

CHAPTER THREE

Thomas Oursin and Anthony Cunningham organised the Hares' next walk, from Koblenz to Schengen and this is the account of the campaign which Sandy Macrae wrote for the 'News Digest'.

Having completed the North-South Trek, the East-West

The Mosel Campaign

1982 - 1983
Traverse and the Great Moselle of Luxembourg, the March Hares resolved to walk north, well beyond the line they had paced, to where the Moselle flows into the Rhine, and to walk home along the right bank of the river in stages.

The character of this season's epic was a passenger, albeit a foot passenger, leaving to Tony Cunningham and Tom Oursin the stage planning, transport arrangements, map and compass reading, the choosing of the café at which to stop for coffee and the decisions to get moving again lest we miss our bus or train. All the while has to be to put one foot in front of the other, observe the changing scene, and appear cheerful in the face of adversity.

It was on September 18th 1982 that we had an early start-up cup of coffee at Tony Cunningham's garage and drove to Treis, where we left the cars and Tom Oursin, our navigator, bargained for a group train ticket to Koblenz. By nine am we were walking along the Rhine past the many landing stages and some waiting steamers to the confluence. By that time the more erudite Hares had left the party to write that the names

Anthony Cunningham

Thomas Oursin



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Having completed the North-South Trek, the East-West Traverse and the Great Circumambulation of Luxembourg, the March Hares resolved to venture forth, well beyond the lines they had paced, to where the Moselle flows into the Rhine, and to walk home along the right bank of the river in stages.

The chronicler of this season's epic was a passenger, albeit a foot passenger, leaving to Tony Cunningham and Tom Oursin the stage planning, transport arrangements, map and compass reading, the choosing of the café at which to stop for coffee and the decisions to get moving again lest we miss our bus or train. All the writer has to do is to put one foot in front of the other, observe the changing scene, and appear cheerful in the face of adversity.

It was on September 18th 1982 that we had an early stirrup cup of coffee at Tony Cunningham's garage and drove to Treis, where we left the cars and Tom Oursin, our navigator, bargained for a group train ticket to Koblenz. By nine am we were walking along the Rhine past the many landing stages and some waiting steamers to the confluence. By that time the more erudite Hares had informed the less erudite that the names Koblenz and Konz are derived from the Latin confluentia.

We paused a while at the mighty junction and the surviving base of the granite monument exhorting all and sundry to observe unity and loyalty. Then, after a quick glimpse of the flea market and the now-busy shopping streets, we enjoyed the unheard of luxury of a taxi through the suburbs and along the main road to Wildfreigehege Rehmstecken to join the Moselle Höhenroute.

One disadvantage of a foreign adventure is that despite a rendezvous at six thirty am, it was already ten am by the time we got started. Fortunately, we had decided to get underway with a two-day march so that when the days grew shorter we would not have so far to travel.

The path we were to take until we left the Moselle to follow the Saar was a good one, broad and clearly marked, through woods, fields and villages. It is these tracks which make the weekend walker dream of setting off for a month or an indefinite period like the heroes whose sagas he has read, Hilaire Belloc, Leigh Fermor and Hillaby.

The first day was perhaps the hardest of the project, but also one of the most enjoyable. The sun beat down and we were glad to reach a large café combined with extensive stables at Nassheck for a rest and the necessary intake of liquid.

By the time we had come down to the river again at Brodenbach we were in a rather sorry state. Indeed, we were in such contrast to the tourists idly picking at their enormous portions of Torte that the landlord at the first hotel we came to suggested we move on to some other establishment.

This beautiful little town was also where we had our first lesson of the real meaning of 'Höhenroute'. Every time we descended to the Moselle we had a very stiff climb to get back up the hill: our highest point on those climbs was six hundred metres. By the time we got to Alken, one of the Hares had such crippling blisters that he had to take the train to collect his car.

Then, an hour from our destination, it began to thunder and the rain poured down on an as yet unmetalled road. The last six kilometres of the thirty-four were covered in silence but for the squelch of boots, heavy breathing as we climbed yet again, and an occasional clap of thunder.

