

Diary of Palmer's Girls' School Trip to Hamburg

1955

Monday 4th April

Raced home, finished packing. Taxi at 5 p.m. to catch 5.24 train. Met some people there including D. who had been to detention. Met others on train and at Barking. Reached Liverpool Street in plenty of time, where J. & I were told off for the first time: we found the way. Bought magazines. Train came in and we found our seats reserved. Left 7.30. Tried to read, but no one could really get interested. As end of journey approached, those of us who were apprehensive, bravely swallowed our Kwells. After the food some people had already consumed it was a miracle they were not already ill.

Reached Harwich and found end of long queue for Customs. Passports checked. No trouble with Customs. Boarded ship (Arnhem) and eventually found our allotted cabins.

When we had chosen our bunks and stowed away our luggage, we found there was just enough room to have a wash. We first decided to go on deck and see what we could of our departure. Met J, K, M etc up there and decided we wanted something to drink, but did not know where to get it. Walked into First Class Dining Room, then re-directed by amused steward to Second Class Bar where we had fruit juice. We had been told to be **IN BED** by 10.30, so, ever obedient, we went down at 10.15, but K and I decided E's case ought to walk; so it did – under my bunk. She found it later. Were in bed by 10.45, (only 15 minutes late), tired out. Had just gone to sleep when someone banged on the door: Miss Potter, to ask if we were all right! Told people next door to keep quiet (none too politely) and were soon asleep again. Were beginning to feel the pleasant swell of the sea.

The next thing we knew (Tuesday 5th April) was someone banging on the door. Once more out of bed and opened it. The steward, waking us up at 5.30 a.m. for 6 a.m. breakfast. Thanked him very much and looked at our watches – only 4.30. Were just getting into bed again when realized that watches have to be put forward an hour. Washed and changed, and had just got my case to fasten when I discovered that I had left out coat hanger. Knew K would not be ready so soon, so took it round to her cabin and she took it and put it in her case. S, J, M and I went to the breakfast room (K not yet ready), where we had a lovely cooked breakfast: bacon, eggs, tomatoes etc: 4/-. Ship had docked early, so immediately after breakfast we collected our baggage and disembarked. Now in Holland. Did not have far to walk, but weight of cases increased with each step. Passports checked and stamped by Dutch officials wearing very smart uniforms. Made our way to train, where we were to spend next 7 hours. Of course, our reserved compartments were at the far end of the platform. We finally got settled in, or so we thought, but shortly after the train had started, a very pompous little official told J and me that we had to move, as we were in someone else's place. Had to go and sit in staff's compartment, but Miss M. and S. were there, and we settled down once more. Prospect of spending 7 hours in this compartment did not seem too pleasant, and the train was not nearly as comfortable as the Harwich one, but between eating, reading and talking, time did not drag at all.

Every now and then, men in impressive uniforms would poke their heads into the compartment and then quickly go away. After about 20 attempts, we succeeded in catching "the coffee man" from whom we bought large mugs of coffee for 1/3. The difficulty some people in our compartment had in drinking one cup of coffee was unbelievable!

At Oldenzaal our passports were again stamped by Dutch and later by German officials. As we left Holland and entered Germany, the scenery gradually changed. The land became hilly, and often on the horizon thick forests were visible. Some things were the same however. The houses seemed to have more or less the same shape, and the people in both countries had the bedroom windows wide open, with the bed-clothes hanging out to air. In

both countries too the curtains were beautifully draped with lovely, probably hand-made lace. We scarcely noticed the distance we had travelled. We had passed through Rotterdam, Utrecht, Amersfoort, Deventer, Bentheim, Osnabrück, and it did not seem any time at all before we steamed into Hamburg. The station was crowded, but before very long we found ourselves in the U-Bahn (the Underground, which really ought to be called 'Overground') on our way to the Landungsbrücken.

Got out of train. It was pouring with rain. We saw a large red building with loads of steps leading up, and were told that was the hostel. Climbed the steps, soaked to the skin. Cases seemed to weigh tons. Here Miss M had a bright idea – perhaps this was not the hostel. She went up more steps to find out and came back accompanied by bedraggled looking boy also looking for the hostel. The red building was the seamen's home. By this time we were thoroughly saturated, but saw the hostel – a large white building on top of another hill. Again hundreds of steps. When we had eventually reached the top and waded along the muddy path, we went into the hostel. At that moment all that Germany meant to us was rain and steps!

Miss M held long conversation with men in office. Then we went down into locker room, where we could open our cases and have a wash. By the time we had washed and changed (J and I into slacks) we were all ready for the hot meal prepared for us in the common room: milk soup, bread and sausage and cheese etc.

Went up to dormitory in which we had double bunks. Miss M then took a party for a stroll round the hostel. G, N and I, being tired, stayed behind and went to bed.

Wednesday 6th April

Awoke at 6.30 a.m. C. and I got up to avoid rush in washroom. Put on slacks. Made our beds and went down to breakfast: crisp new rolls, steaming hot coffee, bread, butter and jam. Bread was not just ordinary English bread, but a choice of black bread, brown bread, white bread and currant bread, and there was always plenty of butter, usually more than we could eat. We were going for a tour of the harbour that morning and to visit the places of interest in Hamburg.

