

**ROSSETT SCHOOL  
MUSIC TOUR  
BELGIUM 2008  
4 - 7 JULY**

Our trip began at 11.30 pm on the evening of 3 July when 61 students and 7 accompanying members of staff gathered in the dark at Rossett School to meet our coach with trailer. There was the usual bustle at the start of the trip with bags to be packed in the trailer and all the instruments in the coach in readiness for our first concert in Belgium the following day. We departed just after midnight, with everyone waving us off as we settled down to travel overnight to Dover. This is always where the children seem to wake up and the adults are already exhausted with all the preparations! No-one really settled down until after 2 am when we picked up our tour driver Peter at Grantham. Making good time, we arrived early at Dover and were able to get an earlier ferry, which meant we were all eating breakfast by 7 am.

DUNKIRK – as we had made such good time, we had a stop over in Dunkirk and many of the group went paddling in the sea, whilst others sunbathed, collected shells, drank coffee and some thought what it must have been like at that beach in the Second World War. This extra visit provided a quiet interlude for everyone to re-group after the journey and enjoy the sunshine.

OSTEND – our first destination on the itinerary and our first concert, the venue changed from the bandstand in the centre of Ostend to the pier by the sea. This was a terrific venue – a backcloth of bright blue sea, gorgeous sunshine and lots of people about who came along to listen to our ensembles, Samba, Saxophonix, Stage Plus and Rossett Jazz. The groups were all introduced by our intrepid linguist Kevin Kehoe! Filled with the success of the performances here, our weary travellers headed for the coach to pack up and set off for the hotel. This was where the fun started!! Our coach was in a tight spot on a one way system still with the trailer on the back. A spot of reversing and a distracted Mrs B meant a reverse into an Italian car [not a happy bunny] and we were totally stuck with a tight bend to get round. The lads were off the coach to take off the trailer and help Peter in any way they could. This was a time when real team work was essential. The rest of us stayed on the coach looking anxiously out of the window and taking photographs. The police were summoned – he came on his bicycle and eventually, after much skilled driving, we were out! Cheers all round!



OUR HOTEL – the Hotel Oude Abdij in Lo- Reninge. A fantastic base for our trip situated in a quiet small town up a tree-lined and narrow path, the final hurdle for our lovely driver Peter. There was plenty of room at the hotel for the party to really settle in. Outside there was a small lake and outdoor seating areas. Inside, comfortable rooms for us all. It was a relief to be able to unload everything and to get everyone settled into their rooms and to enjoy a 3 course meal which most of us were more than ready for! Everyone was really tired by this time and ready for an early night.



THEME PARK DAY – a day off today from concerts for the children, to visit the theme park at Bellewaerde. Once into the park, the staff set up base camp at the balloons and close to many fast food outlets and manned this on a rota basis, letting the children loose in groups to explore the delights of the park – water rapids, trains, lions and tigers, elephants, giraffes, the Voodoo river and the tea cups were some of the adult

highlights. The children preferred the more exciting rides [and did persuade Mrs W on to the Boomerang]!, bought straw hats, had temporary tattoos, ate all kinds of junk food and generally had a great day. By 4.30 everyone had had enough and it was back to the coach and back to the hotel to fuel up for the Entertainment evening.

ENTERTAINMENT NIGHT – this has become a tradition of Mrs W's tours and is always really popular and fun for everyone. All the staff and children joined in with an enormous variety of sketches and performances – a real do it yourself entertainment time. Panto, magic, song, dance, instrumental all were featured. A late and noisy night was had by all! Also a great spirit amongst the whole group and great support demonstrated for each other.

BRUGES – the next day saw the group heading for Bruges for a spot of sight-seeing. A brisk walk from the coach park through the streets of Bruges took us to our first stop the Chocostory. Unfortunately this was not a highlight of the morning and many of the children were quickly through and out again! There was an opportunity for shopping in Bruges itself a beautiful city in the middle of preparing to welcome a sponsored run of some kind! Some shopping was done here, mainly for chocolates, before an even quicker walk back to the coach to make our afternoon venue.

YPRES – our second concert of the tour took place here in the afternoon in the market square and once again lots of people there to enjoy our performances followed by shopping and some good chocolate deals taken advantage of on the back of the history trip visit a couple of days before. The group had an evening meal here in a restaurant – chicken and



chips – which set everyone up well for the serious part of the tour, our performance at the evening ceremony at the Meningate. The children had been well prepared for this part of the tour and the importance and seriousness of the ceremony. We were the music that night – it rained as we assembled and everyone was squashed into the shelter of the impressive gate covered in the names of lives lost in war, many of whom would have been the same age as our Sixth Form students. James Tait played and sang a solo, the Sixth Form girls From a Distance, Saxophonix Amazing Grace and a final closing hymn from the Rossett School

choir. Natalie and Tom, Ken and Bernie laid a wreath at the gate. The solemnity of the occasion was not lost on any of us. It was a real privilege to be a part of such a ceremony. The group left for the hotel somewhat elated by the momentousness of the occasion. Later on there was the chance to spend some time with our Sixth Form group in the evening and to enjoy their company.

HOME – what a day we had! After breakfast at the hotel we had the presentation of awards to all the children before photograph time. The end of an era as for many of our Upper Sixth students this was their last Rossett event. We arrived at Calais for our midday ferry not quite realising what a traumatic time we were all going to have on our ferry crossing. It soon became apparent that the sea was rather choppy and many soon started to feel unwell. It was time to shepherd everyone out on deck into the really fresh air and to keep everyone's minds off being ill! The red hoodies all wore for the trip were essential here to keep warm and there was a lot of huddling going on! Strangely enough, this unpleasant experience for us all brought the entire group together in adversity. When we finally landed at Dover it was with great relief and a sense of an experience well and truly shared! Dry land at last! First stop the services at Maidstone to use the facilities and grab a snack.

PETER – we said goodbye to our coach driver Peter at Ferrybridge. Peter entered into the spirit of the trip from the start. He was something of a hero for us all after he got us out of

Ostend in one piece and he joined in all our activities with enthusiasm. He made a real difference to the trip for us all and it was a pleasure to have him as one of the gang! Everyone was genuinely sorry to see him go on his way. What a kind man.

BACK AT HOME – back at Rossett it was time for some emotional farewells, lots of hugs as everyone set off for home. For our Upper Sixth students, this was their last period of time with us. They have, over the years, provided a marvellous service to Rossett School. What a great bunch of young people who will all be missed. They move on to new and exciting adventures but we hope that they will remember the time they spent at Rossett and in particular this marvellous trip to Belgium.



Charlotte South