

Holiday Visits 1930s

A Week in Devon Easter 1934

The Easter of 1934 will long remain in the memories of the 11 boys who, in company with Mr Hyde (**photo below**), travelled to Exeter to spend a week touring the beauty spots of the most picturesque of English counties – Devon. The tour was carried out by the company Sir Henry Lunn Ltd who also arranged four-day excursions to Exmoor, Dartmoor, Torquay and Plymouth.



Tuesday, April 3rd Wilton Hotel, Exeter

We had a pleasant journey to Bristol in spite of the fact that Mr Hyde encountered a rather ostentatious pessimist at lunch. He said that we should miss a connection there, which we did, with the result that we arrived at the Wilton Hotel, Exeter an hour later than scheduled. Here we found a very homely and obliging proprietress who showed us to our rooms and urged us to wash ready for a good hearty meal. This, after over 8 hours travelling, was received with great satisfaction and pleasure. This evening the majority spent about 3 hours at the Cinema and retired at 11pm, happy and contented with thoughts of Devonshire cream and cider.

Wednesday, April 4th Wilton Hotel, Exeter

I was awakened at 8am by a loud knocking and a simultaneous snore from 'C' (he denies this). After breakfast we set out by motor coach for Exmoor. We passed through delightful country villages, snugly placed among the thickly wooded hills, and arrived at Tiverton. We took up the threads of 'Lorna Doone' and marched off to the old Blundell School. Some members of the party were rather disappointed with the plainness of the place. The school was topped with a cupola (on which were the letters P.B.) and a modern, slanted tiled roof; while in the walls between the old fashioned rectangular windows were innumerable incisions – the initials and dates of the various old scholars. At these they marvelled, for they seemed to add to the quaintness, and in no way defaced the walls. We continued our journey and passing through beautiful country with primrose and violet banks on either side of the road we arrived at Dulverton. Here we saw the inn where John Ridd was supposed to have dined. Leaving Dulverton we climbed to the heights of Exmoor where we stopped in a lonely spot in the wilds 1,000 feet above sea level, to have lunch. We were welcomed by the 'grab all' master of Lorna Doone Farm, after having noted the forge at Brendon on our way to the Doone Valley, from whom we hired ponies. Mr Hyde was leading (on a pony).

The first incident of note was K, like knight errant in the middle of Badgworthy Water, seated on an obstinate pony, pointing with its nose to a gap in the trees. Mr Pony would not move. At the Water-slide, E.P.'s pony, having trodden on its reins, proved quite obstinate until Mr Hyde dismounted and extricated the clumsy animal with a true conjuror's dexterity. We left Doone Valley with pleasant memories of Exmoor ponies and the Water-slide, though needless to say, we had very sore limbs. Travelling on to Oare we looked round the old church and passed on to Lynmouth a quiet North Devonshire coastal town set amid towering pine-clad hills. At about 8pm we arrived at our hotel just an hour late for Dinner and very weary after our 100 mile journey. We retired about 10.30pm.

Thursday April 5th Wilton Hotel, Exeter

More loud snores from C, whilst I grunted and groaned with sore limbs, much to the amusement of others. C. continued to snort, but after a good dig in the ribs, this dreadful row ceased. We set off for Hey Tor about 9.30am and arrived there two hours later. The Hey Tor Rocks are about 1,491ft. above sea level and, we were told, are the centre of attraction for visitors who climb to the top to get a glorious view for miles around and the mauve and yellow carpet which the gorse and heather form when in bloom. Unfortunately it was misty over the moors and everything was silent and dull. The Hut Circles known as Grimspound, once the habitation of the ancient Britons, were visited and one in the Circle was seen to be intact and enclosed with an iron railing. All the huts are encircled by a double stone wall, the greater part of which still remains, and the space between the outer and inner walls formed a protection for the cattle by night. G. and S. grubbed about the ferns for relics and returned to the bus with pockets crammed with pieces of rock for G's museum. We stayed at Steps Bridge, and were enchanted by the nodding daffodils on the banks of an eddying front river which gushes over a granite ledge to form a beautiful picturesque waterfall. From here we proceeded to Exeter where we spent the evening shopping and looking around the city.

