TWJ

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2012/13 the story of travels with Liverpool FC following them in Europe. With a continued relationship breakdown and intimidation from a bulging bald guy.

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TWJ

TWJ (Tony was Jealous)

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(Vincy and Xmas 2011)

December 2011 and the feared visit of Wai Hing Chan with son Jason was imminent. In the intermittent period I attempted to resolve our break up through third parties. This was wise but difficult I attempted first to use a pretend Blackie knowing that Vincy would realise it was me however this proved useless she did not understand why I did this.

Tony was unhelpful very much to my understandable annoyance as without me he would never have met Vincy and I never obstructed them getting acquainted. His excuse was he was busy then he did not want to help and later it was too late (due to his procrastination). In reality he was pleased at the split first claiming she was too you for me then asking how (even though Vincy had been enthusiastic) I could expect her too move from the luxury of Hong Kong to Glorious Gloucestershire.

Tony had been jealous of me while Vincy and I where together and that was at the heart of his behaviour and attitude. He stole the opportunity while pretending and creeping up to me in an attempt to maintain our dwindling friendship.

I finally ended it and told him a few home truths along with Vincy (although I realised she probable would ignore my Emails).

His ignorance and Vincyâ s stubbornness is a difficult obstacle to overcome and I suspect Tony knew more than he let on. Vincyâ s behaviour was foolish led by difficulty in knowing how to handle in the situation while Tony it was down to selfishnessâ (he desired a female friend who talked to him) and greed.

I know little of Vincyâ y visit I knew she was to land at Manchester airport on Christmas day and must have required assistance to get her to a hotel unless she had one at the airport. She met Yvonne pre the Boxing Day fixture Yvonne who again Vincy would not have known without me had obtained tickets on this occasion for her. It was fortunate but not a situation I could offer or condone.

Yvonne had been most helpful and agreeable in fact Yvonne is a genuine friend to both parties although possible too nice and in my humble opinion needs to be firm with Vincy.

John Shaw also declined to help although I only asked as a possibility the manner of his declining nearly broke up our friendship as it was aggressive. He failed to understand the compliment I was paying him because of his nature I believed he may find out something. Again Vincy befriended him on face book another acquaintance gained due to me.

I am currently perusing a policy of honest comment to both Tony and Vincy with the latter the aim. He does not care and Vincy as I stated is stubborn however I may eventually say some truthful thing that could sink in to Vincy. Her friend Molly de friended me from face book as a result of some lyrics I put about Vincy on face book. Molly and I never spoke and it was not unexpected in fact if Vincy had a genuine reason to end our relationship (stop talking I refer too specifically) why did it take Molly so long to follow suit.

The lyrics where personal attacks and could rightly be deemed bullying however they told the honest truth and if read by Vincy could make her stand up and think.

December 31st 2011 one day before I head off to Hastings.

Chapter 1 Entry into Europe (2)

The Carling cup is the first final of the season in England and provided the mighty with reds with their first possible trophy in a decade. I always claimed winning it would be a cushion by winning it and qualifying for Europe. From this position of strength we could march on and claim our rightful place in the big one!

Brighton and Exeter where despatched away from home followed by Stoke and Chelsea all away from home. For the semi final we where again drawn away in the first leg a match we where to narrowly win one nil despite some negative tactics late on.

And so too Anfield for the second leg a home draw would be enough although the packed Kop roared on our team in the hope of a comfortable win. I enjoyed and endured the tension from the Centenary stand next to Bristol girl Yvonne McLeod.

In the Eighties Liverpool dominated the League cup under the many different names it used. Four times in a row we won it I saw all the Wembley appearances but not the replays! We won it once in the nineties and in the millennium our first of many trips to Cardiff was to play Birmingham in the League cup final. A game we

eventually won after penalties and endured a long slow drive home.

Our 2011/12 adventure started at Exeter followed by Brighton both who were dispatched despite the reds being the visitors on both occasions. Stoke followed and then the Chelsea blues both who succumbed to our superior on the day team. So we where drawn away again in the first leg at the Ettihad stadium to face league leaders Manchester City. Despite some negative play in the second half a first half penalty converted by Steven Gerrard gave us a slender lead to take to Anfield.

The Atmosphere that night was like no other that had been seen in a number of years the Kop stood for all ninety minutes and the breaks in between as the tie ebbed and flowed. City took the lead the reds equalized only to see the City retake the lead. With extra time looming but no chance for penalties as our visitors would then go through on away goals we needed a hero. Craig Bellamy the ex Manchester City striker was the man to strike stunning the visiting supporters into silence.

It was to be a tense last few minutes for us reds and a relief beyond compare and so we returned home a long slow coach ride happy arriving in Cheltenham at about four oâ clock in the morning.

The scramble for tickets was going to be equally fervent our first ever visit to the new Wembley and for many fans their first ever. I took no risks driving up the night before kipping in my car at Knutsford service station. It was as forecast an unbelievable cold night minus zero temperatures that my sleeping bag and three blankets helped protect me from and I had a relatively good sleep. In the dark I drove into Anfield and delayed my walk to the ground to my surprise about twenty people where lined up so I joined it quickly waited patiently till that moment when I was at the ticket window buying two precious tickets as was my entitlement.

Driving to work was an equal adventure and as I arrived I locked my tickets in my draw and retained my key. Only at the end of the working day did I unlock and show to a colleague the gold dust I possessed

One nil to the visitors and we feared the worse. One all to quieten the visiting supporters to my left who where soon to raise their voices as a Two one lead was taken. This was not sufficient to win the tie after ninety minutes however as my nervous companion commented No penalties then.

Craig Bellamy our returning striker after a free transfer from our opponents on the night was our hero of the night with his sublime goal hardly celebrated by him. Three sides of the ground went wild and the upper half of the Anfield road end looked down on our dejected light blue visitors. The final minutes where tense extra time no and the final whistle was greeted with joy and tears in the eyes of Kenny Daglish.

