

# THE CROFT CHRONICLE

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Dear

My apologies for the lateness of my letter to you. I wish you and yours a Happy New Year and trust your Christmas was joyful. For a long time I had been pondering if I could manage another overseas trip. This would be my last so I planned to spend four months away ... two months in Europe and two months in England, Ireland and Scotland. My youngest daughter Jeanette said she will come with me.

We flew to London via Singapore on the 29 April on a Qantas A380 which holds 500 passengers. Planes are certainly getting bigger and faster.

We were met at Heathrow airport by a good friend Eric Shirley. He was a competitor in the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne. He offered us accommodation at his home in Pinner which was wonderful. It was close to transport with easy access into Central London where we visited all the tourist places and even attended a session at the House of Lords at Parliament.

We toured Southern England for ten days. We stayed with friends Maurice and Veera Harper near Southampton for a couple of days. Maurice worked for the British Embassy in many countries. We first met in 1985 in Bombay/India. It was also great to see two of Joan's cousins Marion Faull in Worthing and David Garrity and his wife Pauline in Bath. We enjoyed going over the family tree.

Travelling through the Cotswolds was truly delightful. To Castle Coombe and Burton on the Water. Near Oxford, in St Martin's churchyard at Bladon is the final resting place of Britain's war time Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill. On our way back to Pinner we visited the graves of actors John Mills, Trevor Howard, Deborah Kerr and Benny Hill.

My youngest son Robert (54) and his son James (21) arrived at Gatwick on 23<sup>rd</sup> May. They live in Baltimore USA. We then all drove to Luton where we hired a 7.5metre long 4 berth fully equipped motor home. This was ideal for four of us to travel around in and eat and sleep in. It cost 5000 pounds for 67 days which works out at 75 pounds per day. Robert was the driver, James the navigator and Jeanette did the housework, bought supplies, cooked and looked after us. We couldn't have done it without her.

As we sailed out on the ferry to Calais (France) the view back to the White Cliffs of Dover was spectacular. In France my first objective was to visit the grave of my father's brother, Uncle Bill (William Croft). He was killed in the First World War on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1916. His grave is in the Bernafry Wood cemetery near Albert. I would be the only Croft relative to have visited this grave.

The plan in Europe was to travel as far as Poland through France, Switzerland, Austria, Germany Slovakia and back through the Czech Republic, Northern Germany, Holland and Belgium. My desires were:

- To visit friends I hadn't seen for many years
- To see the highlights of various countries
- To visit some cemeteries where celebrities were buried
- To visit the Oscar Schindler Factory in Krakow (Poland)

After three days in Paris we headed south to Fontainebleau to see the palace of Napoleon Bonaparte. Then to Nevers where the body of Saint Bernadette of Lourdes is embalmed in a glass casket in the Convent of St Gillard Church. Near Vichy at Bellerive Sur Allier we enjoyed a stay with another of Joan's cousins Marlene and husband Tom Robson. Marlene's father Arthur Twiss and Joan's father Robert Twiss were first cousins.

Apart from WWI cemeteries in Belgium near Ypres those in Northern France near Villers Bretonneux and then a WWII American cemetery at Omaha on the Normandy Coast, we visited a few others – like The Pere Lachaise in Paris where many famous people were buried such as Maria Callas (opera singer), Sarah Bernhardt (actress), Edith Piaf (singer), Jim Morrison (rock star), Oscar Wilde (writer) Frederick Chopin (Polish composer). In Switzerland around Lake Geneva are the graves of movie stars Richard Burton, Audrey Hepburn, David Niven and Charlie Chaplin. In Berlin Marlene Dietrich is buried in the Schoneberg cemetery. She was born in Berlin and died in Paris on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1992 aged 90 years. At one stage she was the highest paid actress in Hollywood. In Vienna Central Cemetery in Composers Corner are buried Johan Strauss jnr, Brahms, Beethoven and Schubert. Mozart is buried in St Mark's cemetery grave 179.

The Alps in Switzerland are breathtaking with lovely villages like Grindelwald and Lauter Brunnen. Lucerne is a city not to be missed with its amazing old wooden covered Chapel Bridge and the rock carving of a dying lion. Around Lake Constance (Bodensee) are places well worth seeing – Stein-am-Rhein, gardens at Mainau and the island town of Lindau. This lake borders on three countries – Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

In Switzerland it was great to see friends:

- Emil and Berty Braun in Wolfhausen near Rapperswil. We met in 1985 in Lauterbrunnen and have corresponded ever since
- Vroni and Andreas Riggenbach in Oberwangen (near Bern). They have a landscape business and live in an amazing swiss chalet farm house.
- Susanne Jappie in Winterthur. Her husband Hozie stayed with us in Melbourne. Their daughter Miriam and husband Omar had a wonderful get together for us.

In Austria we had a happy reunion with Tina and Rudy Trober at their home at Lechaschau on the Austrian/German border. Tina and Jeanette worked on the same passenger ship in the 1980's. She spent time with us in Melbourne in the 1980's.

When I was in my twenties while hitch-hiking in Europe I met a German family Wilhelm and Rosemarie Deeg and their three daughters Uta, Irmela and Ulrike. I stayed in their home in Munich and now, many years later, it was wonderful to see the girls again – all married and still living in Munich.

