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# 3000 Mile European Walk

France, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France

Mayor of Rushmoor, Councillor Grace Bennett, met up with John Taylor and Allan Curtis, to wish them well and give them a letter to deliver to the Mayor of Farnborough's twin town in Paris, Meudon.

Councillor Bennett, hosted a small business gathering for the two adventurers, where a 3000 mile route plan was unveiled, showing where the walkers trek would take them.

The walk, in aid of the mentally handicapped children in Hampshire, trying to raise 28,000.00 pounds to build a hydrotherapy pool and physiotherapy room, was the walkers goal.

After the pleasantries had concluded, the boys jumped on a train to Dover, ferry to Calais, where there 9 month walking adventure of a lifetime was about to begin.

Christmas Day 1978, with snow on the French roads, armed with maps, tent, back packs, full of adrenalin and youthful inexperience, the walk commenced.

Songs from Godspell and Jesus Chris Superstar could be heard in the Gallic countryside, where cows and sheep struggled to understand the two strange fellows dulcet tones.



Five days on the road, the wonderful city of Paris finally arrived. Snow in beautiful Paris was a sight worth savoring, although the extreme cold made for hard work on the boys feet and bodies.

December 30th, having walked 336 km's, the Mayor of Meudon, Paris, greeted both Allan and John, where letters from the Mayor and people of Farnborough, Hampshire, were hand delivered.

The people of Meudon had set up a dinner party, raising 2000 pounds for the boys worthy cause.

Both walkers, from very working class back grounds, could not believe the kindness and generosity shown them, making them truly feel that the walk was more than worth doing.

New Years Eve, 1978, the boys pitched their tent, at the Paris Seine Camp Site.

It was freezing cold, but the camp site was busy. 11pm that night, Allan and John started singing traditional New Year songs. All of a sudden, a voice outside the tent said " sounds like a couple of ' Pommie Bastards ' , " to which the boys exiting their icy accommodation saw 2 male and 2 female Australian tourists. The Aussies said " you can't stay in a tent on New Years Eve, come and join us in our camper. " New Years Eve brought lots of fun and bonding, where the Aussies advised they were touring Europe to try and get away from the stress of not being able to have children and naturally to explore the great history that Europe had to offer.

With addresses exchanged, on arrival back into their UK address, great news from Perth, Australia. Diane, from New Years Eve in Paris, was pregnant ( always wondered where Allan disappeared to ? ).

BBC Radio in Luxembourg invited Allan and John onto their Chat Show, so the next leg of 340 km's enabled the boys to brush up on their interviewing technique.

The Radio interview went out live throughout Europe, with many people en route advising they had heard the interview and wanted to help.

The British army invited the walk to detour to North Germany, where many of the British Forces were based, the offer of accommodation and Security passes, with a letter from the Chief of Staff Germany would enable door to door fund raising with British military families.

The invitation to Germany was taken up, however, a walk of 640 km's needed to be achieved before any fund raising could be done.

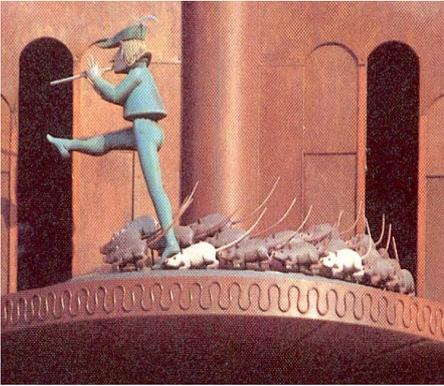
Bremen, would see warm food, accommodation and required medical repair assistance.

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## Germany — Fund Raising Door to Door Raised Thousands

Bremen to Hamburg to Hannover to Herford to Bielefeld to Dortmund, with more than 2300 km's covered going from army camp to army camp, the boys finally ended up in Hameln ( Hamlin ) where the legendary Pied Piper story originates.



Whilst 8,000.00 pounds, had been raised by the door to door knocking and army dinners en route, the boys themselves were running out of funds. To this end, Hameln's timing was perfect. At the Green Lantern pub in Hameln, minding their own business, the army and civilian population got into a fight, Allan and John both fluent in German and English, managed to stop the fracas. The landlady, Mutti, was so impressed that she asked them what they were doing in Hameln.

Nurnberg, Stuttgart, into Switzerland and Zurich, covering 900 km's of some of the world's best scenery. Camping at the Zurich Camp site, with 4 days rest, time to explore and assess the many presents given to the walkers during their travels.

2000 miles had been covered, the weather getting warmer, boys in good spirits, only 1000 miles more to walk, through and over some of Europe's highest mountains. Where's Julie Andrews when you need her.

[Zurich Sea Camp Site](#)



Explaining the walk was for charity and that money was tight, Mutti kindly offered Allan and John a job for six weeks, working in the pub, as cook, barmen and security. This would enable money to be saved, thereafter, the walk could continue.

Accommodation above the pub, 3 hot meals a day, clean clothing, albeit for six weeks was the perfect recharging of the batteries needed to generate a walking continuation.

With snow on the ground in Hameln, this meant after the working time frame was complete, smoother, kinder weather conditions to walk in.