Walked down to landing-stage and boarded a small launch which took us around the harbour for a very interesting trip, lasting over an hour. Commentary given by skipper in German. We dutifully laughed when everyone else did. But the skipper also knew some English, of which he was very proud. Saw various parts of the harbour: boats being built, repaired and loaded. Saw biggest tanker in the world – King Saud I, belonging to Onassis.

Then visited church of St. Michael, a Lutheran baroque church, beautifully decorated in white and gold. It has a very tall tower with 500 steps. These we climbed, although it made us very tired. A wonderful view of Hamburg from the top. Guide took great pains to point out landmarks. Understood that life on the Reeperbahn did not begin until after 10 p.m. (closing time at the hostel!)

Walked to the Rathaus (town hall) but found it was shut for the day, so went into the Stock Exchange instead. We were told that all the men there were not fighting or shouting at each other, but just carrying on normal business.

By now most of us were footsore, tired and hungry, so we returned to the hostel for dinner: fried herrings and potatoes, vanilla pudding and fruit sauce.

After the meal some of us were resting on the table when we were startled to hear a voice shout out: "Schlafen verboten!" (sleeping prohibited). It was the man whom we later called "the Blue Man". This "verboten" was the first of many that we heard and saw in Germany.

Wednesday 6th April, afternoon

We set off with the intention of going to Planten un Blumen, the Botanical Gardens, but still felt rather tired after the morning's trip round the harbour and extensive walk.

Miss M suggested we should have tea, and so we made our first visit to the Alsterhaus, a very big store facing the river. We became very familiar with this store as time went on. We arrived at the "A" and found a dress parade in full swing in the restaurant. Room in darkness. Sat down at table with a German lady and ordered tea. Had to go to a counter full of delicious cakes to choose. Chose one which the waiter described as "sehr schön". Returned to our table and watched the fashion parade. Followed the example of the German lady by saying "sehr schön", "ah", "sehr billig" from time to time. Noticed that models' make-up was not as good as English; they wore too much of it. Two of us seemed to attract attention as we walked out. Realised that we were wearing slacks! We often returned to the Alsterhaus. One could buy ten postcards for 45 Pf. – much cheaper than elsewhere.

Thursday 7th April

Went shopping, and as it started to rain, we decided to visit the Petrikirche (St. Peter's Church). It was Maundy Thursday and a service was already in progress. We entered timidly, and after having been given a copy of the service, we were shown into a pew. Miss M had a conversation with the churchwarden, who was curious to know who we were. We could follow parts of the service quite well, as it was similar to an English one. It was a Lutheran Communion service, and this was strange to us. The congregation received the bread from a table at the side of the altar. Then they walked behind the altar to a table on the opposite side, where the wine was ministered to them. In Germany one stands up to pray and sits down to sing the hymns, which we found rather strange.

We did not understand all of the sermon, but we gathered that it was about Easter and the meaning of the washing of the feet.

After the blessing, the parson stood at the door and shook hands with every member of the congregation. He was very interested in us, and spoke to most of us. It was an experience which we enjoyed very much.

Friday 8th April

Die Hamburger Kunsthalle – the Art Gallery

A large, beautiful building with two long corridors leading to small rooms on both sides, each room containing a selection of pictures. In this section the landscapes, most of them very colourful, showed the North-German scenery and particularly Hamburg and its environment. In this way we had a foretaste of the countryside we were to see later. Also the portraits, many of them of distinguished citizens of this Hanseatic town, were most impressive. There was also an exhibition of sculpture, including some very modern works. Many of them struck me as being perfect in movement and character. A staircase led to more rooms containing works by modern German, Italian and French painters, but time did not permit us to see these in detail; also our feet were aching, and so we left. But we all had our fill of beauty and genius.

Friday 8th April

"Die Räuber" by Schiller
A Visit to the Theatre

Left hostel at 7 p.m. for the "Schauspielhaus". Performance due to begin at 7.30. We were dubious at first about understanding the play. Chaffing remarks in Underground. Were fortunate to have L with us, a student who worked at the hostel.

Arrived at theatre and went upstairs to the circle entrance. Observed Germans taking visit to the theatre very seriously, making themselves tidy in front of large wall mirrors provided. Had to hand our coats to woman who hung them up for 30 Pfennig and gave us a ticket in return. This took more time than we thought. Hands of clock nearly pointed to half-past. We were the only ones left in the lobby. Quickly entered the auditorium. The theatre was already in darkness and very quiet, scene set on stage and audience expectant. We entered very quietly, but had difficulty in finding our seats. Very confused. People near us said "Shh!" and "Leise!", in the end making more noise than us. Decided to wait until the end of the act, but L showed us our seats. (Further remarks from the audience.) Were relieved to be able to sit down. I found myself behind a large round pillar. When I looked at my ticket, I discovered I should be sitting in the next seat. Hesitantly showed my ticket to lady in my rightful seat. She grinned and stayed there. The only thing to do was to make myself comfortable and watch the play.