This baptism of water made our hostelry at Beulich seem a wonderful place, and indeed our hosts produced all kinds of delicacies from nowhere before the first bottles were empty.

Nature is wonderful, but the technique of deepfreezing food is not to be sneered at either. Some of the party carry their house and their food on their backs in the holidays, but it is to be feared that such a practice would very quickly

have separated the hares from the leverets that day.

The next day the sun was shining again, and only the swollen streams and puddles reminded us of the night's rain. After reinforcing the system with boiled egg, ham, black bread and jam, and plenty of coffee, the author resolutely put his weight on the previous day's blisters, let his new knapsack settle just above the painful notch it had made in his back, and followed the Hares in the direction of Treis.

At Eveshausen we found a crowded café and talked to a group of musicians who had entertained the populace the previous evening and were loading their luggage and equipment into a Volkswagen van. These walks take one alternately to where the action is and where the action isn't.

Where the action wasn't was the farm beside which we stopped for lunch, but it was a pleasant stop all the same. We were given water from a well, which had a taste we had almost forgotten, peculiar to non-filtered, non-piped, non-chlorinated water. It was very welcome, for we had climbed for kilometres up a road covered with slippery slate chippings.

Later that afternoon, at the end of our twenty-six kilometres, we had a steep and difficult descent on outcrops of slate on the way down to Treis. Then again we found ourselves drinking very expensive wine in a cool Weinhaus in the very centre of tourist Zell, where one of our number had to take the train back to Luxembourg.

Throughout the winter and so-called spring, fortune smiled tolerantly on the mad March Hares. On November 6th, for example, the sun shone all the way from Treis to Zell. The trees were still crowned with splendid autumn foliage and there were not too many of those shattering ups and downs. There were apples everywhere, offered for sale, on the trees and on the ground. We took our morning coffee at Beilstein, a paradise of cobbled streets and innumerable hostelrys, then either closed for the winter or very crowded. Going up into the woods we saw a large pen full of 'wild' boar belonging to 'Zur blauen Forelle' where we had had our coffee.

This brought to mind the difficulty Asterix had on the island of Corsica in distinguishing between the tame wild boar and wild tame boar.

After twenty-four kilometres we ambled into Zell at half-past four, feeling that it had been very enjoyable and that we had got off lightly. While the drivers went to collect their cars in Treis the rest of us watched fascinated as a man at the bar just managed not to fall over. That was not quite the end of the story, however, as one of the drivers got lost on the way back and the Hares dispersed in disarray.

Even on December 4th the weather was good, but a suspicious-looking carload of Hares got held up at the frontier and one of them was found to be travelling without a passport. It may be of interest to the reader to learn that a travel permit in lieu of passport (Reiseausweis als Paßersatz) valid for one day can be purchased for six DM.

Then others took the long way round to Bernkastel, where the cars were to be parked, and arrived late for the bus to Zell. Tom Oursin told the driver he could make his company a fortune if he waited five minutes, and being a good company man, he waited. In Zell it was coffee and Äpfeltorte for us before we even started. Zell to Bernkastel (twenty-eight kilometres) is a really pleasant but challenging walk. There is a very good view above Zell, and between Enkirch and Starkenburg the path runs along the top of a narrow rocky ridge with a deep valley on either side, with the river visible most of the way. Starkenburg sports a sixty-year-old notice about the home guard.

Bernkastel to Trittenheim as a memorable outing, too - thirty-three kilometres on a windless, almost sunny but chilly January day. Highlights were the miles of straight track, said to be the remains of a Roman road, the Wassertretbecken for therapeutic paddling at Papiermühle, and the piping hot onion soup at Trittenheim. We had to leave two of the more serious casualties at Papiermühle, but fortunately the therapeutic properties of the paddling pool extended to take in the watering holes as well, and both lived to march another day.

It was Trittenheim that the Hares decided to dart off southward for an easy but varied twenty-five kilometres to Hermeskeil in order to avoid the environs of Trier, and very good walking it is on the paths of the Hunsrück. After Hermeskeil we were able to follow the famous E3, not the one you are thinking of but the path that runs from the forests of Bohemia to the Atlantic coast, and that too is the stuff that weekend walkers' dreams are made of.