Next the scramble for tickets. Me with a recent experience of phoning up for Manchester tickets only never to get even in the Queue I decided to travel up the night before and be amongst the early birds getting first pick. And so on one of the coldest nights of the year in a sleeping bag and with three blankets I slept in the Knutsford service station car park.

The main Stanley car park was empty as I parked up a stones throw from anfield as the light was getting better. At eight Oâ clock I joined the queue already twenty long soon to double and maybe more than a hundred when I left. In what seemed half a life time but much less I eventually was at the window purchasing my two precious tickets for the most important event in our history since 2007. I clinched my tickets and guarded them with extreme car even locking them in my works draw and keeping the key permanently in my possession. In pride I shoed a work colleague my treasures later that night before I headed home from work to lock my gold dust safely away for a long month.

Sunday February 25th at 08:15 in a bright morning the road was quite although a few joggers where to pass. I would follow them with my eyes admiring their form and the swinging pony tail whish from side to side in the distance. The first fellow fans arrived then a few more and finally the main men our organiser, Yvonne and Jeff. We climbed abroad and in a rare treat for me I climbed to the upper deck and grabbed the very front seat not above the driver. From here I could enjoy the sights and journey in comfort the route was all too familiar but it is different as a driver when the other cars and danger ahead our more important than the beauty that surrounds.

The first pick up point outside the ancient Bristol Temple Meads railway station used occasionally for Harry Potter saw our numbers more than double and then further stops all the way to Reading where our numbers increased to fifty five all in colours excited anxious enthusiastic.

Uxbridge was our first destination where our coach pulled up outside the tube station and after the first port of call underground tickets a large group of us headed to the local wetherspoon. This was to be a new one for our enthusiastic spooners Yvonne McLeod and Paul Wait one well over five hundred and the other ahead with six hundred and more. It was crowded full of blue colours daffodils and the sound of Welsh accents. Some where more attractive than others and despite our clear red colours no trouble or threats were heard.

A great and enjoyable meal was consumed washed down by orange Henry in my case and alcohol in the case of my companionâ s one who dashed across the road to KFC for an alternative lunch. In plenty of time we departed shaking hands and good wishes with our rival supporters. On the tube some banter and conversation with more Welsh boys as the half full tube hurtled towards the home of English football. Minus the towers it is not the same but the Arch easily seen for miles around makes an adequate replacement. The Bobby More walk was crowded full of mostly reds on the way to Wembley. The more experienced Cardiff fans new the route better than us Wembley virgins edging our way and enjoying the unique atmosphere that only Wembley could provide. A sprinkling of police officers but more the rattling of charity buckets after our coins the smell of onions and the sound of horns. At the helm the upper walkway full of reds and over the walls banners only red supporters could write and conjure up with years of experience from the famous Joey bites the frogs legs

to these birds donâ t buy the Scum!

Inside we went through our separate entrance I saw my ex girlfriend out side as I climbed the stairs inside the stadium. I rushed in a vein failed attempt to get a photo. Inside and soaking up the unique atmosphere waiting to be joined by Chris Allen and for the seats to fill up.

The pre match show was a yawn noisy an excited presenter the teams named by regular Liverpool and Cardiff announcers failed as first the Cardiff keeper followed by the Liverpool keeper was named and so on. A big yawn we donâ t need this for big matches we donâ t even need it for ordinary matches at Anfield against Manchester United we are the travelling Kop.

The game almost forgettable Cardiff took an early lead from a well worked move and despite greater possession superior technique and periods of dominating our opponent half team came and went with the blues holding on. It was deep into the second half when our dominating centre back Skrtel used his right foot to secure the equalizer. From here surely the reds would win in ninety minutes and with further pressure when Cardiff had their backs to the wall it was the Welsh side who probable had the best late chances failing to finish of and complete a unique double.

Dirk Kuytâ s second half extra time goal we all thought was sufficient to win it but Cardiff had other thought and one chance was cleared off the line before with less than two minutes to go they equalized a goal that was to secure the dreaded penalties.

Penalties are a lottery and I have the honour of seeing all four of our previous Penalty winning finals plus a few semis as well. To my surprise Gerrard was our first penalty taker although it was no surprise to me when both he and our second penalty taker Charlie Adams missed their kicks. Kuyt I was more confident of rightly so and Downing a surprise choice but maybe only option with Suarez recent failures and Bellamy not keen gave us two goals. Mean while Cardiff had also failed on two occasions and it was now sudden death. Glenn Johnson our exciting attacking full back took our fifth and final penalty with ease passing the keeper and jumping with joy as the ball hit the back of the net. It was now up to Anthony Gerrard for our opponents to extend the Penalties. Like his more famous cousin he failed as the ball flew wide past Reinaâ s right hand post and the Carling cup was won.

The mighty reds will now enjoy European football although Champions league is the preferred choice with its greater rewards and more glamorous ties.

Sunday May 13th a week after our disappointing FA Cup final defeat to Chelsea and we where in our only European competitive away match of the 2011/12 season. That I s based on Glasgow Rangers only being a

friendly (I didnâ t go). Wales being in Europe and it was a meaningless league encounter.

A week after the curse of Chan struck in the FA cup final. We where rocking for twenty minutes Carrol almost equalised and we would have probable gone on to win. The real bad luck was meeting Everton in the semi final caused no doubt by the curse as we had never gone on to win the FA cup when we had defeated the toffees en route to the final.