It was an idealistic play, written by Schiller when he was 17 and still at school. A father with two sons, Franz and Karl. Franz wanted to seize his brother's inheritance and marry Karl's wife. Karl had joined a band of robbers fighting for a good cause – rescuing people from tyranny. Franz told their father lies about Karl, saying he was guilty of terrible crimes. The father, weighed down by Franz's lies, collapses and appears to die. Karl's wife is terrified. Franz shows pleasure. When Franz realized his father was not dead, to avoid slander, he hid him in a cave and fed him on bread and water to kill him by slow death. But Franz was killed by some of Karl's robbers and Karl gave himself up to a poor man, as there was a price on his head. Before giving himself up, he killed his wife who was trying to turn him from his good intentions.

The play, though difficult to understand, was excellently acted, for emotions were shown by pronounced movements and gestures, and character suggested by a very skilful use of voice.

Saturday 9th April

By this time we thought it wise to cash our traveller's cheques, as banks would not be open till after Easter. Many banks were closed already. Walked for miles till we finally found the exchange bureau in the Hauptbahnhof open. After changing the cheques, we were left for the first time to find our own way home. Miss M and the M's went to look for a Catholic church.

Two of us set out together to see what we could find and recognise. We were very lucky: the big store Karstadt loomed in sight and we felt safe. Split up to look inside and arranged to meet in the doorway at twenty to twelve. However, we missed each other and tired of waiting, C. and I ventured forth on our own. We found the U-Bahn and boarded a train after some rapid calculation about the direction. Arrived at hostel early and felt pleased with ourselves.

After lunch we all gathered to see the film "Ludwig II". The cinema manager gave us his best seats at very reduced prices (50 Pf = 10d), and were they comfortable! The film was a sad one, and many of us were surprised at the amount we understood. It was about Louis II of Bavaria, who was thought to be mad by his contemporaries because he built magnificent castles on Bavarian mountain-tops instead of helping Bismarck in his wars. The film was in technicolour and showed the superb scenery of Bavarian mountains and lakes, against a background of music by Wagner. The acting too was excellent.

Sunday 10th April (Easter Day)

Nearly everyone got up at 6.30 a.m. and went to church. Very pleasant to hear English voices all round. The service ended only five minutes before the hostel closed, so we dashed in and gulped down our eggs, which were our Easter treat. Rushed so much that we felt sick, but escaped from the hostel before being collared to scrub floors!

Went for a walk down by the harbour, then sat on a seat by Bismarck's statue and devoured our Easter eggs. Walked about before going to the service at 10.30 a.m., which we enjoyed very much.

After dinner we took a tram and went to Altona, from where we went by train to the delightful little village of Blankenese. It was a fascinating place, set on a hill, with an extensive view across the river to Cranz. The little houses all seemed to face different ways, and there were no numbers on the gates, but the names of the occupants. Brightly coloured Easter eggs were strewn over one lawn for the Easter bunnies to play with.

We made our way to the jetty, from which the ferry boats left for Cranz, then climbed the hill to a hotel at the very top. From its grounds we surveyed the surrounding countryside with satisfaction. We stopped at a café on our way down for tea and cakes, after which we reluctantly boarded the train back to Altona.

Monday 11th April

Today, Easter Monday, was the last night of the fair. Some of us had already been, and Miss Magnus took the remaining six of us. We were really glad that we went.

We left at 7.30 p.m. and walked past the huge stone statue of Bismarck to reach the fairground. The fair was different from English fairs – arranged in straight lines of stalls and side-shows, which led to bigger attractions. Remarked on cleanliness of stalls and variety of goods displayed.

The first amusement we tried with the staff was the high speed roundabout. (Staff showed fear and excitement.) Reluctantly we left this amusement and continued looking at stalls. Kept on being teased by some German schoolboys. Went on Big Wheels, which stopped when we were at the top. These gave us an excellent view of the brightly lit fair, and gave hysterics to a poor girl next to us.

Opposite the Big Wheels was the "Little Dipper". We seemed to be the only ones to scream on this. Germans did not seem to show emotions. Continued walk round the fair, further rides. Stopped at sausage stall, which afforded ample refreshment. Most delightful stalls were those displaying heart-shaped gingerbreads with mottos in sugared icing. Also candies and small cakes were sold. After buying our needs, staff announced it was time to leave this wonderful fair. We left reluctantly with the sound of barrel organs and shouting still ringing in our ears.

Tuesday 12th April

After rattling along the streets in a tram, arrived at zoo. The heavy iron gates looked rather forbidding with heads of savage beasts embossed on them. Found to our dismay that we needed a permit to take photos; this meant more precious money, so we refrained. The most impressive sight were the flamingos standing in water. It was a sunny day and the reflections were beautiful. Also saw seals being fed.

Walking round was tiring for us poor English people, so Miss M decided we should see the miniature circus. First two men came into the arena with some horses. After a series of bows these disappeared behind the curtains, only to appear again with two pigs and two monkeys. The first trick was that the monkeys rode round and round on the pigs' backs. This

proved too much for us and we nearly collapsed with laughing. German spectators clapped dutifully and stared at us laughing. Perhaps they did not appreciate our sense of humour.

Still talking and laughing about these circus acts we took the tram back to the hostel.