In Hamburg we had three days with Frederick and Imtraut Rietdorf at their home in the beautiful suburb of Blankenese. We met in 1985 at Hans Christian Anderson's house in Odense (Denmark). They also have been to Melbourne.

Bavaria is a lovely part of Germany. At Fussen is castle Neuschwanstein built in 1869 by King Ludwig II and near Berchtesgaden is the Eagle's Nest (Hitler's nest) which was given to Hitler by Bormann as a birthday gift. It is situated on a mountain top 1834 meters high. Access is only possible by bus from Obersalzberg – up a 7 kilometre long 4 meter wide winding road to the Eagle's Nest. From here you walk in a 124 meter long tunnel to an elaborate brass panelled mirrored elevator which was originally intended to transport Hitler comfortably 124 meters up to his house. The panoramic view from the top extends up to 200 kilometres. Hitler must have thought he was God up there!

Salzburg and The Lakes at Mondsee and Hallstatt are outstanding. We followed the Danube from Linz via Melk and Dürnstein to Vienna. Bratislava (capital of Slovakia) is only one hour from Vienna. After visiting various villages we entered Poland. Our first stop was to see the fantastic salt mines at Wieliczka then in the historic city of Krakow we toured through the Schindler Factory.

The notorious Auschwitz Concentration Camp was a place where so much horror and death occurred under the Nazi occupation as did other camps throughout Europe. We visited others at Dachau, Mauthausen and Buchenwald.

Prague is a beautiful city with its old Quarter and Charles St Bridge. An interesting museum in the vaults of the Orthodox cathedral of Cyril and Methodius where in 1941 a number of Czech resistance fighters hid from the Gestapo. They were trained in London and parachuted in with a plan to assassinate the Nazi commandant – SS Reinhardt Heydrich. This was successful in 1942 but an informer notified the Gestapo of the hiding place and all were killed in a battle. The museum is a lasting memory to those brave men.

We were now at the half way mark of our trip. We headed to England via Dresden, Leipzig, Berlin, Hamburg and Hanover to Holland and Belgium. At Ypres (Belgium) we attend the last post ceremony at the Menin Gate. Then on to the Normandy coast before taking the ferry from Cherbourg to Portsmouth.

At the end of July Jeanette flew back to Australia. Robert and James returned to America. My son-in-law Ross and Suzanne and their daughter Kahala had also been touring Europe. Ross and Kahala returned to Australia and my daughter Suzanne and I hired a car to tour Ireland and Scotland. On our way to Fishguard to catch the ferry to Ireland we spent time with friends Wynne and Lyn Gibson in Newport. In Ireland we mainly went around the coast from Waterford to Cork, Blarney, Tralee, Cliffs of Moher to Galway. The movie "The Quiet Man" with John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara was filmed in Cong. The museum about the movie is worth visiting.

In Knock is the Knock Shrine. It is a religious place similar to Lourdes in France and Fatima in Portugal where the Virgin Mary was reported to have appeared. The apparition in Knock on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1879 lasted for two hours before thirteen parishioners at the Knock church. Approximately one and a half million people visit the Shrine annually.

My main intention in going to Ireland was to meet another cousin of Joan's Harry de Burgh in Mullingar and a friend Paddy Tobin in Dublin. Due to circumstances this did not happen. We did catch up with friends Frank and Peggy Gray in Bailieborough (county Cavan).

After Belfast and Giant Causeway we took the ferry from Larne to Stranraer in Scotland. The coast was very beautiful. We visited Robbie Burns house in Alloway and then saw friends Judith and Bill McColl in Prestwick. Judith stayed with us in Melbourne in 1999.

Glasgow was very congested so travelled on to Airdrie where we enjoyed a stay with friends Matt and Edel Cochrane who we met when viewing Frank Sinatra's grave in 2016. The Falkirk wheel at Falkirk is the only rotating boat lift of its kind in the world. Close by in the

Falkirk district is a sculpture of two horse heads 30 meters high "The Kelpies" – a monument to horse powered heritage across Scotland.

After Stirling and Bannockburn we arrived in a wet dismal Edinburgh. It was so cold and wet we decided to head south via Lockerbie to Liverpool. In December 1988 a terrorist bomb detonated on board Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie killing 259 people on board.

Suzanne has friends Brian and Lydia Rafferty in Widnes near Liverpool who kindly looked after us. We spent one day in Liverpool – the home of the Beatles, another in Chester. In Northhamptonshire we visited the house "Althorp" where Diana Princess of Wales is buried. Another fantastic tourist place is Blenheim Palace where Winston Churchill was born.

Finally back in Gosport (Hampshire). We stayed our final days in England with Suzanne's friend Adele Laidler and a lovely time also with Adele's sister Lorette and her husband Steve Barry. Also spent time with many other friends of Suzanne and Ross, Ross was born in the area and he and Suzanne were married in Portchester Castle in Hampshire in 1985. A few of their friends who were entertaining us included Glenn and Amanda Williams, Pete and Coral Faulkner, Paul and Julie Hesseltine and Kim Ralphs.