From then on it seemed as if we had reached the home straight, although in fact there were still three shortish stages to go - Scheiden, Orscholz and Schengen. This is rolling country with a mix of woods and bare horizons, sometimes decorated with a single line of trees as incongruous as a single line of tulips in someone's garden.

The highlight was undoubtedly the 'Schleif', the famous meander of the Saar at Orscholz. It is viewed from a great height at a look-out point infested by busloads of tourists from the early morning until evening, but none the less impressive for that.

The last stage, from there to Schengen, took place in temperatures that made us pale under our tans, but there were a few cool cafés on the way and we even had a wedding to attend at the village of Eft. The local football team formed a guard of honour outside the church, and when the bride and groom eventually emerged they had to saw through a log which had thoughtfully been placed there for them. She sawed better than he, but then in these enlightened days it may be she who is the footballer, or the forester for that matter.

Then, on to the border. Peter Davis was being tested by a new rucksack, a beautiful well-packed affair which really belongs on a roofrack or a small trailer, but there it is - if the walking bug really gets us, you end up as a coolie. In a shimmering haze at about three pm on Saturday July 9th 1983, happier but wiser, the Hares strode, limped or staggered, according to personal style, across the Schengen

bridge to a well deserved beer at the conclusion of the 1982/83 campaign.

Among those who took part in the 1982/83 campaign were: Christine Britton, Jeremy Britton, Anthony Comfort, Anthony Cunningham, Peter Cunningham, Peter Davis, Ole Due, Jacques Fayaud, Bruce Goodman, Simon Gray, Felicity Hall, David Heal, Francis Jacobs, Karl Jonesons, Seamus Killeen, Sandy Macrae, Frank Noble, Thomas Oursin, John Overstall, Bent Paludan-Muller, Stan Schaub, Lubbe Schmitiger, John Tompa, Mike Townsend and Stephen Wright.

John Overstall
Stephen Wright

CHAPTER FOUR
bridge to a well favored by the conclusion of the 1983 campaign.

Among those who took part in the 1981/83 campaign were:
Christine Blifton, Jeremy Blifton, Anthony Comfort, Anthony
Cunningham, Peter Davis, Oie Due, Jacques
Fayard, Bruce Goodman, Simon Gray, Felicity Hall, David Heel,
Francis Jacobs, Karl Johnson, Seamus Killien, Sandy Macrae,
Frank Noble, Thomas O'Keefe, John Overstall, Bert Pindan-
Muller, Stan Schaub, Lubbe Schmitzer, John Tompa, Mike
Townsend and Stephen Wright.

Waggoner's walk
1983 - 1984

John Overstall
Stephen Wright

Dear Hares and Hare-belles,

Autumn already and time for walking! Even more painful is the planning thereof, but John Overstall and I have wrought mightily to produce The Plan. So here it is, before you can change our minds.

Broadly, we propose a walk from Liège to Luxembourg - a mere 200 kilometres or so as the hare runs, with the sun on your face and the prevailing wind/rain on your right shoulder. A basic rule in the planning is to reduce motoring to a minimum, with less wear and tear on chauffeuses, or piggy-backing of cars twixt start and finish of each leg. This does mean some surprising changes to our traditional routines. If you don't like 'em, then we can always adapt to the common will.

Meantime, we have roughed out the first three legs (including a 2-day walk) up to the end of the year. Since the idea is to go north by train, to walk back a leetle way, and then to get on a south-bound train each time, the route (at least at first) will follow various Grandes Randonnées which climb gently into the Ardennes up the tributaries of the Meuse before emerging on to the bald watershed of the Belgo-Luxembourgish border between Gouvy and Troisvierges (±450 metres); then freewheeling downhill to the Green Heart of Europe.

So: Waggoner's walk

(Walkmaster, John Overstall

Waggonmaster, Stephen Wright).

John and I look forward to seeing you nombreux on the Waggoners' walk. Especially nombreux, since train fares are cheaper for ten or more.