Wednesday 13th April

Woke up at 6 a.m. Pouring with rain. Thought plans for a “10 kilometre walk” would be washed out. By 7.30 when most people were up, the sun was shining and the ground nearly dry. Set out, carrying a packed lunch: 2 big sandwiches. Went by S. Bahn to Blankenese, which looked prettier still in the sun, and after a short wait, we boarded a ferry-boat to Cranz. J. and I, standing on deck of the boat, saw a lovely view of Blankenese, the whole hillside covered with quaint old houses. Crossing did not take very long, and before our arrival at Cranz most people had eaten at least part of their lunch. Weather had become wonderful and before long many people had taken off their coats. The walk originally 10 Km. ended as being 12 miles. Passed through some lovely old villages, saw beautiful old farm houses: huge, with thatched roofs and doors often cleverly carved and decorated. As the land was flat, there were ditches running alongside the roads, and as we became hotter, the coolness of the water was very tempting. After walking for a long time against a head wind, we saw the town of Buxtehude appear, but instead of getting nearer, it seemed to recede. Then we turned into the main road and could see the church steeple, which is quite famous. When we finally arrived, the only thing to be thought of was a place where we could eat and drink. Found our way to the Fährhaus. Were given large bowlfuls of vegetable soup with a boiled egg floating in it, followed by vanilla pudding with stewed ‘local’ cherries. A lovely meal, and we did our best, but had to leave room for an ice-cream. As we ate, we listened to a juke-box against some people’s wishes, who though it was extravagant, but the proprietor, who had been in Croydon for a year and understood English, put in 10 Pfennig for us.

Feeling very full up and much refreshed we left reluctantly and had a look at the old church, went to the station and caught the train home. Arrived in plenty of time for supper, which somehow we managed to eat.

Then we had to get ready for a visit to the Operettenhaus to see ‘Der Bettelstudent’. J. and I changed into skirts – easier said than done! Impossible to do the skirt up, although had worn it the previous Sunday. Arrived at opera house in good time and found our seats easily. Well in centre and good view of stage. Did not understand many words but followed story. Herr L explained story in interval. In second half our theme song was sung: “Ich hab’ kein Geld! (I have no money): liked it very much and it was repeated several times.

Were tired by end of performance, Went home armed with late passes. Made Kurt’s acquaintance: he stuck his head out of the window and moaned because we wanted to be late. Disliked him immediately, but when J. and I got to know him better, he was not so bad, just very clever and anxious to let everyone know it. Also had some very unusual opinions and ideas.

I think that today was one of the most enjoyable I spent in Germany., I enjoyed both the walk to Buxtehude and the operetta.

(BP)??

Thursday 14th April

At breakfast time Miss M asked who would like to visit the Rathaus, which had been closed on our previous visit. After hesitation, everyone bravely raised hand. (K. M. J. S. and I thought we could find better things to do, but Miss M gave a most pleased look and decided we all ought to go). We were to go shopping first and were given the grand sum of ten Marks. Were then to meet at the Rathaus, where we arrived with our usual punctuality, but had to wait ages for the guide. There followed tour of palatial interior, from one leather

“wall-papered” room to another, containing old furniture, chairs (probably ‘verboten’ to sit on), portraits, landscapes and paintings showing the history of Hamburg.

After the visit to the Rathaus, which despite our reluctance to go at first was a very beautiful building, returned home to dinner.

After dinner, J. and I decided it was time we went on our long-promised swimming trip and courageously asked about it. Were told we could go. Given three Marks between us we set off, armed with sketch-map and good advice. Had to go to Jungfernstieg, luckily, as we discovered later. Booked tickets to Kellinghusenstrasse and there found the swimming pool. But here our good luck ended.

Found door, made our way inside, surrounded by doors and large notices. Studied these intelligently, found out how much it cost to bathe, have massage, shower, Turkish bath, but no indication of where to swim. Saw some little boys come in, armed with towels. Watched and followed them as they went to pay. Did the same. Paid 60 Pfennig each. Then we did not know where the bath was. Had to wait for more children and followed them through doorway labelled “Familienbad”. Proceeded through array of turnstiles. Had 4.10 scribbled on our tickets and deduced this was the time by which we had to be out. But first, we had to get in, which proved more dangerous and hazardous than anticipated.

Guided by the noise of swimmers, made our way through doors and found ourselves on balcony surrounded by little cubicles and lockers. Had no idea what to do next; we just stood and looked helpless. Grabbed an attendant, who opened a door for us and bundled us in and went away. Changed into our costumes, then did not know what to do: should we put clothes in one of the lockers or leave them in the cubicle? Grabbed the poor attendant again, who locked door of cubicle, all the time giving us helpful advice (I think). It was getting later and later. Found some stairs and gaily descended. Now at last for a swim! Found shallow end and advanced down steps. Had just got legs wet when man with voice like a fog-horn began to shout at us. Instinctively we got out. He came up to us and pointed to a large notice which seemed to be very important. It did not mean a thing to us. We studied the notice intently, gazed at the irate attendant who pointed to the showers. Then it dawned on us – we had not had a shower.

