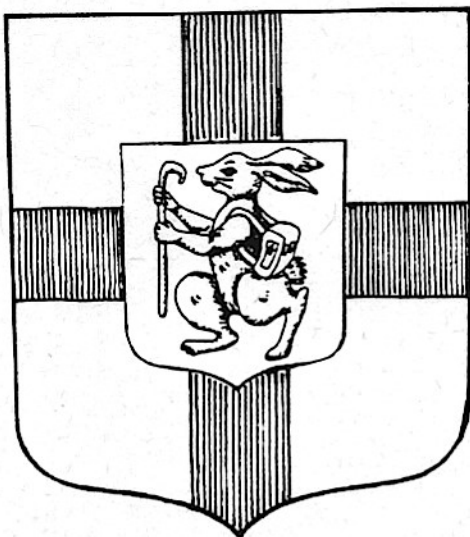
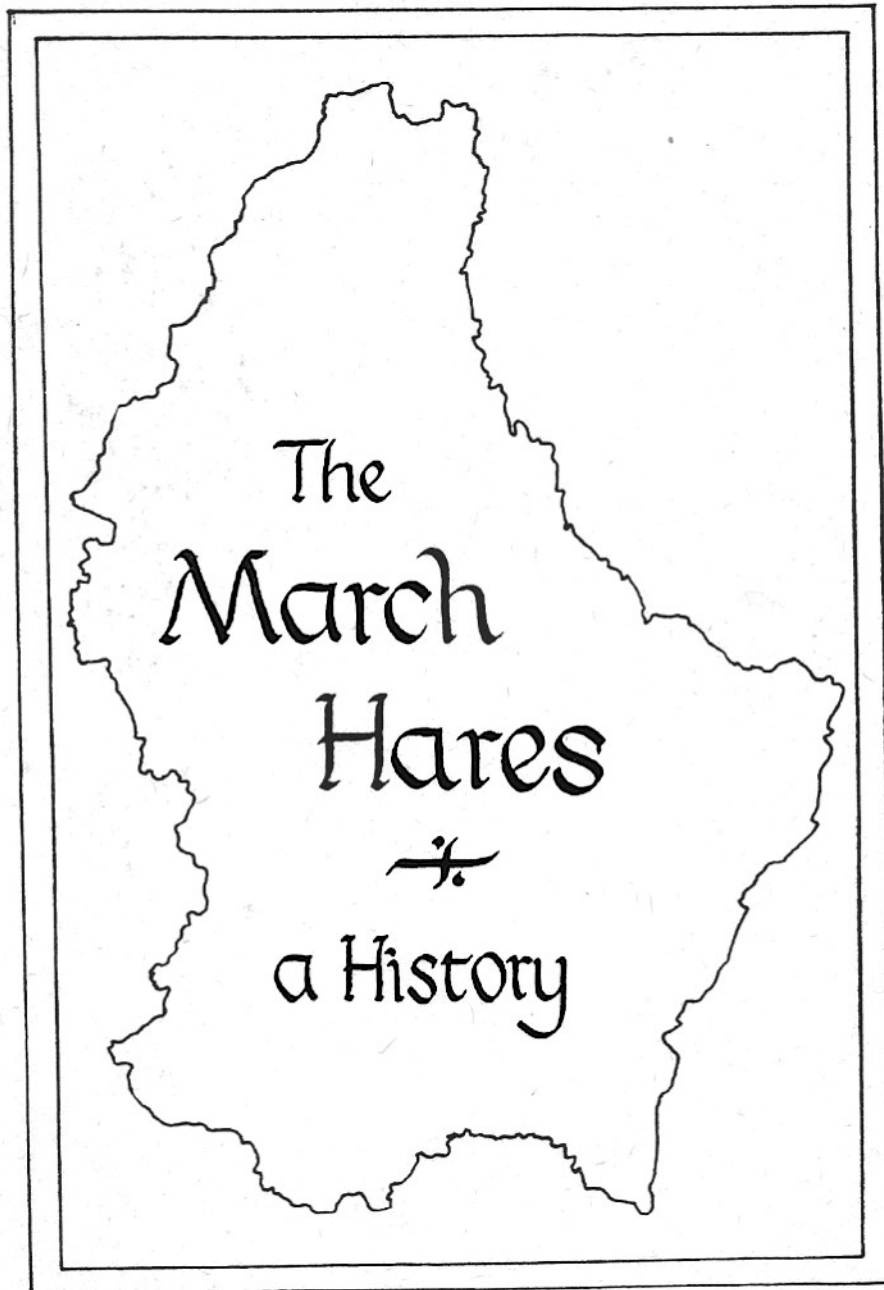
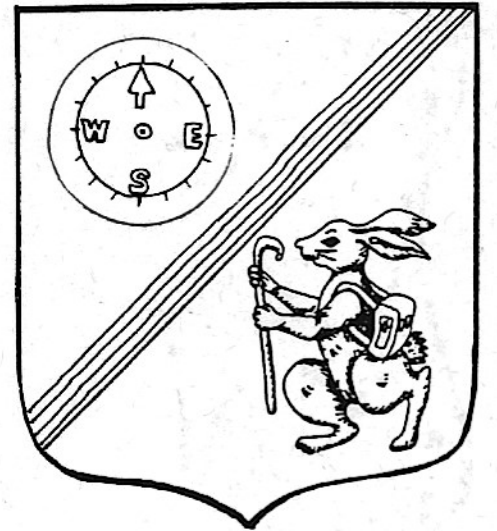