The fine weather and convivial company made the first part of the journey great. When we stopped off at Port Talbot I went for a stroll taking various pictures and taking the Mickey out of the two languages on display in this foreign land. No passport was required and later in the wetherspoon I enjoyed a Bangers and mash and the company of all but mainly Paul Wait and Yvonne. With Paulâ s assistance I was able to prepare a few extra visits for my forth coming trip to Rhyl. He set up the tale with â Are you playing in any chess tournaments soon?â which I was able to respond with a positive â yesâ â Rhylâ and much to Yvonneâ s displeasure he recommended two places near by with wetherspoons to visit. I noted both.

Arriving at the ground by away coach was different to my only other visit to this ground. The hordes of Elvis look alike due to the comment â There is more chance of seeing Elvis than Swansea staying upâ was amusing. Inside we where entertained by a local group then an Elvis look alike.

I was seated between two young ladies to my right a mature attractive lady with gentle man friend. She was foreign and I decided that as I expected a two nil win she was to get the first hug. Not to be out done the younger and prettier girl on my left with familiar spectacles sat next to an elderly father figure was to get the second but more favoured bite. Although we had seen each other before though I could not recall for certain where we did not converse although exchanged smiles as I passed by giving her a gentle squeeze.

We lost the game one nil to a late well worked goal after a period of intense pressure from the reds towards the goal behind which we stood or sat. I left giving my favoured young lady a hug and smile hoping next season we would see each other again and converse for longer.

The journey home was fine in lovely sunshine other a little damp due to the result. Little where we to know then that we had witnessed the final game of the reign of King Kenny Daglish.

Chapter 2 2012. Europa League, Berne (Young boys)

After fixtures in the old Soviet Union and a local tie versus Scottish club Hearts we where through to the group stages. I saw both home ties and was looking forward to my first European night in two years away from the British Isles.

Arrangements where made late in the day as I was absent in Blackpool and Fleetwood when the draw was made. One downside was the fact I would have to travel with traitor Tony who for a man of his age should have more sense. The sweet smell of a female friend introduced by me and the silly argument he had regarding her wish to stay in Hong Kong. Tony overlooked or ignored the issue and never asked if there had been a discussion or difference of opinion between Vincy and me, he couldnâ t be bothered to ask. Still he is slightly better than s p

Not involved in the Official Liverpool supporters club Hong Kong due to I am reliable informed by several differences of opinion (read into that what you like) His organisation is called a â Societyâ again ask yourself why?

Yvonne etc met him in HK through Vincy and who was the instigator of that possible meeting, Who did Vincy meet first let it be known in the history books!

Welsh (North Wales) bore him and when it suits â A citizen of the united Kingdomâ with a Hong Kong flag? A mongrel really! As Tony pointed out why would anyone want to leave the great comfortable life in Hong Kong where as Vincy stated they have a different tax system?

I suspected many things where not right about him after sitting and listening to him in our one and so far only meeting and many have been confirmed with others sure too in time. This was the man who expressed that he â did not want to know the facts about the ill feeling between Vincy and meâ however he expected me (but not her) to discuss this in private. How he thought this was to be achieved when she was refusing to speak to me is beyond the comprehension and is an attitude that encourages anyone to be stubborn.

This â Asian Ambassadorâ has a brother â a senior police officerâ like those he proudly states lied over Hillsborough. (I am glad theyâ re lies have been refutes). Should we listen to the words of senior British police officers as spoken by their foe s p .

The first face is to adhere himself to worldwide reds and follows a (rightly so) popular cause while the second one is to use as a threat in his rant in the indefensible defence of!? He has no interest in knowing the cause of her dispute with me. Makes perfect sense!

I have met many Reds fans from all over the world including Hong Kong they have not heard of VC but the facial expression as Chairman Mao of the Liverpool Supporters HK was mentioned and the fact that the Hong Kong Official supporters club want nothing to do with him says a lot.

s p has more in common with Margaret Thatcher than Mother Theresa the latter who â founded the Missionaries of Charity, a Roman Catholic religious congregation, which in 2012 consisted of over 4,500 sisters and is active in 133 countries. Members of the order must adhere to the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, and the fourth vow, to give "Wholehearted and Free service to the poorest of the poor". The Missionaries of Charity at the time of her death had 610 missions in 123 countries including hospices and homes for people with HIV/AIDS, leprosy and tuberculosis, soup kitchens, children's and family counselling programmes, orphanages and schools.â

It has been noticed the staged picture of healthy, nourished and well dressed men unfolding a â give kids a chanceâ banner. No doubt none were not from the slums in India or the victims of oppressive neighbouring Chinese regime.

So to my journey to central Europe the most neutral of countries Switzerland were on no ones side during two world wars despite adjoining Protagonists Germany, Italy and France. It was 04:30 on the Wednesday morning when I arose from my slumber. Prepared as I was my suitcase was first in the car boot and a slow cup of coffee later plus short wash and dressing before I began my journey.

In the dark September morning lights on I was heading to John Lennon Airport with time on my side I did not rush as I eased my way onto the M5 the later joining the M6 and securely past Birmingham.

A short stop to relief my self was followed by filling up my car fuel tank with petrol and a further drive in the morning light with cars hurtling past me and long queues fortunately on the downwards side.

Another stop for prepared breakfast of oat cakes very filling and nourishing and with plenty of time as even my car parking space was not available till ten Oâ clock I continued slowly with the desire to conquer the Runcorn Bridge. As is got closer and in my vision nerves set in and I still drove on till the point of no return was reached and I could do only one thing look straight ahead until the water was crossed and safety reached. A stop at a Morrisonâ s on route ensured I was driving into my allotted car park just a few minutes after the start of my booking period and on finding a space eventually Part one of my three part journey to Bern the Swiss capital was over.

In the departures lounge I sussed things out and noticed a group of three or four heading for the end where the stairs to the departures lounge stairs where. It took me a few seconds to realise the diminutive dark haired girl was Clair Rourke the famous and popular LFC TV presenter. I was later to discover she would be on the special chartered plane to Bern and unluckily she was to miss out on a photo opportunity with me.

