



## SCHOTTLANDREISE EDINBURGH 14-16 AUGUST 2009

Platform 9 ¾'s? This is Hannover Hauptbahnhof, not King's Cross London! Oh dear. Despite the confusion, all 15 travelers for Edinburgh made it on time to the right departure platform and after a small delay we set off for Düsseldorf Flughafen in festive mood as Baron Cord von Mengersen celebrated his birthday with us on the way down. 'Zinkbecker', handcrafted in the Helpensen forge filled with a celebratory apple schnapps were presented to each member for the journey!



*Spot the Birthday Boy....*

Our plan was to get to Edinburgh via Jet2com which has daily flights to Edinburgh leaving the Rheinland in the early evening. We arrived in Scotland's capital after a small delay in flight departure, to be greeted by a persistent drizzle and strong winds, and after baggage collection took the Airport bus to Haymarket, a short walk from our Hotel. Getting a group of 15 passengers onto the same bus proved impossible, but with only 15 minutes between busses we eventually re-formed, checked in and with the help of Colin Gordon departed on a speedy foot march through the streets of Edinburgh to a Bistro that had been a former polish chapel, deep in the heart of Edinburgh's West End.



*Ilsegret Halbeck breakfasting alone....*



*Where is Cord.....?*

No stay in Britain can be complete without a strong 3-course English breakfast, provided in a packed hotel restaurant and cooked and served by staff from every other nation in the world other than

Scotland. And no trip to Britain can be completed without taking a train as we did to get up to Waverley Station for the start of a Bus tour of the city. A train, because the heavens were still letting the rain fall, and a covered bus tour that showed us the main sights of Edinburgh simultaneously in German, French, Spanish and Italian was the best way to see the main sights in the City. And then, as if ordered, the rain stopped, the sun came out and the party split into groups, some going shopping, others to visit the National Gallery of Scotland, and others to watch the entertaining 'Fringe' performers dotted around the city. Some even went hill walking.



*A view over Edinburgh*

Moving around on foot was almost quicker than by bus. The centre of Princess Street was a building site as a new controversial Tram Line system is still being built and there is serious traffic hold ups around the centre.

On re-establishing links to everyone back at the Hotel we dined together in the Indian Cavalry Club in Coates Crescent – no trip to Britain is complete without an Indian Curry - and then to the Tattoo by Taxi.



*Eating out in Edinburgh – and not a Haggis in sight....*

For those new to the Tattoo, we were attending the evening performance, and as advised arrived an hour and a half early. This was so that we could wait for the 8 500 other spectators from the previous performance to leave, a process that took a good half an hour!



*Crowd Control at the Tattoo*

The lovely Clara Wheelan, from the Tattoo Management team met us and escorted us in and up to the Castle Heights. As a former Castle Guide, she took us round the ramparts, pointing out the history of the castle on the way up, and from the top we had dramatic views of the city as the skies cleared and a light fresh wind accompanied us back down to the officers' mess. There we met Major General Euan Lowdon, the Chief Executive of the Tattoo and former General Officer Commanding Scotland. In the wooden paneled ante-room of the mess, and with a glass of wine he recounted tales of his work as Tattoo organizer and how the thousands of players come together for the three week musical jamboree. With just 10 minutes left before the start, Clara wheeled us down through the throng of performers and out onto the main stage in full floodlight and up to our seats for the 2 hour performance. The sights and sounds of the tattoo are too many to recount in a short story, albeit that the backdrop to the display, the great walls of the castle, are a mirror of the multi-coloured musical pageant below on the Esplanade. Our seats were small but warm and the action below us non-stop. The Tattoo is dominated by the Massed Bands and the massed Pipes and Drums but there are many other exciting displays to watch, from the great cascade of fireworks from the battlements, to the thrill of dancers from China and Tonga and Top Secret Drummers from Switzerland.



*Cord's Camera Explodes during the final display*



*The massed Bands*

Our final morning in Edinburgh was spent visiting the Palace of Holyroodhouse, the Queen's official residence in Edinburgh. It is situated at the end of the Royal Mile. Outside the grounds and within a stone's throw of the main entrance is the new Scottish Parliament building – a controversial and highly expensive project that now symbolizes Scottish independence.



*The 'new' Scottish Parliament*



*Hello – is anyone at home...      Why is mine in Rumanian.....?*

The Palace, best known as the home of Mary, Queen of Scots, is a living palace used for Royal and Official occasions throughout the year. Once again the tour guide was a portable machine with a variety of languages. We didn't unfortunately have enough time to walk up to Arthurs's Seat, a hill dominating the ground to the southeast of the Palace, but we did have lunch in the Palace café and there was still time for a bit of shopping and further sight-seeing before returning to the airport for the flight back that evening. We arrived back in Hannover with the ICE on the dot of 11.28pm, as planned, complete with one Dudlesack, and a nice bottle of whisky for the organizer. Many thanks to those that made up the group and supported our most northern journey yet – perhaps in a couple of years we will be in Ireland..... HP