Many of the paintings were by children, with their names on, and dates of death because they all went on to Auschwitz. Of 15,000 children in the camp 100 survived. The paintings were mostly unremarkable, the sort a child would bring home from school. Very poignant.

Had to go back to Charles Bridge one more time, but just sat on the parapet and looked at the views and the people.

Out in the evening to a performance of Czech folk dance. No meal involved, so had a quick buffet at the hotel. The girls came with us in the bus but peeled off because they wanted to have their Czech dinner, sitting in the Square. They missed last night with us because they had managed to get four tickets for La Traviata at the Prague Opera! (Heard later that they had actually had an Italian meal, in a cellar). The dancing was excellent. All sorts of different styles, for which they changed into different appropriate costumes, (even down to the shoes). A group of only ten. A few duets, others with all of them. The band played by themselves in between - fiddles, clarinet, cello, cimbalon and (sometimes) bagpipe. We were in the second row, so saw very well. Another very enjoyable evening. (I had partly chosen this tour because it offered the folk evenings. Will watch out for the Czechs at Llangollen). In the interval, an American recognised my Royal Stewart! tie. Ugh. Set him right, politely.

Thursday The day I forgot to write my journal! Another travelling
20th day. From Prague we went through Southern Bohemia, a land
 of woods and forests. Paused at Cesky Budowice (where
Budweiser comes from) to look at the town square. Hapsburgs gave grants for the building up of Cesky B because it was a Catholic town among a hussite contry population. So fine solid buildings and lots of Maria Theresa yellow (which really ochre). Fine Neptune statue in the Square. All round the edge of the square schoolchildren were drawing wigwams and Red Indians and so on on large lengths of paper joined together. It was hard to find a teacher who spoke German or English to ask what was going on. At last, one told me that they were trying to draw the longest picture in the country. She couldn't tell me what they would do with it when they'd done. Some small bcys had progressed beyond graphic art and were playing cowboys and Indians, with water pistols. One small girl was sitting on a corner of the picture to prevent it blowing about, looking very virtuous and having cleverly found a way of doing nothing at all.

Next stop, Cesky Krumlov, former seat of the Schwarzenbergs (one of their seats, anyway). Old town in the loop of the river (Vltava). Castle along a ridge on the other bank. Very small compact town, but easy to get lost in. Spent a while in the town church, John Baptist. Then lunched on fried carp, local delicacy raised in the Schwarzenbergs' very extensive fish ponds. It came as a steak and a tail, not a very interesting taste, rather bony but that was probably because I was unused to it. Decided that I wouldn't bother with the castle, then decided that I must, so climbed the hill and "did" it quite swiftly (not much entry to the buildings anyway) and reached the bus in time, unlike two couples who got lost in the castle. Our first delay.

On our next lap we got diverted (road up?) along quite a small country road, winding through the woods. Like a thriller when they take to a quiet side road, hoping to cross the frontier where there is no frontier post. We did actually cross back into Austria near Vyssi Brod, and there was considerable delay while the Austrian police checked Martin's tachograph and evidently asked some awkward questions. Eventually got back to the Hotel Radisson outside Salzburg about 7. Supper was "included" in the tour so we sat on at our round tables and chatted. All identifiable now.

Friday

21st

The "guided tour of the city" by Diane was over by 9.

It amounted to little more than telling us where things were. I had realised that most of the morning would be free I might have signed up for the afternoon Salzammergut tour. As it was, I went briefly to the cathedral, then to an exhibition commemoration St Rupprecht (1000 yrs?) who established the Church here after Irish missionaries had stirred things up. Felt annoyed with myself for mistakenly putting 200 instead of 20 schilling into the box for "our needy brethren", and then felt ashamed of myself for only intending to give 20.