Friday April 6th Wilton Hotel Exeter

I awoke early and ambled around to wake the other folk. Breakfast was served early and we took a motor coach to Torquay via Newton Abbott. We found the place rather too artificial. It would have appeared less so had it not rained, for this spoiled the general outlook for everybody. Boating was the order of the day, and here G. dumped his Hey Tor Rocks. We returned via Kent's Cavern which, situated on a hillside, was an example of one of Nature's most marvellous works - a cave half a mile in length reputed to have the finest stalactites and stalagmites in Europe. Our guide showed us the various fossils which have been recently found including the antler of an Irish elk which proved that Ireland was once part of the mainland. As we came to the surface, rain was still falling fast and continued to do so until the late evening, when we arrived back at the hotel about 8pm. We stayed in the hotel and retired early.

Saturday April 7th Wilton Hotel Exeter

Today there has been no organised tour. The majority decided to spend the morning at the Baths, which later were found to be closed, so we went to the Cathedral. It is a beautiful Norman building situated in the centre of the city. The quiet peace of the interior contrasted with the busy world around. The afternoon was spent on the river, with new experiences with the skiffs and the canoes. The majority passed the evening at the Cinema and again retired early.

Sunday April 8th Wilton Hotel Exeter

After Holy Communion we had great fun tipping various sleepy heads out of bed. It has been a glorious day, and some members of the party with Mr Hyde had an afternoon on the river. Two keen individuals practised 'deep-sea diving' from a canoe. One keen eye spotted an 'ancient fossil' on the river bed; the fellow leaned well over the side of the canoe, at the same time informing his friend who was also rather curious. The two then leaned over the same side and peered into the depths below, with the result that the canoe overturned, and with a big splash they dropped into the water. Unfortunately the water was a little too deep and wet, and so the thoughts of the fossil were only momentary, and the 'divers' returned empty-handed to the bank. They were escorted through Exeter in borrowed rags to the Wilton Hotel, beaming with smiles but very much afraid to face K's camera. The rest of the day was spent discussing the pros and cons of 'deep-sea diving'.

Monday April 9th Wilton Hotel Exeter

We were on the road by 9am and we reached our destination, Plymouth, by 12.30pm. The famous Lydford Gorge was visited en route. It is about 60 feet deep with beautiful overhanging ferns. The small stream falls in many cascades into a trout's paradise. The small path runs along the side of the gorge, first under a waterfall and then steeply down among the ferns to give several beautiful artistic scenes. We were soon on Plymouth Hoe looking with pride and admiration at the war memorial near the famous statue of Sir Francis Drake. At first we were struck by the children of Plymouth. **They were all military-minded. The tiny tots were either looking intently at the bombing operations by the seaplanes hovering above the clear blue water of the harbour, or toddling down to bathe in the specially made open-air pool with their costumes on their shoulders, talking in accents we could not understand. Plymouth is the chief naval and military base of the West Country, and this is evident. Everything seems to be in readiness for an invasion. Huge guns overlook the harbour. The battleships, tanks, aeroplanes, sea-planes, the barracks and the soldiers are there to repulse the attacks of the enemy.** We spent our last night in Devon at the picture house, and retired a little later with our first thoughts of School.

Tuesday April 10th Wilton Hotel Exeter

We are to leave by an early train for Yorkshire, and we all wish we could stay longer, after our exceedingly pleasant holiday. All thanks are due to Mr Hyde for so kindly organising and managing the holiday, and we hope that he will accompany us on a similar tour next year.

Easter in Devon 1935



On Easter Saturday our party of sixteen past and present girls from School left the smokiness of Hemsworth to spend a week visiting the beauty spots of Devon. The tour, arranged by Sir Henry Lunn Ltd. was similar to the one our party of boys enjoyed the previous Easter and included four day trips from Exeter, our centre. There were no organised trips on Sunday or Monday, but thanks to Miss Griffiths who knows the best places to see, we spent part of both days sight-seeing. Most of us braved a soaking on Sunday morning to attend the Cathedral service, and as the weather changed favourably in the afternoon we went by bus to Teignmouth. From here, a weary uphill climb brought us, tired and hungry to Labrador Bay. We had tea at the Hotel, formerly a smuggler's den, situated on a ledge half-way down the sheer face of the red sandstone cliffs, with the sea roaring far below and the gulls screaming round about. Such charming places, we had always thought only existed in novels.

Monday morning was wet again and so we spent it looking round Exeter's fine old buildings. As the weather was still unpromising, in the afternoon we set off for Sidmouth and were amply rewarded for our venture by glorious sunshine which greatly enhanced the beauty of England's Riviera.