Our flight home left Gatwick airport on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August via Hong Kong. We arrived in Melbourne on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> August.

After four months away it was wonderful to sleep in our own beds again.

Many many thanks to all who made us welcome and we do hope we will meet again downunder when we will extend some real Aussie hospitality to you.

Remember my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in January 2021 – you are invited.

Love, best wishes and God bless

*John Croft*  
John Croft and family





JOHN & SUZANNE WITH CHRISTINE BANKS,  
THE MAYOR OF LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND



JOHN WITH MARION FAULL - JOANS COUSIN IN WORTHING, ENGLAND



JOHN & SUZANNE AT BLARNEY CASTLE, IRELAND



DAVID GARRITY, JOANS COUSIN & WIFE PAULINE, BATH ENGLAND



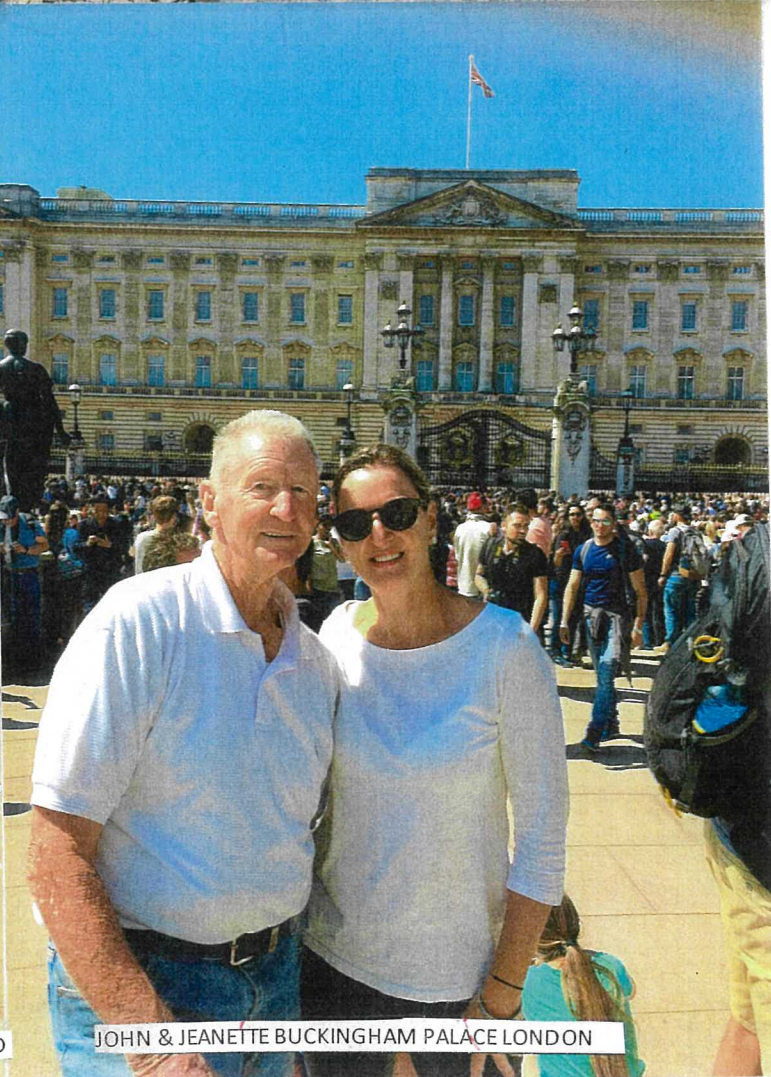
SUZANNE IN MAUREEN O'HARA'S DRESS, QUIET MAN MUSEUM, CONG IRELAND



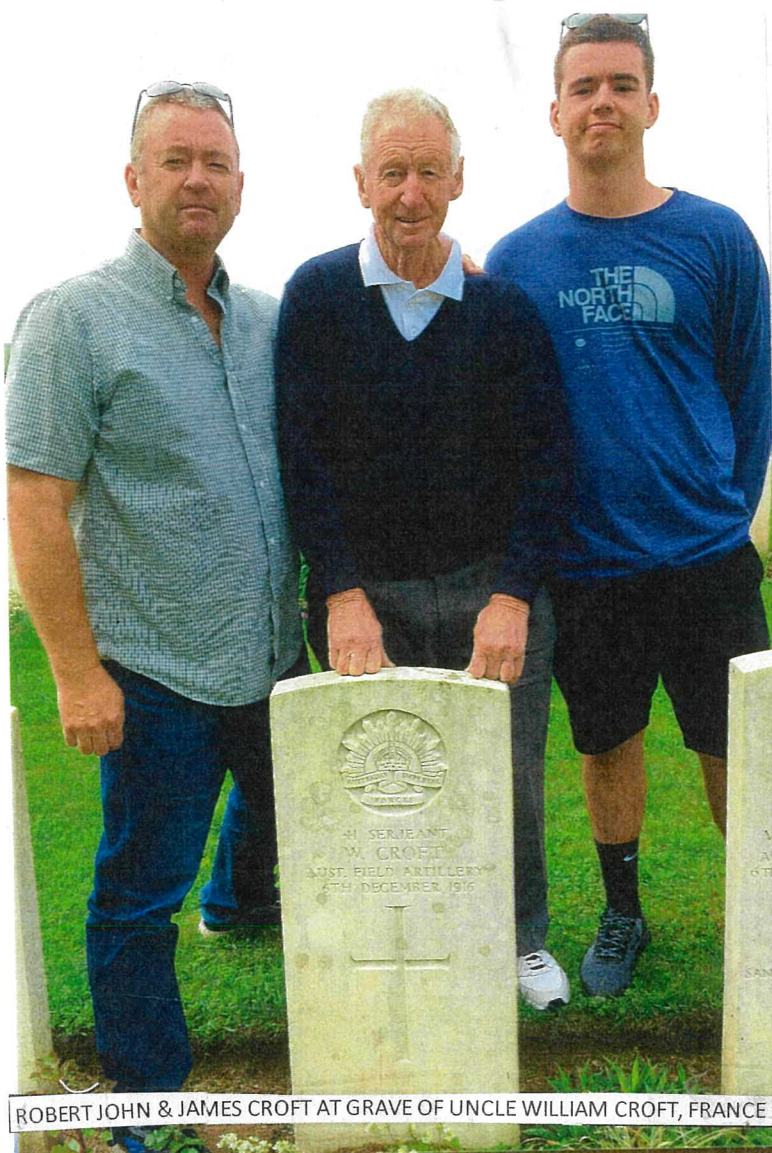
STATUE OF JOHN WAYNE CARRYING MAUREEN O'HARA WITH JOHN CROFT HOLDING HER HAND, CONG IRELAND



SUZANNE WITH DAVID MITCHELL THE TOWN CRIER IN CHESTER ENGLAND



JOHN & JEANETTE BUCKINGHAM PALACE LONDON



ROBERT JOHN & JAMES CROFT AT GRAVE OF UNCLE WILLIAM CROFT, FRANCE



GRAVE OF AUDREY HEPBURN NEAR LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND



GRAVE OF WINSTON CHURCHILL, BLADEN ENGLAND



GRAVE OF MARLENE DIETRICH BERLIN GERMANY



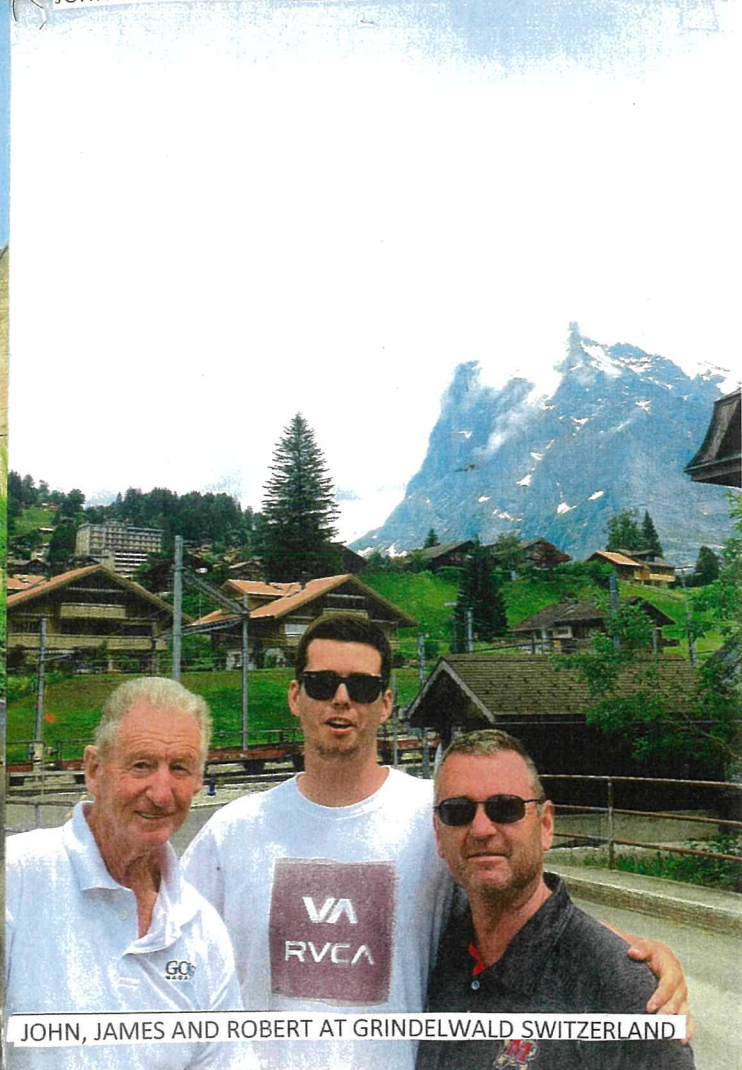
FALKIRK LIFT WHEEL FALKIRK SCOTLAND



JOHN WITH BILL & JUDITH McCOLM. PRESTWICK SCOTLAND



THE CROFT ICE CREAM PARLOUR, BURTON-ON-THE-WATER ENGLAND

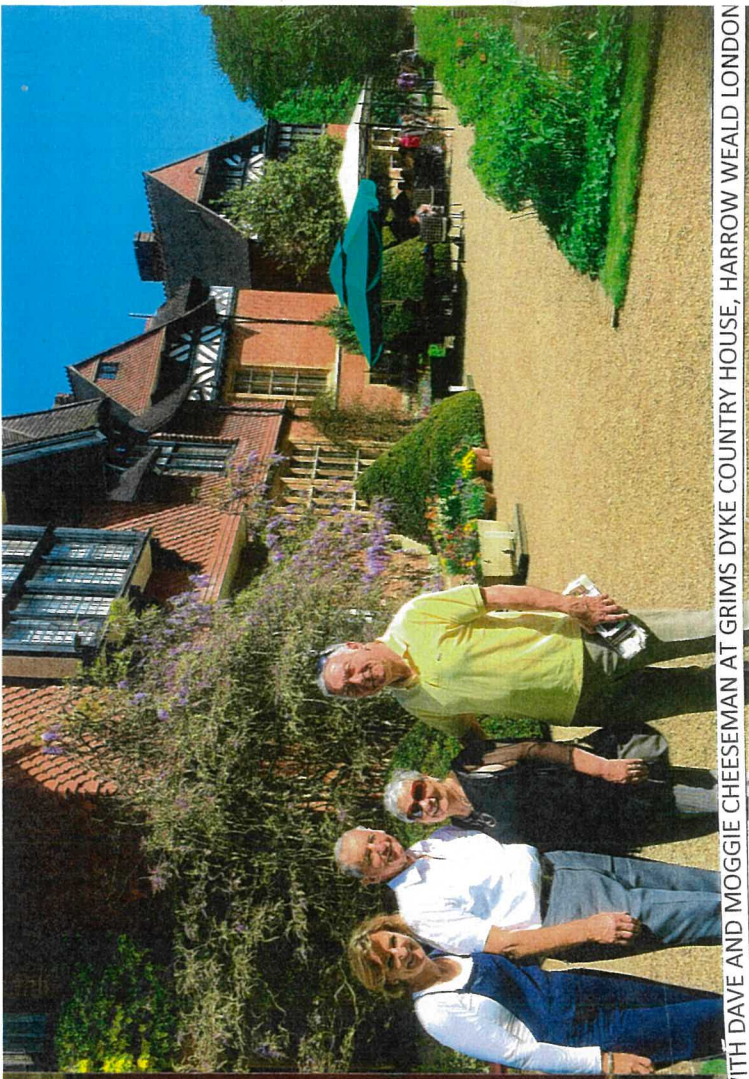


JOHN, JAMES AND ROBERT AT GRINDELWALD SWITZERLAND





WITH MAURICE AND VEERA HARPER, HYTHE ENGLAND