John Overstall



T H E M A R C H H A R E S

The collected papers of the
March Hares,
a walking club founded in
The Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg
on 24th March 1979,
by Michael Townsend,
Seamus Killeen,
Steve Wright and
Peter Davis.

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Foreward(s)

(Leporem excitare: to raise a hare)

I argue that the only excuse for making a speech is to say 'Thank you'. So let it be with prefaces.

Thank you

to Mike, Steve and Seamus for joining me on that first walk in March 1979,

to Mike for coming up with the idea of a walk in stages,

to David for coming up with the idea of a campaign,

to Thomas for the Moselle campaigns, especially the first one: this was, for me, our most memorable campaign,

to Steve, for Waggoner's Walk and especially for all those terrific photographs,

to Sandy and Seamus for the funniest quote "if we play our cards right, we'll both get the sack",

to Frank, for two brilliant campaigns and some pretty zip-py reporting!,

to John, our pace-maker, for pathfinding from Liège to Luxembourg and on the G R 5 in France,

Speakers' Bureau

to Kari, Jacques, Ole, Robert and Raymond,

to Felicity for her part in the Belgian campaign,

to Liz, Christine, Kay, Pat, Birgitte and Nan,

to Sandy, for the laughs and the records,

to Anthony who probably did more field work than any of
us and for his role in four campaigns,

to Liz Turner for the logo,

to all the Hare-wives, especially Diana,

to Bruce and Malcolm for the latest campaign,


to Anthony, David, Frank, John, Felicity, Kari, Sandy,
Mike, Seamus, Steve and Bruce, the nucleus of the club with-
out whose consistent support the pathfinders would have gone
hare-less,

and to you all, all of you who have walked with the Hares,

thank you very much for the pleasure of your company.

It's been great, just great.

Floreat Haresi and good luck to David and Raymond for
the 1990 - 1991 campaign.



*Speciens arnivate quod speciens ambulare
melior est!*

On Saturday, ENO CHAPTER, Seanus
 Kileen, Steve Wright and I walked from Beaufort to Bally-
 nach, a walk of about twenty kilometres, on a fine day
 as a bare cold wind for. It was cold in the ice-walled
 chasma and cold by the near-frozen streams then warm as we
 came up into the mountains Preliminary Peregrinations
 outside on the terrace where we reached the Hotel de l'Erin
 1979 - 1980
 Hotel, the terrace, incidentally, where the club got its
 name.

We were sitting there drinking beer when Steve said:
 "If this is going to be a club, it ought to have a name.
 I suggest we call it the March Hares". We drank to that.
 It has been our first toast ever since.

Our route took us from Beaufort to the Grandhof, up
 to Berdorf and on down the valley to Bontersbach. At a
 guess, I would say we ascended about ten and got there some-
 time around five. It was a good walk and an agreeable
 enough experience for us all to want to walk together again.

The second walk nearly defeated us. Mike suggested we
 walk round the lake at Esch, in two stages. And walk we
 did. The only trouble was that we lost the path soon after
 leaving the Point Mire and we found ourselves clambering up
 the near-vertical slope that drops down into the water on
 the Northern bank. Seanus said later he came close to want-
 ing to give up. He wasn't the only one.