The first person to arrive was John Shaw a Seventy year old Bristolian who greeted me and we exchanged words. We went our separate ways me for my suitcase from the car him to the gents before meeting up again in the departures lounge and enjoying a drink and in his case breakfast in the Wetherspoons bar John Lennon airport.

Robbie was around then later I passed and enjoyed a conversation with the Warburtonâ s before returning to the bar and after purchasing a lunch we progressed further waiting for the stragglers to arrive. They were not long as our departure time arrive with greetings exchanged except by me and Tony as I was eating anyway when he came up with â long time no seeâ .

He got the message!

The easy jet to Geneva was not full but must have been less empty than a normal flight judging by the number of red shirts in addition to that of the Thwaite party. A comfortable and short two hour flight later we where landing after viewing from afar the Swiss countryside, It was over forty years prior that I was last in the country of fine Cheese cuckoo clocks and yodelling. Once more I was breathing in some of the finest air in the world and part two completed with the enjoyable train journey through the glorious Swiss country side to come.

We passed through customs with some eager travellers keen to get their passport stamped with Switzerland . Later we congregated before boarding the pre booked train, reserved spaces at the back with Thwaites sport travel reserved from Geneva to Bern plastered on windows it made our party proud. Seats where a plenty with adequate leg room as the double decker train departed on time with no hint of lateness. Lake Geneva was a sea of the bluest water I can recall seeing with many a yacht sailing on its clear and clean water in the afternoon blue skies. The countryside was equally impressive with green fieldâ s cowâ s deer and the unique chalets that only Europe provides. It was a fantastic journey with sweets provided by little Annie Ward and great company. The local talent that boarded and departed was an additional benefit. It was a journey that had to end with the slowing down and arrival at Bern station with Part three over and now a short walk to or hotel.

I had a colour map of the area around our hotel and the short route to and from the station. It was needed as we split into our two respective parties due to meet later. We negotiated our way to the hotel the majority of us where to enjoy in the city centre the appropriately named â hotel Adorâ .

In and out with my room mate Duncan as downstairs we where soon to regroup and head for an Italian meal!? No that was cancelled as they had no Pizza so it was a stroll and hunt round a lucky dip excursion out of the city almost getting us lost. An lady who spoke great English guided us back to where we came from an obvious move that John was aware of even though his mate Tony had all on his own got the group lost. I had taken with me a map acquired in the hotel which gave me a good idea of where we where heading and from my brief research I remembered the description of the glass cover over the main tram and railway station in the city centre.

It was Bill Millard who discovered and recommend the restaurant we where eventually to pile into. Based on the ground floor it was convenient for Andrew in his wheel chair while still busy and deep inside. Tables where huddled together as a group of about thirteen in total with myself centrally placed adjacent to Laura and with Ann on my left side. A pretty waitress benefited from our custom her smile delightful she realized that some of our party where struggling with the choice and was patient despite the late hour. Drinks where followed by our meal mainly we all choose Pizzaâ s with bear and coke in my case flowing freely. The

filling and inexpensive meal was truly delightful, and enjoyed by all. Conversation and laughter flowed with tales and memories of our recently departed companion Mick Dunn and plans for future trips and nearer to home the following day discussed.

The waitress offered us â One last wishâ in her words meaning time for last orders followed by the bill. Everyone was happy we at our meal its relatively inexpensive cost in a country renowned to be expensive and the waitress plus her employers who had benefited from a bonus that they would not enjoy again.

The waitress was later to pass us in the street her instantly recognisable smile shining like a lighthouse.

En route a diversion to an Irish bar I was keen to get into our hotel tired yes but also I did not feel like torturing myself with further glasses of cokes so did not drink hiding in the middle watching the tele and making little conversation.

It was a relief to get into bed and although my room mate has a deep snoring problem of which I was aware I managed to get some sleep. The traffic outside was almost as loud as the snoring something my room mate was to confess. The morning and day ahead was to be exciting with breakfast a true look round the city and the match eagerly awaited.

Thursday 20th September and after some sleep I woke to the noise of traffic outside our ajar window. It was busy despite the early hour and I cold sense a cold early morning outside but a fine day to follow. My room mate was sleeping snoring rarely and quietly while I rested then grabbed my watch updated to local Swiss time one hour ahead of GMT. I was not going to abide by the 08:30 breakfast that others had agreed the night before deciding to rise shower and wash while my room mate slept.

After dressing and preparing my evening gear I slipped downstairs greeting the receptionist with a good morning as I passed by and outside for an early morning stroll. Brief I explored the near area only a five minute walk to the tram and train station taking a few pictures in the early morning blue skies before returning at 08:00 a deliberate 30 minutes ahead of planned for breakfast.

Our group soon followed with others also arriving early while the late comers were not long after the arranged time with only and surprisingly Bill Millard a real late comer.

We all tucked in to the scrumptious buffet me starting with a mixture of fruit and cereal returning for a second helping. I tried and didnâ t like the salmon but approved of the cheese and created my own bacon sandwich. I concluded with a roll and jam washed down with a final Latte a warm milky drink to add to the OJ I started with.

Meeting adjacent to reception there was much discussion on where to go Robbie deciding he was heading for the Young boys ground where he would purchase half the shop. I had decided I wanted to look round the city with no specific place I wanted to visit, concluding that as we would have a free tram later than evening why pay to visit the ground. With map in pocket the only group member to bring this we were led into the city through the glass roof that covered the tram station. Skies were blue the day mild and the stroll pleasant as we arrived at the cross roads with the house of parliament to our right and clock tower (a former prison I later read) above and in front.

Trams appeared from all directions as did pedestrians mostly tourists speaking various languages. A few Asians and the traditional Japanese photographer.