Stephen Wright

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Meanwhile, we have roughed out the first three legs (including a 2-day walk) up to the end of the year. Since the idea is to go north by train, to walk back a leafy way, and then to get on a south-bound train each time, the route (at least at first) will follow various Grandes Randonnées which climb gently into the Ardennes by the tributaries of the Meuse before emerging on to the bald watershed of the Belgio-Luxembourgish border between Gouvy and Troisvierges (1450 metres); then freewheeling downhill to the Green Heart of Europe.

So: Waggoners' walk

(Walker, John Overstall)

Waggonmaster, Stephen Wright)

Autumn madness on the Liège trail

A dozen March Hares started the long walk from Liège to Luxembourg last weekend. They covered 51 kilometres in two days, with an overnight stop at Aywaille, reaching Stoumont on Sunday afternoon just in time to catch the train home.

Any idea that this was going to be the gentle riverside ramble, as advertised, was rudely dispelled when the walkers found that Saturday's leg began with a stairway climbing out of the station yard at Tilff, on the outskirts of Liège.

From then on, things (and paths) kept on looking up ... until the first switchback descent to the river Ourthe. And so it went on, with the path showing all the symptoms of a rabid fox: one glimpse of water and it ran screaming for cover up the nearest wooded cliff.

After 28 brisk kilometres most of the group were beaten by the gathering gloom and (literally) ran for a train to cover the last eight kilometres to the beer, bath, bouffe and bed awaiting them at the splendid Villa des Roses in Aywaille. Not so wipper-in Anthony Cunningham who, having delivered one-day walkers to their homebound train, trudged on through the night to a hero's welcome from his lazier, shamefaced fellow hares and harebelles.

Sunday morning, and pious predictions of an easy start to the day proved once again completely wrong. The path took off almost vertically out of the hotel's chimney pots. First the forecast 'morning mists' closed in, then condensation, which some call rain.

For the rest of another muscular day, seeking consolation for their self-inflicted madness, the hares reflected that at least they couldn't actually see the next murderous up or perilous down. At some point lunch was taken, coolly, in the depths of a damp forest, when 50 yards later there would have been a welcoming inn. This second day ended in the same pattern: somebody had moved the railway station, so again they (literally) hared to catch the homeward train.

Like-minded masochists are invited to join the next leg, thought to be five hours and 18 kilometres of not-flat walking, between Stoumont and Trois-Ponts in the Ardennes skiing country. The date is November 5th, leaving Luxembourg station at 9.37 am. Home the same evening ... if they catch the train, that is.

Stephen Wright.

Waggoner's Walk

November 5th 1983

Stoumont to Trois-Ponts

Escaping from the Luxembourg fog, 11 March Hares enjoyed a day of autumn sunshine last Saturday on the second leg of their walk from Liège to Luxembourg. During the midday halt the news leaked out that their boys d'âge Jacques Fayard, is to be admitted to the order of Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur.

In recognition of this honour to their group, on arrival at the Cascade of Coe and at the foot of an exceedingly steep climb the marchers agreed that their Lièvre d'Honneur (or Superharet) should be duly elevated to the top of the hill by the nearby chairlift. So, while the lower orders tailed up the forest zig-zags, Jacques rose effortlessly to the top.

The day's score was 18 kilometres in four and a half hours from Stoumont to Trois-Ponts up the river Amblève, including two ascents and descents.

The next walk is on Saturday December 3rd departing at 9.30 am from the station and following the river Salm from Trois-Ponts. Anyone interested should contact Stephen Wright.

Stephen Wright

March Hare honored

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The next walk is on Saturday December 3rd departing at 9.37 am from the station and following the river Salm from Trois-Ponts. Anyone interested should contact Stephen Wright.

Stephen Wright .

Waggoner's Walk

9th January 1984

December 3rd 1983

Dear Hare/Hares,

Trois-Ponts to Salmchâteau

For a variety of reasons (only one of which was a certain lack of New Year resolution) the March Hares' first excursion of 1984 is to be a little later than provisionally intended.

The great day is not (repeat not) this Saturday. You have two more weeks to prepare for the next leg of the Luxembourg march: on Saturday, January 28th.

A particularly momentous walk, this one because:

- (a) We cross the Beldo-Luxembourg frontier.
- (b) Going up will in principle be succeeded by going down.
- (c) We shall be catching a much earlier train.
- (d) Thanks to (c) we shall be walking backwards.