Anthony Cunningham
 Peter Davis
 Michael Townsend

On Saturday, March 24th 1979, Mike Townsend, Seamus Killeen, Steve Wright and I walked from Beaufort to Echternach, a walk of about twenty kilometres, on as fine a day as a hare could wish for. It was cold in the ice-walled chasms and cold by the near-frozen streams then warm as we came up into the sunlight and fine enough for us to sit outside on the terrace when we reached the Hotel de l'Ernz Noir, the terrace, incidentally, where the club got its name.

We were sitting there drinking beer when Steve said: "If this is going to be a club, it ought to have a name. I suggest we call it the March Hares". We drank to that. It has been our first toast ever since.

Our route took us from Beaufort to the Grundhof, up to Berdorf and on down the valley to Echternach. At a guess, I would say we started about ten and got there sometime around five. It was a good walk and an agreeable enough experience for us all to want to walk together again.

The second walk nearly defeated us. Mike suggested we walk round the lake at Esch, in two stages. And walk we did. The only trouble was that we lost the path soon after leaving the Pont Misère and we found ourselves clambering up the near-vertical slope that drops down into the water on the Northern bank. Seamus said later he came close to wanting to give up. He wasn't the only one.

Anthony Cunningham joined us on this walk, impressing us all by actually running up the slopes whenever the fancy took him.

On one of the two stages, Mike rowed us across the lake, from Liefrange to Insenborn, on a raft: the only time, I think, when Hares have travelled in this way. I remember ending stage two at Insenborn and diving into the lake for a swim to cool off. Mike joined me while Anthony played the good Samaritan by going to fetch bottles of beer for us all.

It was on this stage that Mike produced his lunch pack, as we sat down on the grass overlooking the water, to discover that it was large piece of cheese.

These walks were: stage one on Saturday, May 26th and stage two on Saturday, June 2nd.

On Saturday, 24th November we walked from Mertert to Stadtbredimus. I know this from a perfunctory note in my diary for that year. Of that and of the other walks in 1979 I can, I'm afraid, tell you little. Help in filling this or any other gap in the records would be appreciated.

I know that we began 1980 with a walk in the Prüm valley, beginning and ending in Echternach. It was probably our coldest walk ever, the very stream being all frozen in places.

Jacques Fayaud joined us, as did John Overstall and David Heal. Jacques subsequently distinguished himself by being admitted to the Légion d'honneur (the only Hare to receive this honour), John by being the first walker to exceed the speed of light and David by becoming an authority on local history. To each his own. They were very welcome.

In about April of that year we made a two-day traverse of the Grand-Duchy, from Martelange to Vianden, stopping overnight at the Hotel du Moulin in Esch-le-Trou. The wives joined us for dinner there, I remember and a good dinner it was. It was a cold night though. Being so early in the year, no one put on any heating. I remember shivering most of the night.

The weather was variable. I remember getting soaked three times and drying out three times between Martelange and Vianden. Was it after this walk that we repaired to the Overstalls for a delicious tea, only to find, after half an hour's relaxation, that we were hard put to get up again, such is the speed with which one's muscles cool down after a long-ish walk?

From 1980 I also recall a walk from Clervaux south to Kautenbach and then a haze comes over all those early treks, one walk blurring into another. Happy days.

Any help with the gaps will, as I say, be welcome.

The credit for the next idea should go to David Heal. In the autumn of 1980 he suggested that as we had walked across the Grand-Duchy and walked the country from North to South, we ought now to walk right round it. And so we did. And this gives me a breather for I am able, here, to hand over to those who wrote chapter two of our history:

The Great Circumnavigation.

The credit for the next chapter should go to David Heal.

CHAPTER TWO

In the autumn of 1980 he suggested that as we had walked across the Grand-Duchy and walked the country from North to South, we ought now to walk right round it. And so we did. And this gives me a breather for I am able, here, to hand

over to those who write chapter two of our history:

The Great Circumnavigation

1980 - 1982

The Great Circumnavigation.

David Heal

At about one o'clock on Saturday June 19th, twelve men and a dog walked quietly into Weiswampach. Cameras clicked. The sun was shining. Wives and children gathered round. A few beers were drunk. The March Hares had completed their 250 mile walk round the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg. It was the end of a walk that began on 15th November 1980 and continued off and on over thirteen stages of about 35 kms each at roughly six week intervals. Two stages were through continuous rain, one through snow and intense cold, one in very hot weather and the rest in the sort of pleasant enough weather we get most of the time here.