WITH DAVE AND MOGGIE CHEESEMAN AT GRIMS DYKE COUNTRY HOUSE, HARROW WEALD LONDON



JOHN & JEANETTE WITH BLANCHE AND ERIC SHIRLEY, PINNER LONDON



JOHN & SUZANNE WITH MATT & EDEL COCHRANE, AIRDRIE SCOTLAND



LUNCH WITH MIRIAM AND OMAR AND FAMILY



ANDREAS, VRONI AND STEPHANO RIGGENBACH AT OBERWANGAN NEAR BERN SWITZERLAND



WITH SUSANNE JAPPIE IN WINTERTHUR



EMIL AND BERTY BRAUN IIN WOLFHUSEN

FRIENDS IN SWITZERLAND

Google Just go motorhomes  
Motorhome hire, Sales & Service

Just



BY OUR CAMPER VAN, UTA & PETER HOFFMANN, MUNICH



IRMELA & KARLI SCHMIDT-DEGG, MUNICH

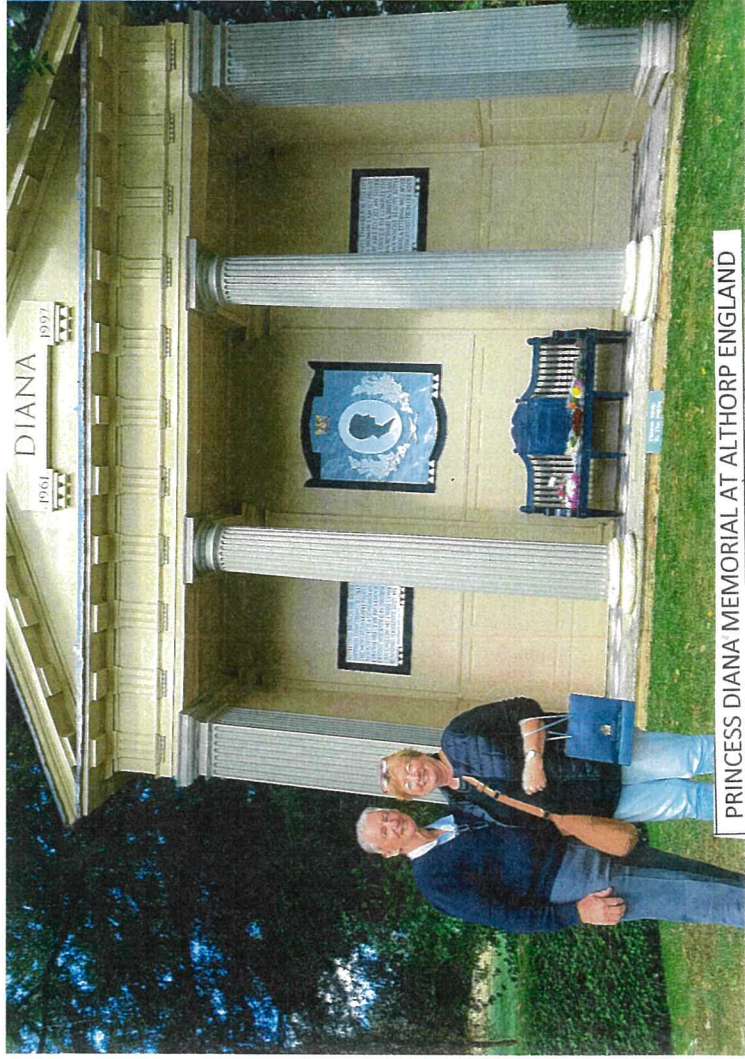
## FRIENDS IN GERMANY



WITH FREDERICH, IRMTRAUT REITDORF & THEIR DAUGHTER ELKE AND GRANDDAUGHTER IN HAMBURG



WITH ULRIKE COSSEK AT HOFBRAUHAUS MUNICH



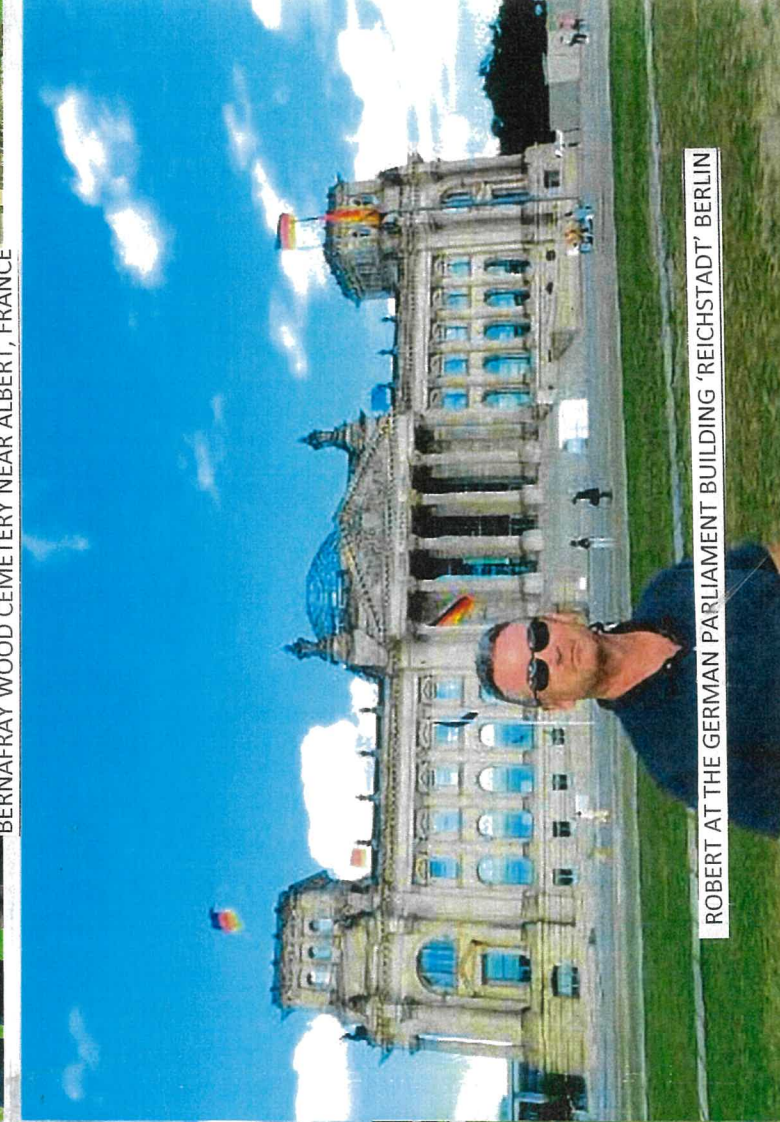
PRINCESS DIANA MEMORIAL AT ALTHORP ENGLAND