May 1979, 5 months into the walk, on Rose Monday, celebrations were flowing, everyone having a good time. Allan had got into a drinking

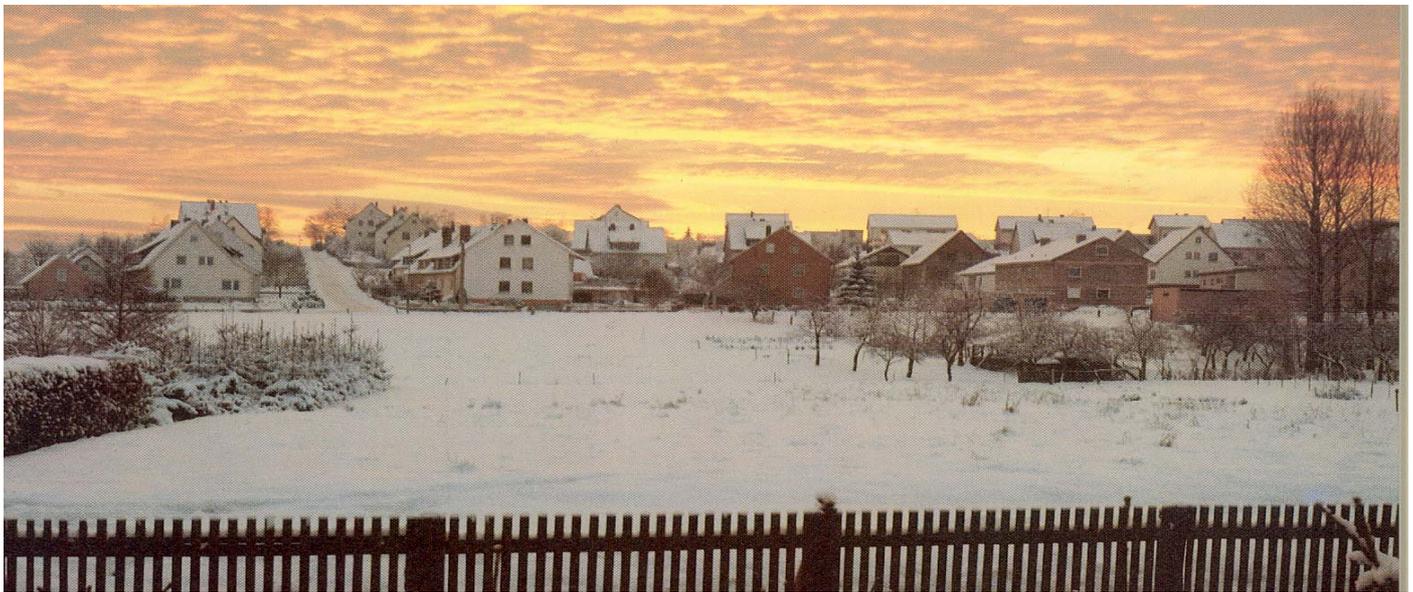
Competition with the German army boys, vast amounts of spirits and beer were consumed. John carried Allan up 10 flights of stairs, where Allan lay unconscious on the bed. John returned to work in the bar downstairs. 30 minutes later, Allan was in the bar again, wanting to resume the drinking dual. He was strongly advised against this, but continued drinking. One of the pub customers accidentally knocked Allan's arm, which in his drunken state he took offense to. The words coming out of his mouth were fighting words, which he directed towards this innocent customer and his friends. The German Karate Team were in town and guess what ! Allan had picked a fight with them, fortunately, the German army guys calmed down the karate team and got Allan out of the pub.

Mutti, very upset by this episode, advised John that next morning they would have to leave, as Allan had stirred up too much bad blood. Eight weeks had passed, money in the bank, it was time to get on the road again, heading 470 km's south to Nurnberg.

## Germany, Switzerland, Italy, South of France



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## Pepe Aus Tirol

Zurich to Venice is 560 km's through mountainous regions. Pepe, a Swiss newspaper and hotel owner, offered the boys a couple of nights at his hotel and the opportunity to share their 3000 mile walk story with the Swiss and Italian press.

Pepe's generosity one of the many kind stories Allan and John would talk about, for years after.

Entering Italy, was like visiting a whole new world, neither walker spoke the lingo. On arrival into Venice, Italy showed how expensive the Italian part of the adventure was going to be. Venice to Milan to Turin, saw 410 km's more covered in distance, only 560 km's to the END.