We began in the Oesling, in the wild country where Belgium borders Germany and Luxembourg, striking south along the Our before cutting into Diekirch. The Petite Suisse came next, followed by the Sauer river stretch along to the Moselle. And then the vineyards, for mile after mile. We cut west once we reached Remich, skirting the frontier with France, walking through Mondorf and crossing Luxembourg's industrial belt through Dippach before making north again to Arlon. And then the Ardennes, followed by a walk up past the lake at Esch and into Wiltz. This was rugged country up to Troisvierges, our highest point being reached at Bourgplatz, where the altitude is 558 metres. Slowly from there, a few short miles to Weiswampach and the end.

Those taking part, in alphabetical order and with the number of stages completed in brackets were: Anthony Comfort (1), Anthony Cunningham (13), Father Kit Cunningham (1), Peter Davis (13), Giles Edmonston-Low (2), Jacques Fayaud (5), Bruce Goodman (5), David Heal (12), Francis Jacobs (2), Seamus Killeen (7), Sandy Macrae (7), Thomas Oursin (7), John Overstall (10), Michael Townsend (8), Sepp Simon (1) and Steve Wright (4). Each of the Hares was asked to record impressions of one or other of the thirteen stages.

We began in the Oesling, in the wild country where Belgium borders Germany and Luxembourg, striking south along the Our before cutting into Diekirch. The Petite Suisse came next, followed by the Sauer river stretch along to the Moselle. And then the vineyards, for mile after mile. We cut west once we reached Remich, skirting the frontier with France, walking through Mondorf and crossing Luxembourg's industrial belt through Dippach before making north again to Aillon. And then the Ardennes, followed by a walk up past the lake at Esch and into Wilton. This was rugged country up to Trolavieges, our highest point being reached at Bourqpiatz, where the altitude is 528 metres. Slowly from there, a few short miles to Weiswampach and the end.

Wet beginnings

Weiswampach to Clervaux,

15th November 1980

Apprehensive breakfast in Bridel with the rain falling steadily. Lift up to Weiswampach with intermittent rain. Tighten boots and fasten poncho. Heavier rain. The circumambulation of Luxembourg begins.

A rapid march north-eastwards. The unit breaks up into groups of two or three. We reach the corner where Luxembourg, Germany and Belgium meet. Strangely moving, with its instant prehistoric stones commemorating the founders of the Community in this empty country on this empty, wet day.

Now down the Our valley, roadless and beautiful, even through curtains of rain. Keep going with the promise of coffee at a little café - pause and, of course, it is closed - but it has a covered porch so we shelter for the first time. On we go like a commando unit at relentless speed. Lunchtime - tall trees provide some shelter but we do not linger long. Finally we head west. At last we reach an open café!

We eventually set off again and, sticking rather closer together now, the last bit seems easy as we descend to Clervaux. Another cafe and our train back to Luxembourg. 35 kilometres achieved, fitter and our skins rain-resistant...

Francis Jacobs.

A winter's tale

Clervaux to Stolzenbourg,

December 6th 1980

The yellow lamps were still glowing as we climbed through the forest up from Clervaux railway station at the start of lap two of our walk around the Grand-Duchy. Castle and monastery were dark against the snow. It was cold. Our breath made mist in the silence.

We went wrong almost at once as we came out of the valley. We tried a short cut to get back on the track. John and I stepped in the holes Anthony made deep in the snow. We went wrong again, ending in Fischbach, not Marnach, walking back along the main road to get back on course. In the distance the German hills, snow covered, were tinged with blue.

We climbed down through the forest to the Our, the snow compacted hard in places making it slippery to walk on. We crossed into Germany when we reached the river, climbing up to Dasburg for a memorable breakfast.

The man at the customs post ignored us as we crossed back into Luxembourg and away up into the forest we went, the yellow circle waymarks guiding us. The going was slow, slippery, hard even: the views magnificent.

Surprisingly we went inland as far as Wahlhausen before turning to the Our again. It was getting late. We were not going to get to Vianden in time for the 4pm bus. Providence intervened. When we got to Stolzembourg the bus was there waiting for us. The trek to Vianden could wait.

Peter Davis.

Stolzembourg was an unmissable stage and it provided us with the most extraordinary of bus services. The Bishop of Bass-Monture had been there before us, noting the castle and speculating about the copper mine once worked here. There is still a rue de Mines in Stolzembourg.

