

Mainly in the plain

Altwies to Dippach,

David Heil

26th September 1981

(by kind permission of Prince Goodman)

By George we got it!

From the moment of stepping from the bus at Altwies the rain made it absolutely clear that the Costa Brava is out and Luxembourg in.

The walkers set out, starting with a quick foray into France and then back into Aspelt. An attempt to walk along the old railway to Luxembourg ended in thorn bushes, and a quick diversion through a farmyard was necessary.

On through the forests and across some fields. Livange beckoned in a haze of coffee.

Plunging through trackless forests, and a sea of mud, luncheon was taken in the shelter of a forest hut.

The rain really got into its stride as we squelched into Pontpierre stopping only to change maps in the shelter of the motorway.

Reckange was slightly astonished to see such a bedraggled party, but nevertheless provided sustenance, and finally Dippach.

Sing Ho, for the bath at the end of the day!

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(by kind permission of Bruce Goodman).

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Oh what a beautiful day

Dippach to Oberpallen,

7th November 1981

Sun was shining in the skies and in the hearts of walking addicts. But, as usual, this creeping doubt in my mind, 'you won't be able to make it this time' - Rubbish!

We all made it wonderfully, all forty kilometres of it.

All of us. We walked miles on those railroad tracks which seemed so friendly and smooth but were in fact so treacherous with their, 'rolling stones'. We walked across sticky ploughed fields and green pastures, crossed over a roaring torrent on a slippery tree trunk.

Some of us got lost, but found their way again, like lost sheep back to the ways of the Lord.

And, oh wonder! we had lunch on the autoroute to Brussels, something we will never be able to do again - but of course the road was under construction - but still.

And then after thirty miles of hard labour, the night closing menacingly over us, a glow, a light in the distance, a petrol station, and then an angel at the wheel of a Citroen Stationwagon, Diana, our devoted driver. She had to rescue

every one of us in a small 'feldweg', like debris of the 'Grande Armée' after the crossing of the Beresina.

But what a wonderful day!!

Jacques Fayaud.

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Beating the bounds

Oberpallen to Martelange,

12th December 1981

In the enjoyment of a pastime there are two elements - the continuous and the incidental. In a walk, there is the lasting enjoyment of leisurely activity, the open air, the changing scene. And there is the occasional delight of finding wild violets or even fraises des bois, of starting a hare or glimpsing a fox, of watching the sudden folding of a kestrel's wings as it dives on its prey.

In anticipation of such pleasures the six of us met at Luxembourg's main station shortly before seven one Saturday morning last winter, when snow was still lying. We were setting out to complete one of the last stages of our 'beating of the bounds' of Luxembourg - from Arlon to Martelange.

With two extremely uncomfortable exceptions, previous stages had benefited from pleasant weather, and by the time the train reached Arlon the day had dawned bright and clear. To limber up we climbed the hill in the centre of the town and gazed from the church at its summit northwards, to the white roofs, and the fields and woods we would be walking over.

Crisp snow crunched underfoot as we made our way back into the Grand-Duchy, soon crossing the upper reaches of the Attert by a log bridge. On a sunny southward-facing slope we sat on our haversacks to eat our sandwiches, and later crossed another, un-named, stream east of Perle.

There followed a long climb through thick dark woods to a broad table-land where langlauf skis would have enabled us to double our speed, until finally we scrambled down steep wooded slopes to the slateworks just outside Martelange. Here, after a warming session of coffee and cognacs, two of our long-suffering wives drove out to pick us up and take us back to the hot baths to which, truth to tell, our minds had increasingly turned as we had approached our goal. We all nonetheless felt it was a day well spent.

Michael Townsend.

North west passage

Martelange to Wiltz,

27th March 1982

We arranged to rendezvous in Martelange at eight am. It should be explained that to meet in Martelange at eight am the group had to leave Luxembourg before seven am. We were driven to the starting point by a number of dedicated wives, whose sense of loss at being deprived of their husbands' sage advice while making the weekly purchases in shop and supermarket was more than offset by the relief of getting a bevy of potentially frustrated walkers off their hands.