All was provided: soap, flannels, scrubbing-brushes and plenty of hot water. Had a long shower and then did not know what to do again. Went to attendant, who, like everyone else there, thought it all extremely funny, and asked if we could go in.

By then, very little of our hour was left. Went in boldly and found more and more things that were ‘verboten’ – to dive off the side, or swim without a cap. If you committed these crimes you would be ordered out. Before long, large clock said 4.10 and we decided we ought to get out. This we did. Found our cubicle and stood trying to look as if we knew what to do next. Attendant came to our rescue and opened door. We changed in leisurely fashion and skilfully made our way out. Were accosted by a woman who looked at our tickets, stared at clock and held out her hand. She tried to explain that we owed her another 60 Pfennigs, but as we looked stupid (which she probably thought we were anyway) she only charged us 30 Pfennigs. When we eventually got outside, we found we had just enough money to pay our fare to Jungfernstieg and had 25 Pfennigs extra between us. Found kiosk where sweets were sold at 1 Pfennig each. Amused assistant by picking out twenty-five sweets one at a time. We were very hungry. The sweets tasted rather like leather, but we ate them.

Then we speeded to the station. When we arrive at Jungfernstieg and started to walk, we felt pangs of hunger. J miraculously produced an orange from her bag, so we walked along the main street of Hamburg peeling and eating an orange. Then we did not know what to do with the peel, for nobody throws rubbish into the gutter, so we put it near a stationary car and ran. Walked for ages and ended up on the far side of Bismarck. Must have missed a turning somewhere.

Did nothing much that evening, just talked as usual.

BP

Friday 15th April

After breakfast rushed to get ready for trip to Schleswig-Holstein. Left hostel. Coach (Mercedes) waiting for us outside. We were armed as usual with packed lunch.

Enjoyed coach journey, though I felt like nothing on earth at first. It was peculiar to be driving on right-hand side of road. Were racing gaily along (with much cheerful music to lighten the way) when we came to a sudden halt. Had a puncture! But did not worry. The coach had conveniently stopped outside a Gaststätten (inn) and wealthier members of the party sallied forth and returned clutching strawberry ices with strawberries in them. E., B. and one or two other m... meanwhile did a “Zatapek” up and down the road and had seen the Windmill. Poor driver, ably (?) assisted by “Lex” and “Blue Man” succeeded in changing the wheel. Continued our journey till we reached Ratzeburg, where we had a break and ate and shared packed lunches with the swans. Went for a walk round, took photos. Old 12th century cathedral. Looked at scenery: the loveliest we had seen so far. Had a sunny day, which showed lakes and hills to their best advantage. Gazed at bank on the far side of the lake, which was in the Russian zone, but it looked no different from our side.

Reached our destination: Ukleisee. Very attractive, surrounded by woods on all sides. J., “Blue Man” and I could see two small rowing boats next to a jetty. Were very hot. “Blue Man” said he would take us for a row, but found there were no oars, and boats were full of water. “B.M.” got into one and wanted us to do the same, but the boat did not look safe to me. Decided to get into the other boat. Gave J. my camera and boldly stepped into it. That was all right, and the boat did not sink. J. thought I would like a ride and pushed the boat out. I did not know the boat was tied to the jetty and had visions of myself stranded in the middle of the lake, in a waterlogged boat. Decided to jump for the jetty, but . . . it was further than I thought. Found myself knee-deep in cold, muddy and – wet (!) water. Realised boat was tied to jetty. Could not stop laughing. Got out onto jetty. “B.M.” could only think of what Miss M would say. Unfortunately I was wearing slacks, so had to change them somehow. Made our way to the coach. Persuaded K and M on the way to lend me their waist-slip and coat respectively. Changed in coach with difficulty, but had to keep shoes on.

By the time I had finished, the others were already sitting in the lake restaurant waiting for their dinner. Had to squelch all the way through the large room, looking like a little girl in a big girl’s coat. What a meal! The room was dark and the waiter like a funeral attendant. Did not smile once. Glared disapprovingly as M’s beads broke and when we asked for some water after the meal. (Only one course.)

Returned to coach and drove back via Eutin, Malente, Lübeck. Miss M had toothache. Other staff in high spirits. Sang songs under Miss C’s tuition. Reached hostel eager for more food

Herr L came after supper and we sat in the hostel library to discuss questions. Talked about German and European problems, trade, traffic, our allied occupation etc. until bed-time.

Saturday 16th April - missing

Sunday 17th April

Four of us set out, intending to walk down-stream along the river Elbe. En route we came upon a fish-market, and our progress was cut short. It appeared that all the population of Hamburg was congregated there to impede our progress. We endeavoured to fight our way through stalls of (smelling!) fish, fruit and other delicacies. Having found a way through, we discovered on our return that our way led again through this market. Were we pleased!

In the afternoon we again set out. This time our ambition was to walk the 8 miles to Blankenese. For 2½ hours we admired the beautiful countryside until at last we reached the little village, where everyone was out in his Sunday best. Resting on a wall by the promenade we ate ice-creams, and decided we were too tired to walk back to Landungsbrücken. We found the road and saw a bus coming towards us. Our immediate impulse was to cross the road, expecting the bus to stop on the left-hand side. Of course, we missed the bus this way and had to wait for the next. After a very roundabout journey we eventually got back to the hostel.