We climbed up and over the deep buried-pipeline through which water flows daily between lakes at two different levels, the idea being to optimise the electricity supply of the Federal Republic. Then on to the Chapel, Bildchen, a memorial to the devotion of countless Christians, beginning with those Irish monks of long ago. On past the still-standing walls of Vianden and off south-south east to cross the most permanent of the local frontiers.

Kingdoms come and go but rocks change little. The boundary between the Paleozoic rocks of the Oesling and the Mesozoic rocks of the Gutland outlines the changes in landscape borders. We pass abandoned quarries of the rocks known as red grès, streaked with the veins of fibrous gypsum, passing over the last hill and down to the Roman town of Diekirch, for 2000 years a centre of human life.

Of rocks and men

Stolzembourg to Diekirch,

February 21st 1981

Stolzembourg was an unforeseen stage and it provided us with the most serendipitous of bus services. The Bishop of Basse-Mouture had been there before us, noting the castle and speculating about the copper mine once worked here. There is still a rue de Mines in Stolzenberg.

We climbed up and over the deep buried-pipeline through which water yoyos daily between lakes at two different levels, the idea being to optimise the electricity supply of the Federal Republic. Then on to the Chapel, Bildchen, a memorial to the devotion of countless Christians, beginning with those Irish monks of long ago. On past the still-standing walls of Vianden and off south-south east to cross the most permanent of the local frontiers.

Kingdoms come and go but rocks change little. The boundary between the Paleozoic rocks of the Oesling and the Mesozoic rocks of the Gutland outlives the changes in manmade borders. We pass abandoned quarries of the rocks known as red grès, streaked with the veins of fibrous gypsum, passing over the last hill and down to the Roman town of Diekirch, for 2000 years a centre of human life.

Sensibly it is by a river, standing a fair distance from what were once bare lands to the North. Seamus and I compare them with those in the West of Ireland or Mid-Wales. Diekirch has a railway station, important to us, and in Diekirch, as in Burton-on-Trent, gypsum is good for the beer. We are glad to walk into the town along the river path. We cross an elegant bridge and come to the end of our third stage.

Anthony Cunningham.

known for its beer and Roman mosaics with a church dating back to the 12th century. We were not to linger for we had an appointment in Echternach. Recollections of the walk are few: a steep climb opposite the army barracks, a rest at the top, losing my way in beech woods on an earlier walk when a friend's assistance at my having bothered to bring a compass changed to relief as he realised we were still heading in the right direction.

We stopped at Beaufort for lunch and rested on a wall. Water was our drink, not the excellent cassia produced locally. There was no time to visit the castle enjoyed by children for its implements of torture.

Beaufort was the next halt for a glass of beer. We visited the church whose altar is a stone depicting Hercules, June, Apollo and Minerva but long ago hallowed to Christian use.

The path down the Wolfslippe is spectacular but well trodden. It brought us to Echternach where, after wine in a cafe, we were taken on a tour of the school housed in the former Benedictine abbey founded by a Northumbrian monk, Saint Willibrord in 698. Sep Simon was our guide.

Towns, castles and Christianity

Diekirch to Echternach,

March 21st 1981

Diekirch is a commercial and tourist centre on the Sauer known for its beer and Roman mosaics with a church dating back from the ninth century. We were not to linger for we had an appointment in Echternach. Recollections of the walk are few: a steep climb opposite the army barracks, a rest at the top, losing my way in beech woods on an earlier walk when a friend's astonishment at my having bothered to bring a compass changed to relief as he realised we were still heading in the right direction.

We stopped at Beaufort for lunch and rested on a wall. Water was our drink, not the excellent cassis produced locally. There was no time to visit the castle enjoyed by children for its implements of torture.

Berdorf was the next halt for a glass of beer. We visited the church whose altar is a stone depicting Hercules, Juno, Apollo and Minerva but long ago hallowed to Christian use.

The path down the Wolfschlucht is spectacular but well trodden. It brought us to Echternach where, after wine in a café, we were taken on a tour of the school housed in the former Benedictine abbey founded by a Northumbrian monk, Saint Willibrord in 698. Sep Simon was our guide.

Wandering down to the Moselle

The scenery was varied with extensive views, marshy woods and well walked paths. The buildings were worth more than a passing glance for they recalled piety and learning, siege and reconstruction.