Tuesday - Exmoor ponies. After visiting Tiverton, and driving through beautifully wooded country we reached Malmsmead. Here the fun began with stubborn Exmoor ponies, which refused to be pushed, coaxed, or even led any way but the one they had in mind. Then when they had gathered impetus and sensed which way they intended to go, screams, kicks, and reins could not prevent their going at an alarming fast speed for a pony trot. A few aches were the only regrets of this amusing relaxation. We went on to Lynton and Lynmouth, and after driving down Countisbury Hill and other similar ones our char-a-banc broke down in South Molton and required an hour's doctoring before we could set off again. **The return journey was through peaceful lanes with violets and primroses growing in profusion along the banks, and past villages of thatched cottages snugly nestled amongst thick woods, far remote from Yorkshire.**

Our visit to Plymouth on Wednesday aroused our just pride in the daring escapades of the Devon sea dogs. We were pleased to see that the rather unimposing front is undergoing improvement to make it more in keeping with the grandeur of the Hoe.

En route for Torquay on Thursday we were very obligingly conducted round the Royal Watcombe potteries where we marvelled at the ease with which experienced craftsmen can shape unwieldy lumps of clay into beautiful vases. At Kent's cavern we again broke our journey and were delighted with the splendour of the caves. From Torquay we enjoyed a sail to Paignton and to Brixham, an old world fishing town.

We spent our last day in Devon on Dartmoor. We had lunch close to the Druid Hut Circles and then went on to Widdecombe. Here we visited Beatrice Chase's cottage and met the authoress in person. On our return journey we climbed Hey Tor Rocks, but the view was somewhat misty.

On Saturday, April 27th, we caught the home train with much regret to leave such delightful scenes behind. Everyone acclaimed it the most enjoyable week they had ever spent. Our heartiest thanks are due to Miss Griffiths for having so kindly arranged and looked after our tours, and we hope that after such a success a similar holiday can be carried out next year.

Lorna Jaggar (Price House)

A Visit to France July 1936

"The boat train for France via Newhaven and Dieppe leaves at ten o'clock, number one platform." This is what I heard as I pushed my way through the huge crowd at Victoria Station. After being knocked this way and that, I got to the ticket barrier. I quickly passed this and rushed for a seat in the train, which was getting full up although it was only five minutes to ten. After travelling for two hours we arrived at Newhaven where the Channel Boat awaited us, with steam up, ready for its crossing to Dieppe. Those people who thought they were going to be seasick were sitting near the deck rails with long and haggard faces. When I had passed safely through the Customs, not forgetting to have my passport stamped, I heard a French railway porter shouting "Le train pour Rouen a droite." I then selected a comfortable seat near the window where I was able to watch the French countryside pass quickly by. With a screech and a hiss of steam the wheels of the train stopped, I was at last at my journey's end, Rouen, where my friend was waiting for me at the ticket barrier. He greeted me with. "Bonjour monsieur, avez-vous fait bon voyage?" and a shake of the hand. To my surprise I found I had to go on a noisy tramcar which did not go very fast but seemed to be clang-clang-clang all the time. At last I found myself in a very comfortable chair drinking a cup of hot coffee, with my French friends seated round me, asking me hosts of questions.

Every evening at 7.30 p.m. dinner was served. We had soup first, then meat and vegetables, followed by sweets and coffee. Once the rest of the family had snails, which they said were very tasty, but I refrained from trying them. While we were eating this dinner, cider and wine were served and sometimes champagne. During and after dinner, they always discussed politics and events of the day, whilst smoking a cigarette which smelt just like our cigars. At ten o'clock we went to bed unless we went to the Casino or to the Cinema. I thought the Cinema was very funny; there was an afternoon and an evening show. Half way through the picture they had an interval, when everyone present rushed out to drink wine. The shops in France are very fashionable and on every large shop window one sees printed. "English spoken". I saw on many windows "English" spelt without a capital letter. I would advise people who eat a lot of sweets not to go to live in France because sweets which would be cheap in England, cost one shilling a quarter in France.

Rouen is a magnificent city. Two of its most famous sights are the place where Jeanne D'Arc was held prisoner and the place where she was burnt. The Cathedral of Rouen is a beautiful building and its stained glass windows are lovely. It has three steeples, all built at different times. One can climb the centre one and get a fine view of the city and the river. Jean, my friend, told me that he did not like the English Sundays, because there was nothing to do. In France, after early morning Mass, Sunday is a holiday. First you see the women-folk going to market, then in the afternoon the men-folk go to football matches (football matches are only played on Sundays and it is a very crude unskilled game that they play). Their wives, meanwhile, go to the cinema. In the evenings they enjoy themselves in the cafes drinking wine and listening to dance bands playing the latest music.