Monday 18th April

Our last Day in Hamburg

I was rather sad to say goodbye to our dormitory that last morning, and lingered for a long time on the window-sill, trying to fix the view over the Elbe in my mind. The green-roofed clock tower on its bank, the little quay with the green-and-white river steamers alongside it, the busy craft plying to and from the docks on the further side, and the occasional sea-going vessel gliding majestically upstream in the wake of two fussy tugs, the great sign of “Stülckenwerft” overlooking the scene, the water shimmering in the morning sunlight . . .

As usual, M. and I marched gaily into breakfast long after everyone else, and quickly consumed our daily portion of rolls and jam. Then we made our plans for the day.

The morning passed quickly in last-minute shopping. I spent my last few Pfennigs on a mad impulse, on a pair of brilliant striped socks for my sister (which she has never worn).

In the afternoon I discovered to my horror that everyone else had already packed, so I hastily bundled my belongings into my bag and went upstairs, only to find that everyone had gone out. I joined forces with another lost soul and we went for a last walk along the quay, looking tenderly in at the familiar café, where you had to pay one and something for a cup of mediocre coffee. We took numerous pictures of each other sitting on mooring blocks with one wave in the background, and one or two of passers-by, but as usual, people began to stare at us so fixedly that we decided to go back to the hostel.

The caterers had prepared us a dear little farewell tea, which we ate in a separate room, with delectable cakes and real coffee, which was a pleasant surprise. After tea we all felt at a loose end, and having stacked our cases in the hall, were constantly up and down the stairs, popping out for last walks, and standing idly around, wondering what to do. Some of us went to the library, where to our delight we were joined by three guitar-playing Danish acquaintances, and we had a sing-song, a curious mixture of folk-songs, “blues” and boogie-woogie. It was rather sad singing there with the pale evening light dying outside, knowing that in a few hours we should be gone, leaving our friends behind.

At last we got up reluctantly to go. I for one felt suspiciously choky as I shook hands with the kitchen staff who had been so sweet to us (even if they had given us rolls instead of the requested drink of water once or twice, which was rather an insult to our German), our friends in the common room and Kurt and the others in the office. If there is anything I hate, it's saying goodbye. We took a last look at the river, the green spire of Sankt Michael, the imposing statue of Bismarck, and all the other familiar landmarks, before taking the U-Bahn to the central station.

To our surprise, the Danish boys, their guitars dashingly slung over their backs, accompanied us and most gallantly carried some of our cases. It seemed unbelievable that we would never see any of them again. Then, our luggage having been taken care of, we went off to a farewell supper in the “Ratsweinkeller”, which is a luxurious restaurant in the basement, so to speak, of the Rathaus. We had half an hour to wait before supper, which we spent looking in the lighted shop windows and admiring the sight of the magnificent Rathaus building, its roof glowing under the great electric lights in the square, and the different night

colours reflected in one of the still waterways beside it. They gave us an excellent supper, with white wine and cigarettes (if desired) to follow, at a long table in a room to ourselves, with three or four waiters. It was fascinating to hear the ritual as they came round. If you said “danke” they just nodded politely, but if you said “danke schön”, which is stronger, the refrain of “bitte schön”, meaning “don’t mention it” was bound to follow.

Then, having obtained the waiters’ and all our German guests’ autographs, we hurried back, happily replete, through the brightly-lit streets to the station. We boarded our train, and after a great palaver of hand shakings, wavings and “auf Wiedersehens”! We began our journey back to England.

An extra Account of 4th to 11th April by one Person

Monday 4th April

We left Grays on the 6.24 train and met the rest of the party at Barking. On the way to Liverpool St. station, we were given slips of paper with our reservation numbers etc. written on them. We left Liverpool St. at 7.30 p.m. and arrived in Harwich at 9.10 p.m. We had no difficulties with the Customs officials and were soon on the boat (Arnhem).

We were delighted with our cabins, but before going to bed, some of us went on deck in the rain to watch England disappear. By 0.15 we were in our bunks and Miss Potter came round to see that we were all in bed.

Tuesday 6th April

At 4 a.m. (by my watch) I saw Holland come into view. But 20 minutes later the steward entered and announced that it was 5.20 and breakfast was at 6 a.m! We dashed out of bed and when we were dressed, went up on deck, only to find that we had already been docked for some time. At breakfast, one of the ship's officers presented Norma and me with a pile of paper serviettes for souvenirs. We left the 'Arnhem' at about 6.30 a.m., went straight through the Customs and caught our train for Hamburg. It was funny to hear Dutch people all round us.

We had a most enjoyable journey to Hamburg and accumulated three stamps on our passports (to our secret delight). From the Hauptbahnhof we took the U-Bahn to Landungsbrücken, where it was pouring with rain – such a change – and when we thought we really had arrived, we found that we were at the wrong building entirely. So Miss Magnus found out where the hostel was – at the top of numerous flights of steps. We tramped up them, half dead, but game for anything, and finally reached our destination.