Some members were late coming and our impatience to commence the walk was subdued in idle chatter about the fine morning, and the noticeable chill in the air. Those who hoped to take advantage of the delay by drinking a quick coffee were thwarted. Café doors refused to yield as we tentatively sought entry. An unsympathetic world slept on at eight fifteen am on a Saturday morning.

Just as we were composing a note for the latecomers to say that we had gone ahead, the party from Rameldange swept into sight. This was no ordinary walk. Included in the large attendance there were two photographers - Nan Townsend from the News Digest, and Stephen Wright, who decided to photograph as well as walk.

Well, there is no point in having your picture taken as a disorganised rabble, so we were carefully marshalled in single file along the bank of a stream and down a gentle incline. We hoped that our rugged features and purposeful gaze into the middle distance would actually give the impression that we enjoyed walking. We got a faint hint of the inconvenience which must attend the really famous who frequently pose to have their pictures taken.

The initial delay, compounded by the photographic session meant that we were way behind schedule and so we set off at a cracking pace. It is our policy to avoid roadwalking and as far as possible to keep to cross-country paths. As we hove in sight of Bigonville faint cries could be heard from the rear of the group suggesting a stop for coffee. Many of us silently prayed for general agreement. After all, we had had an early start.

The suggestion was curtly dismissed however by the leaders of the group who instinctively quickened pace. Who said walking was a cissy's game. Whether by accident or design, the leading group drew ahead of the main body as we approached Bavigne though a wooded area. Thus the leading group lunched on the bank of a stream on the edge of the woods, while the main party descended by an easier route and lunched on the open green in the centre of Bavigne.

About half an hour later we all reassembled in the hot sunshine and set off for Wiltz in the heart of the Oesling - excellent walking country.

'Where the sally tree went pale in every breeze
Where the perfect eye of the nesting blackbird watched
Where one fern was always green'.

(Seamus Heaney)

The journey in the train back to Luxembourg gave us a
chance to rest our singing feet and plan the next walk.

Seamus Killeen.

We followed a rather bewildering series of roads, paths and
streams from Hestras to Bokorn. After some stiffish climbs
through woods, we emerged in open country. It was then, with
the wind stinging our eyes and tearing at our headgear, that we
realised that the good weather of the previous hike was no
longer with us.

We marched in close formation through the marginal farmland
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added in the form of basic slag from the steelworks of Luxembourg
and Lorraine, but most of it was given over to sheep, cows and
cash crops of trees.

Sandy Macrae.

Springtime in the Ardennes

Wiltz to Troisvierges,

24th April 1982

David, Peter, John and I took the train to Wiltz. There was plenty to see and the last stretch from Kautenbach on the branch line under constant threat of closure is sheer delight. The narrow valley, the quick glimpses of river, watermeadow, wild plum in blossom and perpendicular expanses of rock or vegetation made the journey seem an end in itself.

We followed a rather bewildering series of roads, paths and streams from Noertrange to Boxhorn. After some stiffish climbs through woods, we emerged in open country. It was then, with the wind stinging our eyes and tearing at our headgear, that we realised that the good weather of the previous hike was no longer with us.

We marched in close formation through the marginal farmland. The horizons were as wide as they had previously been narrow with rolling hills reminiscent of a child's painting and clearly delineated woods and fields as far as the eye could see. The stony ground of the Oesling was bearing corn, thanks to the phosphorous added in the form of basic slag from the steelworks of Luxembourg and Lorraine, but most of it was given over to sheep, cows and cash crops of trees.

Sandy Macrae.

Homecomings

Troisvierges to Weiswampach,

19th June 1982

It was not far from Troisvierges to Weiswampach so we decided to cut up North to Bourgplatz, at five hundred and fifty eight metres the highest point in the Grand-Duchy. On our way there we discovered part of a canal, intended originally to run right across the Ardennes. It was never completed.

A fine day for walking, with sun, wind and rain. The sun won in the end and it was quite hot as we came to Weiswampach.

Giles Edmonston-Low.

A word of thanks is due, now that our walk has come to an end, to our wives for driving us to our points of departure or for rescuing us at our journeys' ends. Diana did most but Pat, Kay, Nan, Thérèse and Brigitte deserve thanks as well.

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