To be precise, please be at Luxembourg station, awake, with a cheap weekend return to Troisvierges in your possession, in time for a 7.50 departure. That's 7.55 at Dommeldange, Sandy. And 8.05 at Lorentzweiler, lucky 11-in-bed John.

Then all we do is start walking from Troisvierges at 9.15 in northerly direction for some 25 kilometres back to Salmchâteau or thereabouts, where you will remember we stopped walking on December 4th. The good book reckons that takes six and a half hours, which leaves ample time to catch the 17.02 stopping train home (beer and chips obligatory at Gony gare).

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To be precise, please be at Luxembourg station, awake, with a cheap weekend return to Troisvierges in your possession, in time for a 7.50 departure. That's 7.56 at Dommeldange, Sandy. And 8.05 at Lorentzweiler, lucky lie-in-bed John.

Then all we do is start walking from Troisvierges at 9.15 in northerly direction for some 25 kilometres back to Salm-château or thereabouts, where you will remember we stopped walking on December 4th. The good book reckons that takes six and a half hours, which leaves ample time to catch the 17.02 stopping train home (beer and chips obligatory at Gouvy gare)

arriving Luxembourg 19.39. Tigers on the other hand, who could manage another couple of miles to Vielsalm station without getting lost, might get the 16.34 Amsterdam-Zurich express, arriving Luxgare 18.05. Snowdrifts, blizzards and frostbite permitting.

Have read: "Deep wet snow. Hares run slow. So no go to pity piece I neglected to write, let's see."

Yours until the next hare-do ... "Salutations"

Stephen Wright. Stations are in order for the intrepid eight who reached Cleroux (22 kilometres in seven hours and only three kilometres short of the target). Honourable mentions for the sensible six who settled for chips with Orval as Govy after four hard hours of alpine trudging. And a particular welcome to four new hares - two of them ladies.

Next Walk

Saturday February 25th, striking south from Troisvierges to Cleroux and beyond. Destination depends on wind (yours) and weather (theirs); there are stations at Cleroux (13km), Draillet (22) and Wilwerwiltz (27). There are also things to see at Manumunnie and Cleroux.

Morning departure: 7.50 stopping train ex Lux Gare. Leaving and bounding begins: 9.15 ex Troisvierges Gare.

Stephen Wright.

Last Walk

Apologies to those hoping their wintry heroism of January 28 would make the lead story in the Digest. The pithy piece I neglected to write, let alone submit, might have read: "Deep wet snow. Hares run slow. So no go to Salmchateau."

Congratulations are in order for the intrepid eight who reached Cierreux (22 kilometres in seven hours and only three kilometres short of the target). Honourable mentions for the sensible six who settled for chips with Orval at Gouvy after four hard hours of slushy trudging. And a particular welcome to four new hares - two of them ladies.

Next Walk

Saturday February 25th, striking south from Troisvierges to Clervaux and beyond. Destination depends on wind (yours) and weather (theirs); there are stations at Clervaux (13km), Drauffelt (22) and Wilwerwiltz (27). There are also Things To See at Maulusmuhle and Clervaux.

Morning departure: 7.50 stopping train ex Lux Gare.

Leaping and bounding begins: 9.15 ex Troisvierges Gare.

Stephen Wright.

P.S. Frank Noble spotted this in the Daily Telegraph. Is somebody getting at us? I think we should be told.

A meet of the hares

The Chinese ambassador, Chen Zhaoyuan, followed a precedent set by his predecessors in the post the other day when he hosted a reception for the Drunken Hares Club.

The club, an exclusive group of fewer than 30 members, was founded in December, 1978, by Sir Frederic Bennett, Conservative MP for Torbay, as a riposte to the Soviet Union's furious reaction to a speech given in Peking in May that year by the then Chief of Defence Staff, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Neil, now Lord Cameron.

Lord Cameron, addressing the 6th Chinese tank division, had said: "We both have an enemy at our door whose capital is in Moscow." This prompted an angry response from Russia which claimed that Lord Cameron had made the remarks while "swaggering before Chinese officers like a drunken hare."

Stephen Wright