We were taken to the Gepäckraum, where we left all our luggage, and were then given a most enjoyable meal (cauliflower soup, gherkins, brownly-coloured bread and coffee). We were just resting on the table after our long journey, when a man interrupted and announced very loudly to Miss Magnus "Schlafen ist verboten!" Although Miss Magnus pleaded with him, he remained adamant, so as we could not sleep, we decided to go for a walk. We thoroughly enjoyed it and were afterwards glad we had not spent the evening sleeping. We saw the entrance to the Elbtunnel and had a glimpse of the harbour before returning to the hostel. As the lights were turned out at 10 p.m., we only just had time to wash and make up our bunks.

Wednesday 7th April

Edith and I woke up early and took a walk before breakfast. We saw two pigeons resting in the roof of 'Brücke 3' and watched several ships pass.

Our breakfast was just as we had imagined it to be: crispy rolls with butter and jam, and a coffee substitute made from blackberry leaves.

At 9a.m. we assembled in the entrance hall. We were taken on a tour of the harbour, which was very interesting, although we could not understand what the German guide was explaining. At the end of the trip we were able to buy photos of the party which had been developed while we were on the boat, and the photos were still warm.

We were taken to see some of the really old-world houses of Hamburg. These were simply fascinating. They leaned towards each other across the narrow little street, almost blotting out the sunlight. Afterwards, we were taken to the very top of the Michaelis, a great church and landmark of Hamburg. The view from the top was breathtaking and we felt reluctant to come away. We explored the interior of the church, which was very beautiful and

quiet. There was such a different atmosphere in the Stock Exchange, which we visited next. There was a positive hubbub, and it was most amusing to watch the crowd of business men with their secretaries, slithering across the shiny floor and all shouting so as to be heard above everyone else. We were fortunately viewing the scene from above.

After dinner, which consisted of fish, fried potatoes and either vanilla or chocolate blancmange, we went to the Alsterhaus where a fashion show was in progress. Three of us received some rather weird 'looks' from the people because we were wearing slacks of all things! I had a cup of tea, or rather, a glass of hot water with a little packet of tea leaves suspended in it, which had to be removed when the tea was strong enough.

We walked home, and after our supper, we spent the evening writing letters.

Thursday 8th April

Soon after breakfast we went by U-Bahn to Mönckebergstrasse, intending to book seats for the operetta "Der Bettel Student", but were unfortunately caught in a downpour of rain. We went to a large church called Petri Kirche and were allowed to stay through a service. We were given service sheets and hymn books, and although we could not understand them, they made the service a little less confusing. Afterwards, one of the priests shook hands with us all and asked us questions. It was still pouring with rain, so we sheltered for a while in the 'Karstadt' before returning to the hostel for lunch.

Afterwards, we went to a café at Rathausmarkt and had some very creamy coffee, for which Norma would have had to pay 1DM40 if Miss Magnus had not come to the rescue! I was amused to see a gentleman actually standing to eat a full-sized meal, but I was horrified on turning round to see another man, who, before beginning his meal, very diligently removed his false teeth and placed them first in a handkerchief and then in his pocket. Fortunately, it was the only time I saw an exhibition of this sort, and the incident rather amuses me when I think of it now.

Miss Magnus booked our seats for "Der Bettel Student" for 13th April and then we took a steamer from the Jungfernstieg and went on a trip up the river Alster. We walked back along the bank and sat on some seats at the side of the river. We stopped again farther on for tea at a pretty little café and had some Schokolade drink and a very creamy cake.

With some trepidation, we set out in small groups, to make our own way home, but it was fun, and nobody got lost. Edith very valiantly went into a shop and bought some biscuits.

We had quite a mixture for supper – rice, cheese, jam, pilchards and cherryade, and I wasn't the only one whose appetite seemed to have doubled itself.

We spent the evening with a group of scouts from Berlin, who sang songs and strummed on their guitars. Consequently we were late to bed and had to wash by torchlight. Edith and I were given some buttermilk, which nearly made us sick.

Friday 9th April

Immediately after breakfast we set off to visit the Art Gallery, so we went by U-Bahn to Hauptbahnhof. For over two hours we wandered at will through the spacious halls, examining not only the hundreds of paintings, but many great statues and glass showcases containing ancient coins and relics of past ages. We could easily have spent the whole day there and still not have seen everything. However, we had to be back home at 12.30 for lunch, and before doing so, we went through the Rathaus to the courtyard beyond. One of the boys from the party that was with us, called Horst Breiden, took a photo for me of the roof of the Rathaus, and on the way home I was quite surprised to find that he could speak English fluently. This proved to be a great help during the afternoon when we were playing 'doodles' with a number of the boys, for they had never played it before and nearly every doodle had to be explained. That was where Timmy and Horst made themselves useful.

For tea we had some very tasty soup, a kind of mayonnaise with potatoes in it. Immediately afterwards we rushed off to get ready for the play, "Die Räuber". I am not surprised that Schiller is thought of as Shakespeare's 'partner', for the acting in general showed the same dramatic mood that we find in so many Shakespearean productions in England. An actor will spring on to a high wall or a wobbly table to deliver a dramatic speech, with one arm stuck out in the air, and retain the position long after he has finished speaking. However, I found the acting on the whole very good, and the play was really enjoyable. We were amazed to find that the people just went on and on clapping. They were still clapping when we left, and even then, some cleaners were impatiently waiting to sweep the corridor. We certainly needed our late passes, for we were not back at the hostel until after eleven. Gill and I had to write our diaries on the landing.