BERNAFRAY WOOD CEMETERY NEAR ALBERT, FRANCE



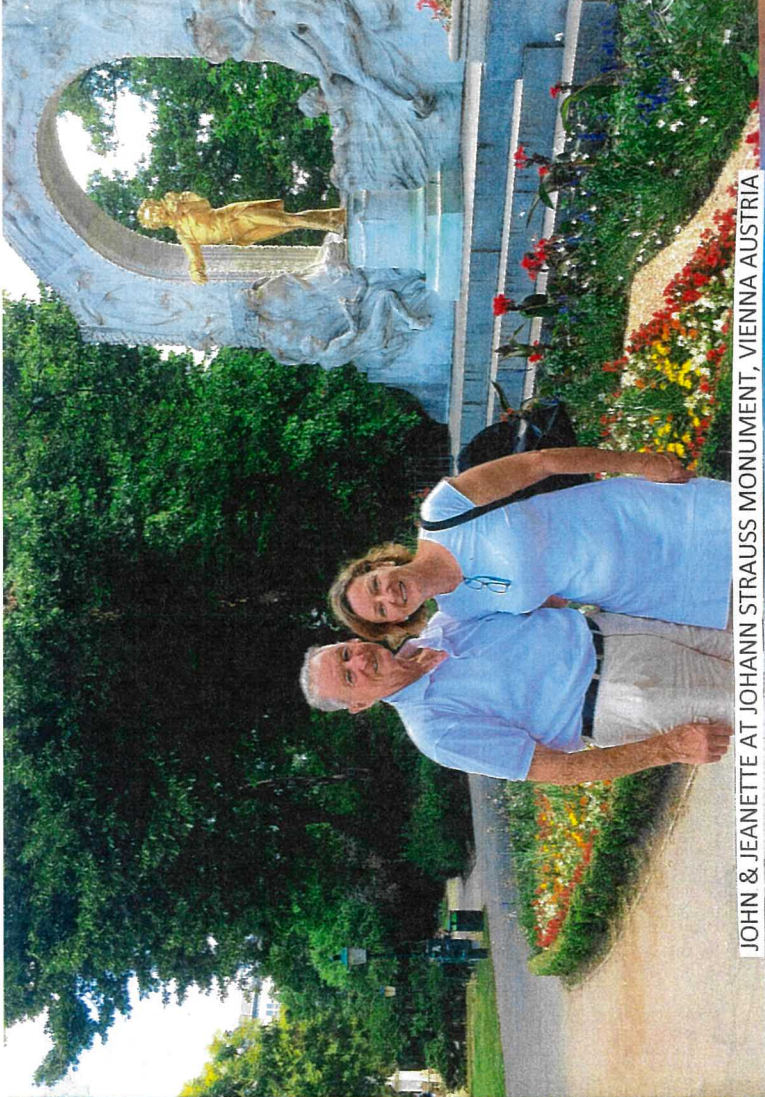
JOHN & SUZANNE AT THE KELPIES, FALKIRK SCOTLAND



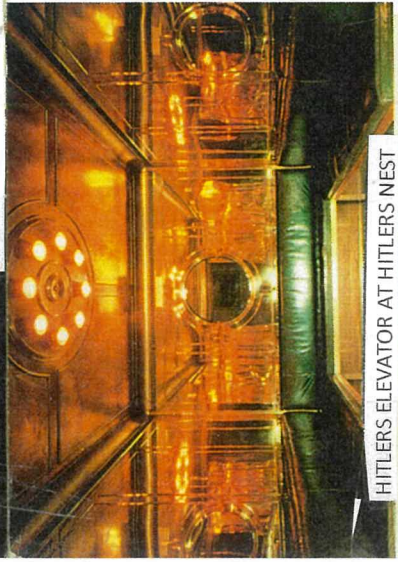
ROBERT AT THE GERMAN PARLIAMENT BUILDING 'REICHSTADT' BERLIN



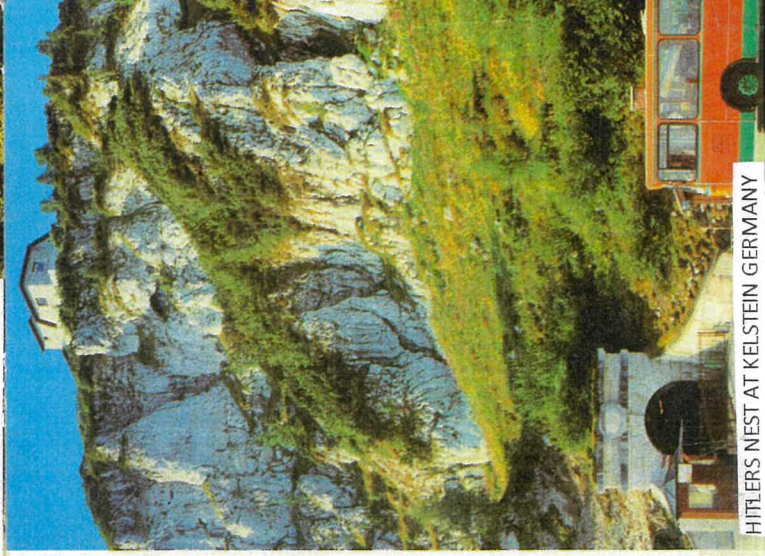
CASTLE NEUSCHWANSTEIN, NEAR FUSSEN GERMANY