From our position all roads led to the river due to its natural curve and onwards we headed weary of traffic on the funny side of the road. Underneath a natural river ran with its flowing pure water and fountains with monuments or statues situated at differing places. Either side were shops and the houses or shops decorated with forms of architecture. Every place had a basement some open others closed and looked inside and down we could see through to a restaurant theatre or barbers shop.

Ahead under the blue skies a bridge and as we got closer the clear blue waters of the flowing river. Great views ahead and either side, on one a church with towering spiral and across the river a quaint unusual building was it a house or restaurant. And across the bridge as I had read briefly the famous bear pit housing a small family of three bears of Bern. Maybe a hundred tourists looked down to the grassed bank adjacent to the river with a stream and wall protecting those who walked the river path. They enjoyed a better view than us closer looking down seeing the docile uninterested giant, big and baby bears sleeping.

The other side the bear pit with logs to climb a tree scented with honey and a small pool that in the hot summer days no doubt would be enjoyed.

I was able to get a few photos some using the long lens to appear close as one strolled round its territory and stood high to show off its magnificent body. Many a woman would describe as well hung as the beast enjoyed the nourishment it so deserved and enjoyed.

Slowly returning where we had come we halted for a coffee and the first group photo opportunity of the five thirsty explorers. A kind and attractive waitress was volunteered into action taken three pictures of the five male reds.

I donâ t think it was mid day yet the day was mildly warm and crowded city full of fine fun and atmosphere we headed up a narrow cobbled street that I could see from my map was going to pass the city Cathedral. As we neared it come into view towering above the surrounding buildings it spiral was being renovated and as we got closer it appeared more like two split buildings one part ageing in days gone by another newer being reinvented, the newer part would have not been out of place in the newer business area of the city adjacent and on the far side of our hotel.

Robbie had phoned and with directions and the aid of my map was guided to meet us while heading down towards us was Steve Stead and Laura.

We gave the adjacent cathedral park a miss later to be advised there was not much in it as it merely provided views of the river. Now our group of eight headed up and back to the bar area where we settled down to enjoy a coke or beer. Some later had some food as we joined by Mrs M, hubby Mac and companions Nigel and co. I cannot remember the fourth party member although he is a regular on our coach and I regularly speak to him.

Adjacent was another beautiful monument with more shops a MacDonaldâ s and souvenir shop across the busy road inhabited by pedestrians, trams and the occasional vehicle.

I did not want to eat then and had as many cokeâ s as I could endure so paying up said my goodbyes as I headed away firstly to the train and tram area where I settled on a chicken salad from the MDâ s in the shopping area.

I investigated the area further a chocolate shop where as the only patron I was interrogated explaining I was looking well browsing actually. The chocolate was enticing a chocoholicâ s delight only exceeded by the

chocolate factory in the film or Cadbury at Bourneville in Birmingham. The prices especially when converted to sterling was enough to put off many a tourist and it made me think twice what I would return home with for my girls!

The Parliament was near by and deserving of a visit it was a fine building from the outside aided by fine day. The market area I negotiated in front and as I got closer a square in front of the building a wet area in front like a large puddle gained my attention.

Then to delight and squeals of young girls two with umbrellas a spurt of water rose from the pavement one here another there then two at once later six together in a pattern briefly for seconds a brake and more. I stood and admired from a safe paved area as the road in front had the occasion vehicle but mostly pedestrians and the more frequent cyclist.

Returning to my hotel was a happy event through the tram stop crossing carefully and passing the route to the Irish bar from the night previously. I peered into a Chinese restaurant for menu and prices considering it a possibility for the next day.

In the hotel room I washed and changed into my prepared outfit for the evening. Jeans, a white shirt with another white short sleeved T shirt â Istanbul The final 25th May 2005â on it in memory of a match played between AC Milan and Liverpool.

Coat to keep me warm in case the evening got cold and my much travelled red and white scarf which just to be safe I carried in an orange plastic bag inside out to hide the name of the supermarket. If they paid me to carry this I would not do this. The trams where to be free from four Oâ clock local time for the seven Oâ clock kick off and at the tram station I was waiting knowing the number and destination. Across the rails I noticed heading towards the hotel a few of the group so I popped over to speak and state I was heading for the ground and would see them later.

The tram I caught was not full and I easily obtained a seat saying nothing the journey was not to be long and at no point was my tram ticket well match ticket checked. A few stops later the Wards arose and later entering the same carriage as me. This was a bonus as it meant they I could speak to them and ensure I would get off at the correct stop. It was to be the final stop passing the hotel the Wardâ s Laura and Steve stayed at. The tram followed a route in which it turned in a semi circle into the stop a wide and full four or more lanes wide to cross to the hotel.

I was given direction easy to follow to the Stade de Swiss only a short walk following the crowd down a main road where a specific crossing point allowed my easy access to the precinct and bar area that surrounded the ground.

It was a pleasant evening the bars were full of mostly reds including a few I new. Keith Stanton the Liverpool Football Programme Club organiser was sat amongst them I was later to see him in the ground hawking for more of the free programmes to later sell.

I strolled round the ground noting our entrance and the adjacent training ground. It was a fine though small stadium one that would not be out of place in the Championship or for a Premier league club with a lesser attendance than that of the major clubs. A shop area underneath it hosted a precinct including the fan shop, small tiny in comparison to the larger adjoining shops even downstairs in a lower section. It had few souvenirs shirts and cereal bowls but no mugs or programmes I left as quick as I arrived.

A photo in front of the Europa League ball scarf out stretched then bumping into Dougie I later was to see the Liverpool team arrive prior to entering the ground under an hour prior to kick off.

Inside I was amongst the first to arrive a small group that included a lady dressed like a Swiss milk maid a few at the food stall. The entrance area number 13 had â welcome Guestsâ poster by it and I took a self photo with my mobile noticing only minutes later this was taken away by a steward so I got a unique picture.