My holiday seemed to pass very quickly, for there was always something new to see and learn. One of my greatest thrills was coming from Rouen to Dieppe travelling in the auto-railway. This is a streamlined train driven by electricity which travels at 90 miles per hour all the time. The sea was very calm for both my channel crossings. I arrived home safely after eighteen hours travelling. I am now eagerly awaiting my next visit to France.

" Micky ", Price.

The School Journey to Paris April 1938



On Wednesday, 13th., April 1938 we left Hemsworth for Paris for an eight days holiday with Miss Walker and Mr. Nelson. Except for the boy who distinguished himself by eating a four course lunch after he had been warned of the danger of seasickness, the journey passed uneventfully until Dover was reached. Since this was our first crossing, Miss Walker, believing in the old adage that "prevention is better than cure" dosed those who wished with "anti-seasickness mixture". We were met at Calais, after a crossing lasting one hour, by an official of the 'School Travel Service' under whose auspices we were making the journey. This gentleman and Miss Walker steered us safely through the customs and to the train. The official detained Miss Walker for a few moments with the result that when a ticket collector entered our compartment we were overwhelmed by the rapidity of his speech. We called for Miss Walker, who, when she came, found out what he wanted, so that he left us in comparative quietness. The rail journey upon which we now embarked was the most uncomfortable that I have ever endured. At the Gare du Nord we were met by a 'bus which took us to the "Hotel Home Joli" which was to be our home for the next week. Arriving there the manager, after expressing relief that Miss Walker could speak French, supplied us with an excellent supper.

The next day was spent seeing Paris, with its fine monuments and buildings. We saw the Church of the Sacred Heart, Notre Dame, The Tomb of Napoleon, who is buried in seven coffins, and the Arc de Triomphe with the Grave of the Unknown Warrior over which burns the Eternal Flame. That evening we went to a cafe in the Latin Quarter where we learnt to tip the waiter ten per cent of the value of our drinks.



L-R: Mr. Nelson, Miss. Walker, 3, 4, 5, Cyril Mellor, 7, 8

Friday saw us at Malmaison, the summer residence of Napoleon, where he signed his second abdication. We were told that the name was chosen because the building had been, at one time a sanatorium. Leaving here we went to Versailles where we saw the marvellous paintings on the ceilings. In the palace we also saw the Hall of Mirrors, where the Treaty of Versailles was signed. This Hall is a huge ballroom with windows overlooking the beautiful palace gardens. That night some of the party went to the pictures and I heard from a reliable source that Shirley Temple can apparently speak fluent French. During our stay we wished we could.

Saturday morning was spent writing home and in the afternoon we went with Miss Bromley to the Louvre. This again is a great place for artists but I could understand only those works whose meanings were obvious. On leaving the Louvre we went first to a cafe, then for a river-trip and passed some of the Pavilions, relics of last year's Paris Exhibition. On Sunday we found, much to our surprise, that the shops and markets were open. These street markets were a constant source of entertainment to us, to whom they were very strange. We readily agreed to Miss Walker's suggestion that we should go to the Zoo in the Bois de Boulogne. Here after gaining admittance at half-price, by the use of Mr. Nelson's "Laissez-passer", we were entertained by the elephants and seals at feeding time without extra charge.

Tuesday and our last day were spent as was Napoleon's before his abdication. We had ample evidence that he did depart from there, when we saw the "Cour des asieuz" and various rooms arranged just as he left them. We passed through I think sixteen miles of forest en route, a pleasant holiday. We also visited the village and the house in which Millet, the painter, lived and were shown the fields and spire depicted in the "Angelus". In the town of Fontainebleau we had lunch and were charged five francs for a cup of coffee at a cafe to which we were taken by our guide, who was a popular figure with us for the rest of the day - he must have thought money was little or nothing to us! However we forgot our troubles when looking round the Palace. The floors were done in "wood-mosaic" and the walls were draped with beautiful tapestries. There is in the palace grounds a carp pond in which are carp which are supposed to have markings which date back three hundred years. Although some of the carp rose to the surface when we threw bread into the water we did not see any marked ones, which made us inclined to doubt the truth of the story we had heard.

This visit ended our tour and next day we departed for home. The return journey was again broken of its monotony by the feat of the "boy with the cast-iron stomach", who, after eating six eggs, and two sandwiches, followed by bananas and cheese, disappointed us by not even looking pale during the seventy miles of the crossing. The tour was enjoyed by all, and I am sure my fellow travellers are hoping, as I am, for future holidays of this type.

Cyril Mellor 6A, Talbot (photo above)