Right, John and Pepe



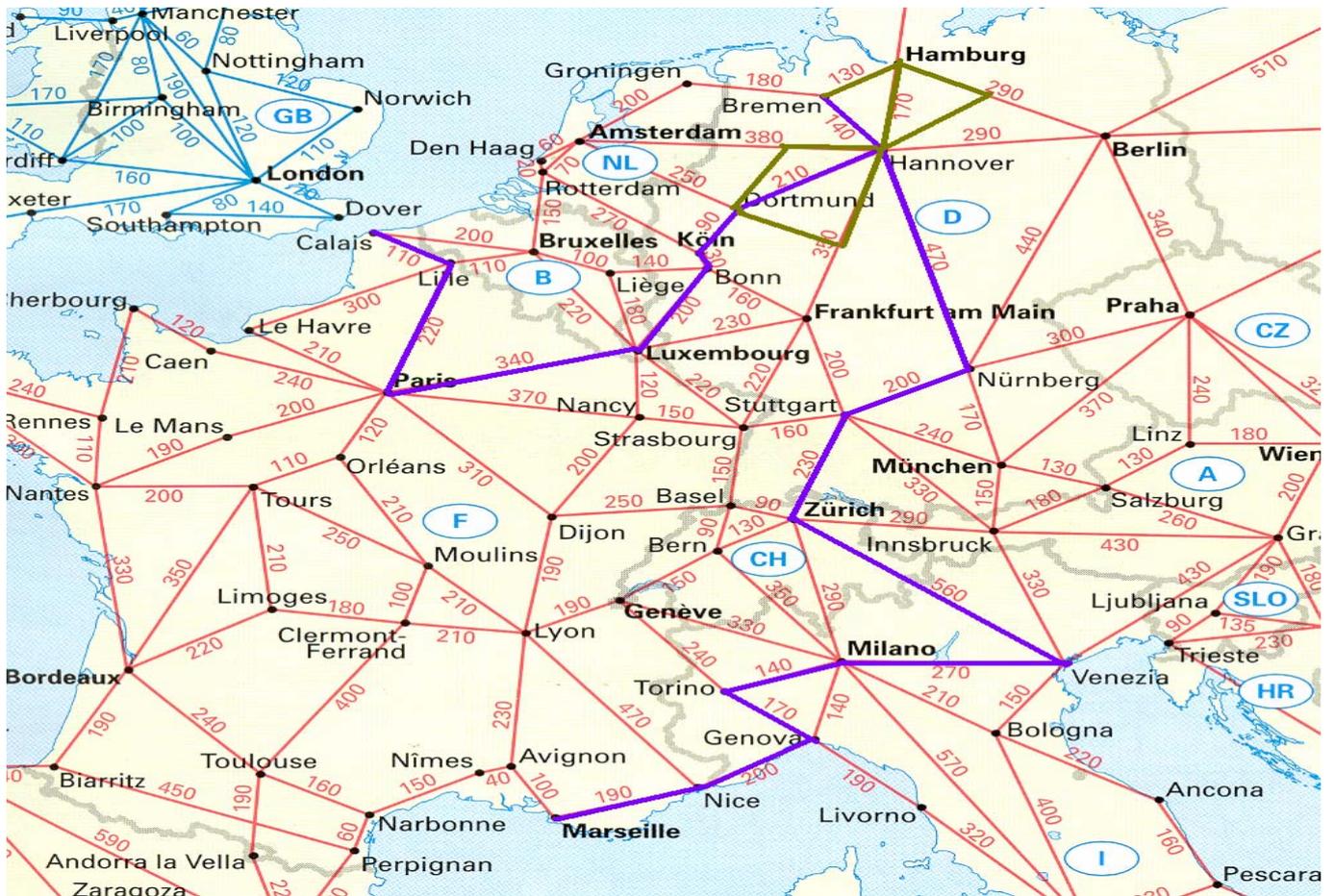
## Turin - Camp Site, Everything Stolen

At an official Torino Camp Site, the boys pitched their tent, had a shower and decided to explore Turin City. On returning to the camp site, Allan and John were horrified to discover that the tent and all possessions had been stolen. The police were called, no one speaking English, the boys unable to speak Italian, the British Embassy advised nothing could be done.

With only the clothes on their backs, passports and money as possessions, it was decided that the walk would be completed, hoping to find cheap accommodation en route to Marseille, 350 miles away. The temperature was warm, so purchasing two sleeping bags was a good investment, giving under the stars sleeping arrangements for the last 9 days walking.

From Turin to Genoa, out of Italy into South of France, signs westerly indicating Nice 200 km's, Marseille 390 km's.

Nine days after being robbed in Turin, the 4730 km, 3000 mile walk had finally been completed. Living on bread and crisps, the boys were tired, but elated about achieving their goal.



Walk Finished - Time To Go Home

3,000 miles of Hard Road – Map above

8 months after leaving the UK, having walked 3000 miles, a cheque for 16,329.00 pounds was handed over to the mentally handicapped children. Not happy with coming up short, the boys decided to walk 900 miles from the top of Scotland to the bottom of England, where they raised 18,000.00 pounds, giving 34,329.00 pounds towards a new 30,000.00 pound hydrotherapy pool and Physiotherapy room. JOB DONE !!!



Right: Marseille, France - on the beach

Quote " It's amazing what can be achieved, when one, is sufficiently naive." Winston Churchill.

Had Allan and John, known the enormity of what lay in front of them, the hardships, the dangers, the walk would never have gone ahead. Naive, with bags of enthusiasm, wanting to help the less fortunate and with never ending determination to complete what they set out to do, helped them overcome their inexperience, gaining valuable life skills which has seen the boys go on to bigger and better things. NO FEAR !!!