Inside our position was in the corner of the ground afforded fine views of the pitch and game ahead despite the traditional netting common at most European grounds despite it being an unnecessary hindrance.

I was later to acquire some free programmes one for myself a second for John at the supporters club. Two spare ones where given away to young friends of two work colleagues leaving one for a special person.

I also enjoyed a coffee and what qualified as a hot dog a large sausage together with separate round roll and mustard.

As seven Oâ clock and kick off time approached I was joined by more of our party took a few more pictures and settled down to the ninety minutes ahead.

Eight goals were to follow the first within four minutes of the kick off as Liverpool reserves started positively. Downing crossed from the right an innocuous cross that the Swiss defender was easily able to head away and like ping pong it went straight to the head of a team mate who unaware as the ball hit his head and headed goal wards past his own keeper.

It was unbelievable a start only we could dream of and a shock to the home supporters at that end of the pitch.

Thanks to confusion in the Liverpool defence not all due to the out of form Jose Enrique he Swiss team came back to level the scores. It was short lived as a corner saw new boy Wisdom coming forward with great determination to head the cross undetected pass the home keeper to restore the visitors lead. It was a debut goal for the youngster that will be remembered for years to follow and the performance throughout the ninety minutes ensured it was a justified reward.

A deserved lead at half time left the travelling fans delighted some nine hundred tickets had been sold at Anfield although judging by the abundance of red and banners along the one side of the ground locals and perhaps a contingent from across the boarder as France Germany and Italy border the small country were amongst their number.

The second half lead did not last long as the hostâ s earnt an equaliser and shortly after a third goal resulted in the host taking the lead. The second equaliser was scored by Ojala making up for his earlier own goal, however for me and more than one of the travelling fans the lost lead led to the belief that a dream victory was over and we would not come back from this position.

Borinio and Shelvey came on as substitutes and livened up the team performance. Borinio produced a fine on target shot easily saved and was instrumental in our equalizer four minutes after the Bern side took the lead. It was Coates who headed in this to level at three all, with six goals scored it was only a question of which team would score next.

It was JonJo who was to score not one but two goals and demonstrated what a great acquisition he was when the then Liverpool manager Roy Hodgson purchased him from Charlton. Firstly Shelvey, finished off an incisive Liverpool move with a first-time right-footed shot and we where ahead again at Four Three, following which he sealed the win when he surged towards goal before powering in a left-footed effort.

It was a tremendous Twenty five minutes performance by the youngster who showed he was a class above others on his day and concluded a deserved victory in a game in which poor defence as to rule the day.

We left the ground not locked in as we would at many a stadium probable Udinese and Moscow our fans would with the Laura group heading first to the bar in their hotel. I stayed for one coke before announcing I was returning to my hotel crossing to the nearby tram stop and soon in the dark heading back. It was dark but safe and I feared no one in a city with relatively little crime. I was unable to use the internet in the hotel and retired to our room later joined by Duncan. I showered and watched a little television catching the end of one Europa league game prior to switching channels for the CN news. English despite the American network I switched off only to be awoken briefly by my returning my room mate.

Team line ups

Young Boys

- 01 Wolfli
- 03 Ojala
- 13 Zverotic (Frey - 81')
- 17 Spycher
- 22 Veskovac Booked
- 23 Sutter
- 08 Farnerud
- 16 Raimondi Booked
- 29 Nuzzolo Booked (Schneuwly - 69')
- 09 Bobadilla Booked
- 19 Zarate (Alexander Gonzalez - 65')

Substitutes

- 27 Benito 02 Alexander Gonzalez 33 Lecjaks 10 Costanzo 14 Schneuwly 07 Vitkieviez 20 Frey

Liverpool

- 01 Jones
- 03 Jose Enrique
- 16 Coates
- 23 Carragher
- 47 Wisdom
- 04 Sahin
- 14 Henderson

- 19 Downing (Sterling - 77')
- 11 Assaidi (Shelvey - 66')
- 12 Pacheco (Borini - 61' Booked)
- 30 Jesus Fernandez Saez

Substitutes

- 42 Gulacsi 22 Wilson 49 Robinson 31 Sterling 33 Shelvey 29 Borini 36 Yesil

Ref: Koukoulakis

Att: 31,120

The final day of any trip is usual uncertain mainly because of the need to depart from our hotel and often with time on our hands but not a whole day or almost as we had on this occasion. This gave us more time than normal to reflect and enjoy the city of Bern basking in another mild day with blue skies.

I arose early as is my personality and after a wash I headed downstairs a brief period on the internet and then through the hotel doors and to be different I turned left towards the commercial area of the city. This was most definitely new Bern with towering commercial blocks on either side of the busy road.

Early morning I crossed one road and noticed a pathway adjacent to a four story building. As I proceeded downwards I was able to see through the windows a few office workers at their computers.

A few more steps twisting and I was out onto a small park that grew larger as I moved downwards. At the far end I could see another busy road and pedestrians walking by. To my left a bus shelter with graffiti decorating its back wall so good it was worthy of a picture. To the right of the path a childrenâ s play area with amongst its treasures a small Romany caravan. The early morning workers passed through in twoâ s and threes mostly coming from the direction I had but some in reverse. Upwards was more buildings some that looked like old big houses or a hotel others office buildings. To the right was an area of grass wet from the early morning due a pond and trees for running amongst a postcard picture in the making.

I returned for my breakfast to be joined first by Robbie and then slowly more group members. A similar breakfast to the day before though I did sneak away an apple especially as I saw a female guest copying me I was delighted.

Where to go well John and myself met downstairs and went for a stroll round the old town his important job of taking my photo under the Interlaken sign (where I had visited on a school trip many moons ago) was made redundant by a young lady who had completed the important task earlier.