JOHN & JEANETTE AT JOHANN STRAUSS MONUMENT, VIENNA AUSTRIA



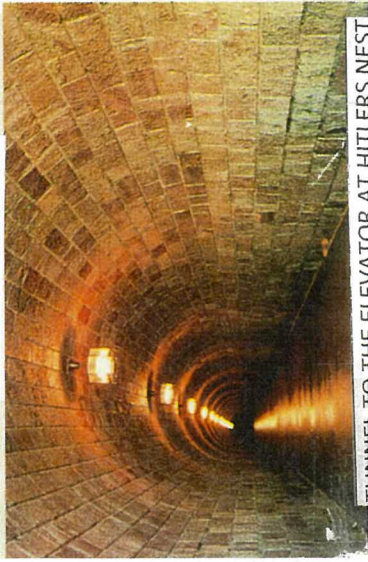
HITLERS ELEVATOR AT HITLERS NEST



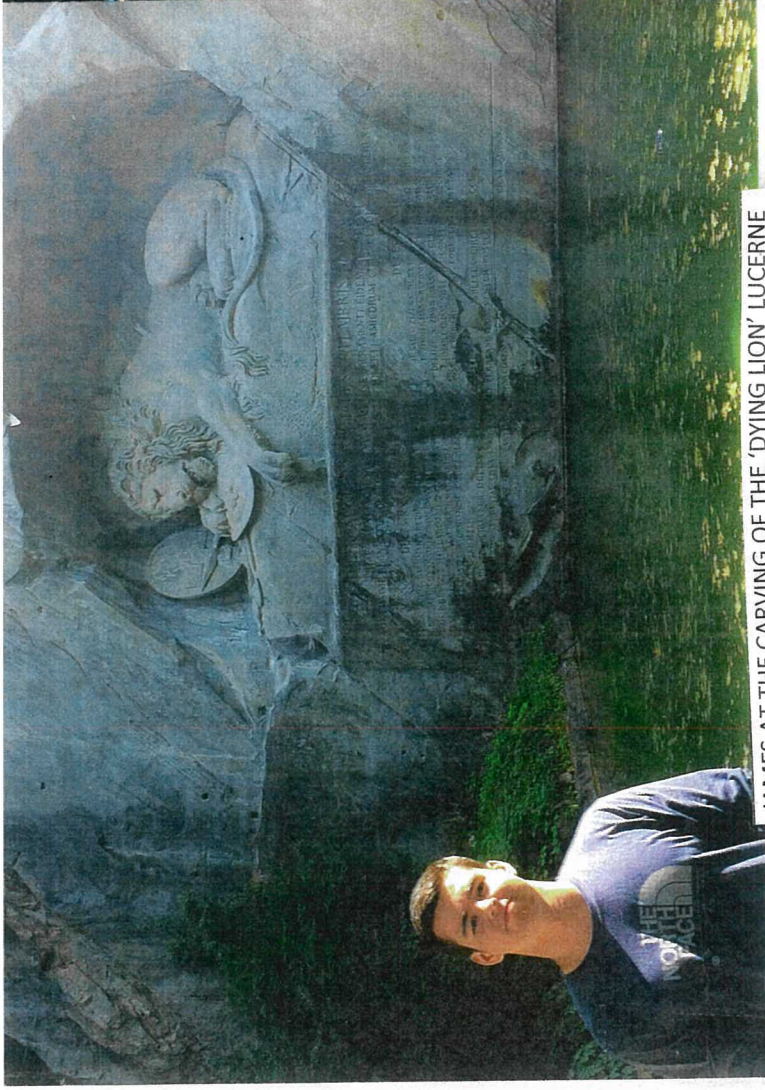
HITLERS NEST AT KELSTEIN GERMANY



VIEW OVER THE ALPS FROM HITLERS NEST, GERMANY



TRAVEL TO THE ELEVATOR AT HITLERS NEST



JAMES AT THE CARVING OF THE 'DYING LION' LUCERNE



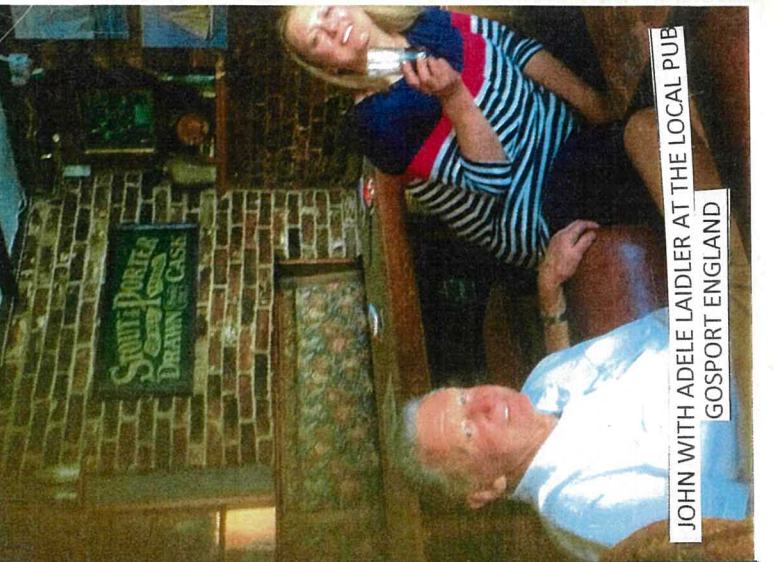
THE WOODEN COVERED CHAPEL BRIDGE LUCERNE SWITZERLAND



OLD ENGLISH HOUSES BIBURY, ENGLAND



SUZANNE WITH BRIAN & LIDIA RAFFERTY, WIDNES ENGLAND



JOHN WITH ADELE LAIDLER AT THE LOCAL PUB  
GOSPORT ENGLAND