Saturday 10th April

After breakfast, we set off with our passports to Hauptbahnhof to exchange our travellers' cheques. On the way we stopped to buy sausages. We found the Currency Exchange office at the station and we each changed one of our cheques. Some of us changed our International Stamp Coupons and then we split up into groups for the rest of the morning. We explored the Karstadt first, then walked to Rathausmarkt, and after spending nearly an hour and half our money in the Alsterhaus, we caught the train back to Landungsbrücken, just in time for dinner.

During the meal, two new people came to sit at our table and to our amazement, we heard them speaking English. They turned out to be Australians, making a tour of the whole of Europe, and they were equally surprised and pleased to find that we were English.

We spent the afternoon writing letters and being decidedly lazy, but immediately after tea we took the train to Berliner Tor and walked to the cinema. A rather overwhelmed gentleman made us welcome. Perhaps he was not used to a large number of people arriving at once, unexpectedly. But he was very kind and helped us to choose our sweets to eat during the film, which was called "Ludwig II". Four of us had armchairs in a recess at the very back of the cinema, so we were very comfortable. I enjoyed the first part of the film immensely, but Ludwig's character seemed to change horribly in the second half, which rather spoils it, for me at least. I am afraid I like films to have a happy ending!

When we got back to the hostel, Gill, Edith, Norma and I had showers, but at first we could not find out how to work the little geysers and had a most uncomfortable cold shower first. We went straight to bed afterwards.

Easter Day, Sunday 11th April

Everybody who was going to eight o'clock Holy Communion got up at half past six. On our arrival at the church we discovered that the service was to be sung Eucharist, so we did not think we should be back in time for breakfast. It was a really lovely service and it seemed so strange to hear people all round us speaking and singing English. The service finished at five to nine so we had only five minutes before the hostel shut. We simply raced back, and one of the kitchen staff very kindly made up some trays of food for us. It was a shame that we had to hurry so, because for an Easter treat we had been given boiled eggs. As it was, however, they had to be all but swallowed whole, for we were afraid that we should be made to scrub the floors if we were not out by nine.

We had plenty of time, once outside, to calm ourselves down. We went for a walk down by the harbour and afterwards sat on a seat in front of Bismarck and ate our Easter eggs. We went back to the church for the service at half past ten and afterwards walked about for an hour and then returned to the hostel for dinner.

The afternoon, I think, was one of the most enjoyable I spent. Mr Loah made his first appearance on this outing, and we found him to be a most interesting and helpful person, always ready to answer our questions and explain anything unusual. We set off for the first time by tram and went to Altona. From there we went by train to Blankenese. The little village in itself was delightful, but our delight turned to fascination as we left the main street and followed a narrow, winding path all among the houses, which led down to the river. As we passed one house, we noticed that the lawn was strewn with brightly coloured Easter eggs which the Easter Bunnies were supposed to roll down the slope. We went on down to the jetty, from which the ferry boats left for Cranz, and then made our way to the very top of the hill, and from the grounds of a hotel we had a really extensive view. Coming down the hill we realized that there were no numbers on the houses, but the names of the occupants instead.

On our way down, we stopped for tea and cakes at a café, after which we reluctantly left for home. During our evening meal, twenty-two footballers arrived and it was far from peaceful until they had gone. Some of us bought youth hostel badges. We were quiet during the process of going to bed (for a change) as Mary had not been at all well since the afternoon.

Monday 12th April

I finished writing my letter in bed, but could not post it because the stamp machine was empty. For breakfast we had rolls and brown bread, as usual, but we had cocoa to drink. At 9 a.m. we set out to explore what we called the “Stülckenwerft Island”. We had to go down hundreds of steps to get to the tunnel, and this made me feel most peculiar. Those very deep tube stations always have the same effect on me. However, in spite of that, I wouldn’t have missed seeing the tunnel for anything. At intervals, all the way along it, were carvings of fish and crabs on the walls. There was a narrow ‘road’ for cars to pass along, and a pavement on either side. There were drains too, by the kerb in case of leakage, so it was for all the world like a normal street.

On the island, I noticed that the atmosphere seemed very different from that which we had left behind us. It seemed so quiet, and we saw only about two people (until we reached the harbour and the great warehouses), yet all around there were factories and other buildings. The latter were mainly derelict ones, with parts of them simply crumbling away. There were also disused railway tracks running parallel with the road we took. I was rather glad to leave this deserted road behind and take a look at the many great ships in dock. Miss Magnus tried to get us permission to go over one, but as it was unfortunately a busy time, we had to be content with looking at them all from a distance.

It began to rain as we made our way back, so Barbara, Joyce and I began to run. This appeared to amuse a man who was walking along the road, for as he passed us, he grinned expansively and called out something in German which was quite past our powers of translation. Consequently, he got three replies: “Oh ja, ja, definitely!” “Nein, danke” and “Ich weiss nicht”. He must have thought we were mad . . .