Up on the funicular to Hohenstauburg where I had my lunch, roast pork, sauerkraut and dumplings, sitting out of doors with a lovely view and then having to eat rather more quickly as it began to rain. Round the corner to the Nonnberg convent where Maria (later von Trapp) really was a postulant. Had planned to walk in the gardens of Schloss Leopoldskron but too wet so walked back into town, visited the Franciscan church then bussed back the hotel. Receptionist had been very helpful and sold me bus tickets and marked on my map where to change. Actually, he sold me an all-day runabout when all I wanted was a single journey, and he marked the wrong stop to get out at so I had half a mile walk. Put my feet up and read an old Daily Telegraph. What with reading up the guide book each day and doing leftover Church Times crossword puzzles, I have not opened Les Miserables. Conscious that I have not had my after-lunch nap for a fortnight. Plan to go into Salzburg and have a meal together, but discover Martha's just across the road so a large party of us go there. Discover George and End who had gone there for a quiet dinner, but we swamped them. The four girls turned up later and had a table to themselves. Loretta, who had originally suggested this on the grizzling evening, not present which was rather sad. She had turned up with the rest of us in the hotel foyer and then disappeared. Excellent food, but not a very organised establishment. We ordered at 8 and I chose the specialty of the house, Marthas Labling, as my main course. It arrived at 9.30, when my neighbours had finished theirs. Water apologetic but not sufficiently so. Said there was only one cook. I was with Rodney and Yvonne, Grace and Andrea and Dave and Beryl from Wirral. There had to be quite a lot of conversation to cover the wait (they also had to wait, but not so long) and we got a bit noisy. Nobody liked to order sweet until I was ready, which was perhaps a mistake because some of the sweets took ages to come too. Much ribaldry that all the men on our table chose "hot love", ice cream with hot stewed raspberries. We made the waiter wait in his turn while we shared out the bill. Bank manager Andrea and pay clerk Dave had to do that. Finally left, contented, at 11.15. My meal when I did get it was delicious pork rissoles and noodles in a cream sauce with mushrooms and peppercorns and herbs.

Saturday A very awkward left over sort of day. We were all leaving on different flights, mostly not until the evening, but must be out of our rooms by 12. And it was pouring with rain. Final packing. I'd brought more than I needed. No need for the suit or the second pair of tidy shoes or the packamac. Swimming trunks and towel were not used for taking a thermal bath in Budapest. Why did I ever think they would be. However, from arrival at Gatwick I never carried my case, except from inside to outside my bedroom door. There were millions. Managed to "check in" our luggage at 10. Also managed to put our hand luggage in the Left Luggage, against the wishes of the Left Luggage attendant but he was overborne by some more senior manager. Said goodbye to some of the morning flight people and to Diane. Some planned to spend the day at the airport. Awin thought. I took buses into town. All pavements a battleground of prollies (all Salzburgers have umbrellas). I bought, leisurely, yesterday's Independent, went to the Gadenhaus in Linzergasse, remembered from last visit, and spent a couple of hours having

a good meal and reading my paper, unchivvied. Then to the Sct Andrä—Kirche, reconstructed since being bombed by the Americans, and evidently revived in other ways too. "Charismatic Mass" once a month. Modern mural above the altar. Crucifix. Peter and Andrew below, each with his own cross, diagonal or upside-down, and the symbols of the four evangelists. All in flaming pinks and orange. In the war memorial chapel a mural, rather like Coventry's, of Christ in a mandela, but this a risen Christ, displaying his wounds.

Back by bus. Saturday ones not so frequent so got quite wet as I waited for the second one. I thought I would look silly wearing a sunhat in the downpour so have squashed it into my suitcase. Will it ever recover? Small reunion in the airport. Got my hand luggage back. (I had wondered if I would, and realised my boarding card was in it). Quick flight bak. Landed at the north terminal, having flown out from south terminal, so took a little while to get to the right carpark. To my great relief the car a) was still there and b) started. To my b and b, which was adequate but not at all like Harmonie ro Olympic. No towel, breakfast to be eaten on the lap in the bedroom, and the wardrobe door came off in my hand. Went to walk in the quite ordinary town of Horley feeling that I had to stretch my legs but also quite worn out.

Really quite an exhausting ten days. Mental adjustment between all the different dynasties, cultures, languages and currencies. Feel rather proud that I used up of changed nearly all the foreign notes (except for 2000 forints still presumably somewhere in my baggage). It is certainly the way of making sure that you see a lot of places, but independent travel means that you can spend a little longer poking around and absorbing. The fellow travellers were a nice lot, and not too many of them, but I didn't exchange any addresses and resisted the idea of a group photo because it was not a time for making lasting friendships. I was quite surprised to find that some of them do this every year. When George asked if anyone knew good places to go on holiday I could only offer to tell him of some well-appointed church halls. My real suggestions of Ventnor and Nottingham were scorned. I'm glad I did take this chance, because I don't suppose I would ever have got to Prague or Budapest on my own, and certainly not all the places in between. I shall remember Martha's and Prague Old Town Square and the Wiener Staatsoper and Grinzing and sailing down the Danube and the folk dancing, but especially Charles Bridge. For years I've wanted to go there and walk on it. Now I've been there, done that.

Sunday Back to real life. Drove to Tunbridge Wells to join Penny and
23rd Adam in time for 10 o'clock church. Got there before any of them
 were dressed. Family service. Reading for the children was
Noah's ark, giving them a chance to wander about in twos. For the rest of us it
was the daily morning and evening offering in the Temple (they are doing Exodus).
Curate, looking like a fifth former but in his second curacy, preached
adequately if unconfidently about it. Light lunch. Met the owners of Penny
and Adam's hoped for next house. Walked in the park with Penny, Megan and Ross,
while Adam had a kip. Megan seems to accept my presence. Then Adam minded
the children while I had a lie down. Early tea for the children. Grown-up
meal for us with salmon Adam's way (sauce with nutmeg and cinnamon) and we
watched a comic romance on video. Flaked out very readily on my sleeping bag
on the sitting room floor.