We strolled through now familiar old cobbled narrow roads aware of the trams and pedestrians. A few new sights and photos including the important one of me on top of a stairway above a fountain of water. By chance we popped into a chocolate shop and proceeded road both making a purchase I Toblerone that later and much to my surprise were a great hit amongst my female work colleagues.

We returned in time to check out both having pre packed in readiness and together with Duncan I settled our bill. The suitcases were stored for later as the group got larger with us six lads being joined by Laura, Steve and later the three Wards.

Only the Warburtonâ s who often explored separately the Gowlingâ s who I believe stayed an extra night and two other group members Annette and her husband would be seen later that day.

We headed back to the bear pit for more photos and adjacent to the central area a group photo. Later we returned to a previously visited where we met Yvonne and co on her way to see the Bears. Nigel was shattered with no hotel room he had hardly slept on the cold bench in the Swiss capital.

Lauraâ s group headed back to the area of our first nightâ s visit and near the restaurant we enjoyed our first taste of Swiss hospitality on the Wednesday evening. This time we retreated to the other side of the cross and outside in the Swiss afternoon enjoyed an overflowing meal of salad followed by a giant Pizza. We were determined to finish it even though it was all too much for there are far too many starving people in the World. For one in Syria an area worthy of the efforts of any â charity workerâ with principles and ethics one who genuinely seeks to help the poor and wants to â give kids a chanceâ !

The market was in full flow and on its far Parliament building side was a chess game in flow being watched. I could see the crowd studying and working out a way forward. One player was clearly winning and had an attack that would at least win material. Suddenly it was all over with the weaker player effectively resigning and the movement of pieces back to the starting position for a new game with colours reversed.

â What happened Kevin?â I was asked by Laura.

I explained the player resigned as his opponents Rooks where going to come down to win material!

The looser of that game was in a better position when we eventually left. However not before a silly stunt was pulled.

As I watch a conker suddenly hit the side of my head I looked up their was a few green buds but wind and not one conker on the floor apart from the one rolling away from me. However passing me by with a silly guilty grin was an elderly man who should have acted with restraint. Showing his foolishness was Tony Audley.

It was back to the hotel to collect our bags and return the door pass I had retained in error. Up to the station for our train with the group split despite our reserved carriage and I joined the men of the group upstairs.

On time we arrived in Geneva and headed through security once the other side I passed and exchanged pleasantries with Yvonne. We grouped and indulged in a drink before queuing to board our flight. Ahead of me was a small group I remembered from the match although not English they turned out to be the Swiss liver birds. I remembered one from Bucharest an ardent Skrtel fan. I exchanged pleasantries and wished them good luck as they where heading to Liverpool for the weekend match.

The flight home went smoothly although the queue at Liverpool airport was a pain. It was not yet eleven Oâ clock I was keen to reach my car and place my suitcase in its boot before a night of sleep in the cold car or noisy airport. Unbeknown to me the Warburtonâ s parked in the very next spot.

The journey home the next morning after interrupted sleep with the cold in the car and cleaning vehicle in the car keeping me awake. I did get a photo of myself beside the great John Lennon at the airport and breakfast in a MacDonaldâ s at Knutsford service station.

Stopping only once more en route home it was just before midday on the Saturday that I arrived home and began unpacking. It was the eve of the Manchester United match.

Chapter 3 Udinese

After a great and thou rally enjoyable walk on the previous Friday a weekend of rest was followed by a Monday morning lie in. Tuesday and I was off to Bishops Stortford a town only minutes from Stanstead airport where I would spend a restful night to ensure a safe and early arrival prior to the 12.20 flight to Italy.

The route was similar to many I had completed before on my many journeys in that direction. Oxford was my first major point and without the snow it was a journey I had taken two years earlier with HK Vincy. A stop off en route for a break and to enjoy some nourishment before continuing on my drive. The territory was familiar although I could not enjoy much scenery and the sat nav was useful as it took me to my hotel and along the driveway and fantastic grounds unusual for this company. A relic of the owners from whom Travelodge purchased the hotel.

The bar I had entered was not packed but its large interior did not deter from its ambiance and made for easy listening of nearby conversations. I ordered some food at the bar giving my table number and purchasing my favourite tipple to take back. A daily newspaper in hand I was able to read bits in between slips at my refreshing drink.

The food was brought quickly and delightfully by an easy on the eye waitress. She returned my smile and added the now traditional but stale â enjoy your meal.â

The adjacent table was empty as where the nearest to me so it was much to my surprise when I glimpsed a red shirt adorned by the â Standard Charteredâ name and worn by I noticed an male of oriental appearance. He came with a laptop which he placed on the table and bag with something in it. He was soon joined by a companion I happened to noticed while enjoying my meal and sipping at my refreshing drink.

I lifted up my paper even though I am known for unintentionally listening in to noticeable conversation when on a train, coach or sat in many a pub I try not to make it obvious. Their being no sky television in this bar I read in between eating and slurp of my tipple. The newcomer I noticed produced a tape recorder and notepad, placing a pencil on the table he looked almost like a hack.

My meal finished I pushed the plate to one side leaving my drink in front of me and providing room for my paper in front of me making it easier for me to read and turn the pages.

â Whatâ s his name?â I heard a muttered reply

â Never heard of himâ boomed out the response

The voice was lowered but in the sparse bar I was just able to hear something like â from Knotty Ash is he?â

If their was a reply I didnâ t hear it

â Whatâ s his name again?â

The reply was muttered and followed by

â We can call him s diddyman p

â Lets see anotherâ the Englishman asked

I canâ t remember the words that followed and managed to catch something like â Look at him in the centre wants all the attentionâ

â Full of his own importanceâ

â Big head smug smileâ

â Not one girl amongst them, more like give boysâ

Of course I could not see what they were talking about I could only assume they were looking at something on the laptop.

