

Rising Damp ... Crystal Palace Band in the Normandy Rain!

Friday 27th August

With a true Penge send off (a fight spilling out from the pub across the road, blood and glass flying!) the band set out for the annual trip – this year saw Crystal Palace Band heading off to Trouville in Normandy to do what it does best ... playing concerts to old ladies on the beach, and enjoying a couple of glasses of wine! And the rest ...

By the time we reached Dover the usual suspects at the back of the bus were well on the way to ensuring that they had as good a time as usual, and as the ferry pulled out of the harbour most of the band gravitated to the bar, where chatter and beer flowed until the wee small hours of the morning when Calais was reached, with only a few succumbing to the time and falling asleep in each others laps ... !



A more subdued and snoring band then got back on the coach and began the journey through northern France to Le Havre, where we found our hotel, sorted out the rooms, and after a quick snooze and spruce up, we set off in the rain over the Pont de Normandie (a spectacular piece of French bridge building!) and ended up in the picturesque but rather wet fishing village of Honfleur. A large contingent headed to a bar that served a wide range of local beers, before splitting up into smaller groups to eat. After food and the disappointment of watching Paula Radcliffe pull out of the Olympic 10,000m in the pouring rain, more bars were visited, and in true CPB busking tradition when baritone player Clare Lipscombe found an empty piano she swiftly took up the challenge and a bar in Honfleur was filled with the sounds of CPB players singing classics such as Yellow Submarine and Show me the way to go home in both its traditional and Oxford English versions (click

[here](#) for lyrics)! Then it was back through the rain to the bus, back to the hotel, and the hotel bar for some drinks!

Saturday 28th August



Saturday morning and the bus set off across the Pont de Normandie again to find the local calvados distillery ... and at times it seemed as though we would never find it, but spend the morning going round in circles ... literally! But ten times round the magic roundabout later and we did finally get there! Unfortunately we were too late to be able to have a tour round the distillery, but everyone got to enjoy a free taste of the calvados and pommeau – and then spend money in the shop on more calvados and pommeau! So everyone was happy ...



Only a quick tour round the magic roundabout later, we stopped for lunch in Honfleur. Though only a brief lunch stop, a very important event took place as 2nd cornet player Ken bought two small remote controlled cars – more on these to follow! After lunch and a bit of celeb spotting round Honfleur Harbour we headed to Trouville for the first concert of the tour. In the car park by the Pont de Ville we set up and wondered whether the rain would hold off, and what sort of audience we would get at 5.30pm ... and were pleasantly surprised by the crowd who soon showed up! They were very willing to sit on a warm summer's evening and listen to the band and Mike's French, including the deputy mayor of Trouville who came to listen to one piece, stayed for the whole concert

and then gave every member of the band a bottle of champagne, a bottle of local cider and some biscuits... his subsequent invitation to the band to come back again was very well received!

After a successful concert thoughts turned to food, and almost the entire band was soon installed outside one of the restaurants in central Trouville with steak, chips and a few bottles of wine! After a fantastic meal everyone wandered back to the coach watching a spectacular firework display – we're still not sure why Trouville had so many fireworks that night, but we'd like to think it was all in our honour! The coach took us back to Le Havre, and as on the previous evening those who still had some energy spent the night drinking and talking on the sofas in the hotel bar, and racing Ken's cars round and round and round and round ... !

Sunday 29th August



On Sunday morning we had to get up bright and early as we had another concert in Trouville, this time on the beach outside the casino. However, the weather was not so good to us as it had been on the previous evening, and as we finally struggled into the town the heavens opened. Luckily as Normandy weather is clearly as unpredictable as the British weather, an alternative venue for us was prepared, and we set up in the casino instead. During the concert the weather improved, and after a quick change members of the band were free for the rest of the day. Some were invited back to [Basil's pad](#) for lunch, while others set out to explore the town, the cafes, the bars and the beach. The weather held off all afternoon, and after an earlier meal, the band headed back to Le Havre for the final night of the tour. Entertainment was provided by the forward thinking of Clare Lipscombe who had put together a TV Themes quiz and had nearly all members of the band stumped as they struggled trying to remember the various 70's cop shows they might have watched once ... though a couple of members of the band had no

problems with this, and provided composer, arranger and even series number details – unfortunately no-one could confirm that all Adam's answers were correct so we had to give him the benefit of the doubt!



Principal cornet player James Gordon celebrated his 40th birthday on the last day of the trip, so on the final night he was presented with a number of items to help him through the day ... including insect repellent and some rescue remedy (See last year's [Scotland Report](#) if you don't understand)! Most members of the band then stayed up to drink in James' birthday in style ... and of course drive everyone else out of the bar with more Grand Prix races around the bar. As it was the last night everyone stayed up as late as they could, enjoying the company and the chat until the very small hours (and some of us managed to make it three nights in a row to fall asleep on the sofa!), regardless of the long trip back home the next day!



Monday 30th August

The coach left the hotel around 10 the next morning, with enough time for the second round of the TV quiz before getting to the Hypermarket just outside Calais where all members of the band did their very best to empty the Carrefour of its wine aisles – this wasn't achieved, but everyone was rather heavily laden with carrier bags when getting back onto the coach!

Next stop was the ferry port, and though we managed to get in the

queue for an earlier ferry we still had an hour or so to wait. Despite the rain entertainments began with the men of the trip showing off their rugby skills (?!!) and then continued with yet more Grand Prix races round the coaches queuing up to get onto the boat. And then ... TRAGEDY! During an exceptionally vicious lap, a collision between Clare and Sue's cars led to one being forced from the raised track, crashing to the ground, and shattering into numerous pieces. Latest reports from Ken suggest that after a period in intensive care the car has now made a recovery, though it is unlikely to race competitively again.

Before long however, the mourners were called back to the coach and we were able to board the ferry back to England. Again, most members of the band gravitated to the bar, though it was a rather more subdued and tired atmosphere than on the way out a few days before. Spirits were raised however when a shout came from the fruit machine, where Ken had won the jackpot, and wanted us to listen to the payout ... 300 pound coins later he brought his winnings over in a plastic bag, and bought everyone a drink! Everyone's mood was lifted with Ken's good luck, and we returned to the coach (breaking up a fight on the way!) for the final leg of the trip, and of course the now traditional Annual Awards – [click here](#) to find out who won what! Finally we arrived back in Penge, sadly no more fights to welcome us, but ready to go home, unpack (only one person had to unpack on the street before they could find car keys and actually get home!) and fall into bed to sleep off yet another successful band trip!

