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International Visit to Leipzig June 4 - 7 2015



(Thanks to Robin for providing this report, and to various travellers for the visit photos)

After a considerable showing of interest in the Invitation to the Inter Club Gathering in Leipzig, Germany, final numbers of members and partners totalled 16 and the party split up into two groups to make their way to Leipzig by various means.

The first group consisting of President John and Linda, Frank Paterson and Helen, Robin and Josie Rich and Nigel and Diana Naish set off early on Monday the 1st June from Manchester Airport en route by Easyjet to Berlin. Using the regional train from the airport we arrived at the Hauptbahnhof Station in the centre of Berlin.

With careful planning, our hotel was only a few yards from the station and we booked in at the Inter City Hotel for our three night stay.

The other 8 travellers, consisting of Graham & Judy Todd, David & Aileen Minns, Bobby & Catherine Hughes and Graham & Pat Wilford came in their cars independently to arrive at Leipzig on the Thursday from various points in Germany.



Following a rainy arrival for the 8 flying in from Manchester, the weather in Berlin soon cleared up and we were to enjoy fine weather for the rest of the trip. Being in the centre of the city we were able to take a Round the City Bus tour to get our bearings as both buses, trams, trains, taxis were all available from there for our various journeys.

On the Tuesday, we visited the Reichstag building and climbed up the glass dome designed by Sir Norman Foster to get magnificent views over the city skyline. Other highlights of our time in Berlin included a trip on the River, a visit to the Zoo, the Charlottenburg Palace, various Museums and finally dinner in the revolving restaurant on top of the Berlin TV tower, 207 metres above the ground. A fantastic experience for us all.

Using the very fine ICE train we travelled around noon on the Thursday, the 90 minute journey to **Leipzig** and checked into the Park Hotel again only 100 metres from the main station. The independent travellers arriving soon after.

The German party arrived in their coach from Erlangen and we met up at 6.30 pm for welcome drinks in the Foyer. They somewhat overwhelmed us with their 39 participants but it was very convivial meeting up with so many old favourites. We enjoyed a Buffet dinner in the Hotel before retiring early ready for the weekend's programme.

On a fine sunny morning we boarded two buses, one for the Germans and one for our group with a few English speaking Erlangens for company. Our first visit was to an Open Cast Lignite Mining Site. We heard how in the early 20th century, lignite was extensively mined using a massive rotating digger called a 'Shaulfulradbagger' which devastated vast areas of the countryside even, at time, engulfing whole villages in its path.

The Lignite, known as Brown Coal, a substance harder than Peat but softer than Black Coal was used in Power Stations as fuel right up to recent times. Nowadays the mining has ceased and the main objective now is to regenerate the countryside and several hills and lakes were created with extensive replanting. Nearby was a leisure park around a delightful lake where we were taken for a summer lunch, with beer of course!

In the afternoon we visited a small village church where the organ built some 500 years ago was used by Sebastian Bach and we enjoyed a short recital of his music played by a very talented young musician after which we were able to view the organ and the old bench used by Bach on many an occasion. On the way back, we viewed the 'Volkerschlachtdenkmal' monument built to commemorate the Battle of Leipzig in 1813 against Napoleon in which 60000 soldiers on each side were killed in arm to arm bayonet fighting.

Our final visit was to the Federal Courthouse Building where we were shown the various courtrooms and the magnificent Ball room. Our guide was not only a judge but also a member of the Leipzig South Rotary Club. Later, we travelled across the City to the 'Ratskeller Restaurant' under the Town Hall for a fellowship dinner.





On leaving the dinner around 10.00 pm, some decided to wander back through the old town, whilst the rest of us took the coach back. This very nearly could have been a disaster as we ran into a full blown riot with petrol bombs and bricks being thrown at the police.

Our coach attempted to turn down a road coming face to face with the rioters and before we could retreat we were hit by bricks and fire bombs all around us. Luckily the driver quickly reversed and turned away not before the windscreen was hit and severely damaged by a missile.

A rather shaken party recalled the incident which made the local news , next day , and resulted in a new windscreen for the bus costing 7000 euros.

The riot, we were told was in protest to the G7 Summit talks taking place in Germany.

On Saturday we were taken on a walking guided tour of Old Leipzig before lunching at the top of the Panoramic Tower 29 floors above the City. In the afternoon the tour included the magnificent Concert Hall before a welcome rest hour before the evening Banquet Dinner in the 'Old Exchange' building in the heart of the Old City.

After drinks and photos on the steps, a sumptuous Buffet Dinner was taken with speeches from President Karl , translated by Bruno Muller ,as Karl spoke no English at all , and our own 'German Speaking' President John ! (courtesy of Marlise Heaton)

The evening continued once the formalities were concluded, by a general singalong and the Judge , a Leipzig Rotarian who had been invited for dinner along with his wife ,an opera singer, using the Grand Piano, accompanied us all in various songs. These included the inevitable 'Ould Lang Syne ' using prepared song sheets in German , whilst we attempted to out-sing them in English, led by guess who !?!



A very convivial week in all with much sightseeing concluding with a warm and welcoming Inter Club Gathering and formulated our time in Germany with the strong wish that whatever the French might feel, the two main clubs look forward to promoting the bond between us by encouraging the rest of our members to feel likewise.

A useful breakfast meeting between representatives of both clubs discussed the future , and agreed that ideas of encouragement would be sought by each Club to further this.

We parted happy, having enjoyed , once again, Foreign Inter-Club Fellowship with the expectation to be invited to Cleremont Ferande by the Aubusson Club next year.

Watch this space !