â What else you got?â I heard asked

A mumbled reply sounded like â officialâ â left disagreementâ

â Andâ

â Society I see run by chairman mowâ the non oriental appeared to do most of the talking â Likes to get his own way then!â

He continued with something like â How much does each member payâ and

â 1 click 1 member like a dating siteâ

I glanced up and noticed the oriental red pointing to something on the screen

â Something not right thereâ was the response.

â Lets see the folder thenâ boomed out I assumed it was it went silent as I turned a further page of my newspaper then shinned through the advert pages I came to the sports page and read a full page report which took me a few minutes.

The last words I heard were

â Can I keep this for if he becomes famous?â

I continued to read another interesting report spread over two pages fully digesting and thinking over. I then finished my drink and rose to get a second as I returned I noticed the two had gone it was all silent leaving me to enjoy a second pint while I attempted the Sudoku.

It took me a full five minutes to complete then another five or so minutes to complete my drink. Looking round the bar was still sparse and having enjoyed my meal and drink I headed for the exit leaving my paper for the next customer.

Wednesday 5th December 2012 and I woke up to complete a short exercise routine prior to a shave shower and coffee. I peeped out the window hoping to see an early morning glimpse of the locals and too my utter amazement the ground was white with more falling heavily with no end in sight.

As I dressed and watched the news sipping my coffee I pondered on how this may affect the flight and those travelling down from the north. I put on some warm items and took something to store in the car. The white snow was falling heavily as I placed the bag in my boot followed by removing a scrapper to clear the majority of snow from the windows. I would return later as it was not a thorough job as snow would continue to fall it was a start.

I chatted to the host as she admired the falling snow and took calls from colleagues struggling to get in. Returning to my room I learnt that my airport and Luton were closed and expected to reopen shortly Luton soon did. Heathrow was ok. I went down for breakfast expecting it not to be ready but too my amazement I was impressed that everything was laid out and prepared with not a hint of disruption. I took a seat from where I could witness any cars leaving or entering as well as the continuing falling snow.

Breakfast was super Cereal followed by a variety of cooked choice that is not available on the continent. It enables me to create my own bacon butty before finishing with a jam butty coffee and some juice to wash it all down. Far to full I returned to my room to take my case to the car. The snow was falling down and I got out the scrapper. A few children built a snowman which with their permission I took a picture of it and later the â let it snowâ they had written on a car window.

Soon I was on my way to the airport a slow and nervy drive which in normal times would take ten minutes however taking the need to warm the car up and drive in first gear at a slow speed on snow covered freezing roads it took me forty minutes plus. An accident on a roundabout and the queue of never ending traffic were further obstacles to my progress into the long stay car park which was a carpet of pure white. I was fortunate as with no visible lines I grabbed an end space with raised pavement to my left as the only visible marker.

Then after emptying my suitcase from my boot and storing important items inside I locked and headed for the waiting bus that would take me to the terminal.

Only one terminal however a crowded on with long queues that had to be negotiated for delayed flights that may or may not fly. A certainty was that our flight despite the runway now being open would leave late and so it was to be.

I used the facilities and then went straight through security the most arduous and depressing of tasks removing belt and coins ensuring liquids were visible in a plastic bag. However it is for our safety and I am delighted when it is completed as the other side I replace items and redress and head to the bars. I choose the Wetherspoon and later was to enjoy a coffee with John Shaw from Kingswood near Bristol.

The others were late but with the weather conditions and appalling long drive down from the north it was no surprise to find them in an adjacent restaurant were we shared a coffee.

Present was the Warbuttons, Bill Millard Steve Stead, Duncan McEwan and a better behaved Tony Audley. The latter showed better manners and courtesy than on the Bern trip and is superior in all manner of

ways to the mercenary that Vincy likes to use. Laura late on parade arrived soon to enjoy a coffee before we boarded the Ryan air flight to Venice Treviso.

While queuing I noticed one lady who at the time appeared familiar this may be I had unconsciously seen her earlier in the lounge or maybe I had. On the plane this nervous flyer sat across the aisle and we conversed, I mentioned her familiarity and she indicated where she worked. I appeared wrong or maybe only time will tell.

The most remarkable thing about the flight apart from the unusual late arrival through no fault of the operators was the Calendars sold for charity feature bikini clad members of staff. One wit asked of a pretty stewardess (sadly not me) which month was hers?

Of our eleven or so on board travellers I was first off and waited in arrivals for the Warbuttons who were next. While they searched information I waited later asking my new friend for advice as she was travelling to Venice for a wake for her late mother and new the area.

Not long we exited the airport and on different sides waited for our respective buses in the late afternoon cooling air. No snow or white stuff but a crisp with blue skies. It took an age for our bus to arrive and the party to climb aboard. I did not register my ticket and know not how many of my companions did so it could be used again though it was not.

We arrived at the Treviso station where we boarded a local train heading for the city of Udine. We where joined and assisted by a pretty local girl who I later discovered worked on the checkout at the airport. I assumed she was a student as she chatted and her passing words when she departed at her stop was â I will see you on the return journeyâ . I thought this meant the train journey I was later proved wrong.

I think if Tony or even Jim Warbutton had directed us we would have got from the station to our hotel quicker however despite what seemed to be a zig zag route we arrived headed for our rooms then met up for a drink before a group heading down town for an evening meal.

I was not sharing this time due to insufficient numbers so endured the single supplement.

The meal that evening was not very traditional Italian and this raised an eyebrow or two. The six men sat on one table and other groups formed else where we had now reached eighteen in number and more where to come the next day.

The company was congenial and evening passed quickly before we returned to our hotel a night cap for some but not me as I retired to my room although I did not enjoy a great nights sleep why I cannot say my eyes where shut but I felt no tiredness at all.

Thursday 6th December 2012 the day of the match.

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