John Overstall.
Sep Simon kindly drove us from the Michelshaus, where
the night, to our point of departure by the
Sauer. His dog joined us for the walk along to Rosport, as
did another newcomer Thomas Ostein. Having a local accent
was useful. We went away as soon as he left us.

Rosport, the source of the world-famous bubbling water,
was the home of Henri Tudor. Here, in 1881, was a house lit
by electric light. This was four years before the first
visible electric lamp had been devised. The Tudors, incident-
ally, enjoyed lighting three years before the Rothschilds at
Ferrières and seven years before Queen Victoria at Windsor
Castle. Henri Tudor is who installed the first thirty-
four street lamps in Eschbornach, all those centuries after
Wittford had brought enlightenment of a spiritual nature.

The weather varied, showering us at times. We lunched
at one of those wooden tables the people here so kindly put
up for those waiting to picnic. It was too cool for us to
linger long.

Over the twenty-five kilometers we walked, the rise and
fall of the land was noticeable. It was from fairly high up,

Meandering down to the Moselle

Echternach to Wasserbillig,

22nd March 1981

Sepp Simon kindly drove us from the Michelshaff, where we had spent the night, to our point of departure by the Sauer. His dog joined us for the walk along to Rosport, as did another newcomer Thomas Oursin. Having a local scout was useful. We went astray as soon as he left us.

Rosport, the source of the world-famous bubbling water, was the home of Henri Tudor. Here, in 1881, was a house lit by electric light. This was four years before the first viable electric lamp had been devised. The Tudors, incidentally, enjoyed lighting three years before the Rothchilds at Ferrières and seven years before Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle. Henri Tudor it was who installed the first thirty-four street lamps in Echternach, all those centuries after Willibrord had brought enlightenment of a spiritual nature.

The weather varied, showering us at times. We lunched at one of those wooden tables the people here so kindly put up for those wanting to picnic. It was too cool for us to linger long.

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Mandering down to the Moselle

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The weather varied, showering us at times. We lunched
at one of those wooden tables the people here so kindly put
up for those waiting to picnic. It was too cool for us to
linger long.

Over the twenty-five kilometers we walked, the rise and
fall of the land was noticeable. It was from fairly high up,

during one of the day's sunny intervals, that we first saw the Moselle. We got drenched later on, walking down through the vineyards to Wasserbillig station. But we arrived in good spirits.

Thomas Oursin and Peter Davis.

The sun rose higher and hotter as the little group climbed the hill out of Wasserbillig.

They strode south along the heights, pausing only for coffee at Mantebach, and lunch in a blissfully cool shelter.

It grew hotter.

Their water finished, they struggled on along the heights of the Moselle valley, the buzzards circling overhead.

A mirage? No, Wormelange.

Slowly they fought their way across the baking concrete of the vineyards. Sadly they were seduced and took wine instead of water, paying the full price as they scaled once more the scorching hill of the vineyards.

All day they crossed the barren wastes without a drink of water.

Only Ehnen could save them.

Mad Dogs and Englishmen

Wasserbillig to Remich,

9th May 1981

The sun rose higher and hotter as the little group climbed the hill out of Wasserbillig.

They strode south along the heights, pausing only for coffee at Manternach, and lunch in a blessedly cool shelter.

It grew hotter.

Their water finished, they struggled on along the heights of the Moselle valley, the buzzards circling overhead.

A mirage? No, Wormeldange.

Slowly they fought their way across the baking concrete of the vineyards. Sadly they were seduced and took wine instead of water, paying the full price as they scaled once more the scorching hell of the vineyards.

All day they crossed the barren wastes without a drink of water.

Only Ehnem could save them.

Water gushed through parched lips and the group crawled on, in a race against time now, towards Remich.

As they dragged their painful way along the promenade, a kindly CFL bus driver gathered them unto himself and took them to Luxembourg.

Yet another stage was finished.

The writer lost three kilos that day.

David Heal.

Steve Wright.

Jabberwalking

Remich to Altwies,

20th June 1981

'Twas Remich, and the stridy coves
Were nine and nimble in the rain.
All flimsy were the hangovers
And the home wives outplained.

'Beware the Jabberwalk, my dear!
The curs that bite, the showers that damp!
Beware the Mondorf birds! Stay clear
Of the Mousel elbow cramp!'

One two! One two! Thus on and on
The vocal blades marched chatter-chin.
Till Altwies filled their horizon
And they came galumphing in.

Steve Wright.