Monday Nipped out early and got my case out of the car. Repacked. All
24th unwanted things and dirty clothes into the Central European case.
 All wanted for the next few days into the U.K. bag. Achieved
before greatniece or greatnephew were awake to help. Adam poorly. Penny
worn out with Ross's teething (there are benefits in sleeping downstairs). Had
my breakfast with Megan who conversed with me (unintelligibly). Left soon
after breakfast. Mitchelham Priory the first moneysworth visit, but shut on
Mondays so went on a bit and walked in Abbot's Wood by the River Cuckmere.
Then on to Eastbourne to Elaine Pillow (fellow pilgrim) for lunch.

In the afternoon we went on the newly-refurbished pier, walked on the ~~from~~ and listened to the band of the Light Division. Memories of "Rifleman" and our links with the Rifle Regiment. Called on daughter Julia and her new baby, both almost asleep. Other daughter Anna and pilgrim Christa joined us for supper. Bed in the basement (or "garden room").

Tuesday 25th

Anna and Elaine off to work at 9 and I left too. To Lewes, where I looked round the town and drank coffee. Climbed to the top of the castle where there is some ancient masonry and some lovely sweet-smelling white roses. Spent half an hour in the town museum (not worth a detour). On to Arundel Castle, where I had to pay. None of my cards any use. Ate my picnic in the grounds. Lots of history and ancestors in the castle and a keep to climb. Visited also the cathedral, not special. I had expected a grand new re-ordering scheme that I'd read of in "Church Architecture", but I must have got the wrong church. To Guildford, to Colin and Veronica Harvey (Rifleman). Carole also there when I arrived. Talked about Rifleman (of course), golf (Veronica), T.V. studio management (son David) and Colin's RNVR jobs in Bombay and Pearl Harbour. He has now been retired from the Bank for five years. Not too late to bed.

Wednesday 26th

Heard of Colin's stroke and by-pass operation and recovery. After the rush hour died down drove across past Winchester and had my picnic on the fringe of the New Forest near Fordingbridge. Into Dorset and viewed Athelhampton House (Elizabethan not Saxon as I'd supposed). Stayed there for tea and, resisting as usual the souvenirs offered, bought a secondhand book of Ian Hay stories. Then Ilington House, where I was the only person taking the guided tour. Georgian. Memory of former noble owners eclipsed by its lease to George III and Princess Sophia's bastard Tom. Newest owners are restoring house and garden and have introduced a great variety of art, including pictures by Plymouth artist Lenkowitz. To bed and breakfast in ex-farmhouse in West Stafford. Very comfy but with alarmingly creaky floor in the bedroom. Into Dorchester to eat. Dithered between Indian, Thai and Chinese, but chose English and steak. Choice rewarded when they played tapes of the Seekers and Joan Baez. My sort of music.

Thursday 27th

Intended to view the new Duchy of Cornwall estate, Poundbury, but was not well directed and instead went for a walk round Bradford Faverell. Noted with approval the wording of notices in their church porch, but too late to benefit from it now. Long coffee visit with Charles and Yvonne Webb and heard about all their family who are too many to remember. Peter has become a Canon. I still picture him as a gangling teenager even though I've met him many times since he was that. Easy to talk with people I've known so long. They liked talking about Plymouth too where they lived for years before moving out to Yelverton. Sunny unhurried picnic above Cerne Abbas (sunhat still effective although modestly no longer at its best). Sherborne Castle, home briefly of Walter and Bess Raleigh, then of Digbys and Wingfield Digbys, including various lords and earls. Satisfying provision of family portraits. Chatty guides in each room. No time to walk the park but a trying drive to Seend to Derek and Ann Frost where I arrived just in time for the meal. News of Clunfield and conversation about former parishioners and clerical life. Joined by their weekend lodger, a lay clerk of Ely with a sister-in-law from Crownhill. Ann, who is a cat-fosterer, suddenly received delivery of a cat and five new kittens.

Friday 28th

Last moneyworth, Muchelney Abbey of which not much is left but pleasantly pastoral. Did a walkabout in Somerton. Then home-wards, admiring all the flowers in the verges - ox-eyes, campion, wild roses, lupins, elderflower. Horrid rain along the motorway but better later. Good to get into my own bed and know where the window will be when I wake up in the morning.