

Past Diary of a Motor Car Mad Youth.

It was July 1935 & my mother & I were embarking on a journey that would have unbelievable consequences for me.

We had received an invitation for myself to go to Germany during my long summer holiday, as a youth of 14 years, to speak English with the youngest son of a family over there.

What a family though — they were probably the richest in Germany — it was the Krupp armaments family.

I had no idea what faced me when we embarked on our journey — Underground to Liverpool Street station, steam train to Harwich, then 6 hours across the North Sea to Flushing in Holland then steam train to Köln (Cologne).

One thing I've learned over the years crossing the Channel, my stomach does not like the motion of the sea, with the North Sea being relatively shallow, giving rise to a choppy boat motion.

It's no good muttering about stabilisers — many more years before they existed.

The Dutch train journey proved the theory of perspective to me — the last carriage had windows at the end & you could see the long straight railway lines coming to a point in the distance.

We arrived in Köln at 11 pm — about 15 hours from home — a bit longer than modern air travel times.

At the small hotel where we stayed, my mother created consternation the following morning when she asked them to connect her pa phone to Bertha Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach in person — it was the equivalent in England of asking to speak to the King.

We went by train to Essen in the Ruhr where the Krupp family lived & where the vast armaments works was situated. Thence by car to their house on the outskirts of the town.

House wasn't really the best way to describe it — a vast mansion set in the midst of woodland, high on a hill overlooking a lake formed by damming the River Ruhr. The mansion was called "Auf dem Hügel" (on the hill).

It consisted of the "Small House" with 60 rooms & the "Large House" with 117 rooms. Connecting the two was an enormous banqueting hall with an art gallery above it.

The family was living in the small house at the time so I didn't appreciate the size of the large house till later.

I blotted my copybook from the word go — I was supposed to speak English with the youngest son Eckhart, slightly younger than I was, but I soon made it clear to him that I speak fluent German, much to his relief. Later on I realised that I was cooking my goose for

future events because my prime purpose was to speak English with Eckbert!

I was incredibly lucky - Eckbert was allegedly difficult to get on with but he & I got on famously & had no problems. Eckbert however never did speak English with me. It did result in my going back to Krupp for the next 4 years, up to & including 1939 - unbelievable.

That first year, a Scots girl, Alastine, was invited to speak English with the youngest daughter, Waldtraut, slightly older than I was. Whoever chose Alastine was at fault - even I could barely understand her extreme Scots accents & phrases. Needless to say, she didn't appear the next year.

My mother went to dinner in the banqueting hall that evening &, being German born, recognised the decor having been taken after a Schloss she knew near to Kassel in Hessen, her place of birth.

So she was in!

The following morning we were strolling in the grounds & met a lady painting a scene around her. It turned out that her father, also a guest, was President of the British Royal Academy that year. She asked my opinion of her painting & with all the confidence & brashness of a youth of 14 I said that I thought it needed a little more sun!

She agreed with me but later on my mother tore me off a strip for daring to comment on an artist's work!

My mother went home the following day and I was left to my own device - literally; because Eckbet was with his tutor for the next few mornings. I borrowed Eckbet's balloon tyred bicycle (because in those days the German domestic roads were fine cobbles) & cycled around the woods surrounding the mansion - quite a trip because they were very extensive.

Another morning I amused myself constructing a vast crane from Eckbet's Meccano set. I also cycled the length of the lake formed by damming the river Ruhr - the dam wasn't fixed in its level - it had eccentrically mounted circular drums which could vary the overflow water level.

Eckbet has a paddle boat in the boat-house by the lake, so I got someone to help me get it on the water & went for a paddle so I wasn't bored.

In case you thought that I had actually counted all the rooms in the mansion, I would explain that the figures were quoted for an English post war illustrated article - the three storied mansion was built in 1871 at a cost of a million & a half dollars! Cor!

There is a vast terrace running along the back of the mansion with its first area consisting of interlacing lime trees in full bloom in July under which (in

(suitable fine weather) dinner would be consumed in magnificent style. - I still recall that Frau Bertha Krupp as hostess at the head of the table of maybe 12 plus people had a silver clockwork powered bell in the shape of a pig about six inches long whose curly tail was the operating key for registering the serving of the next course.

Delightful - but not for me when an individual cheese soufflé was set before me - I didn't realise that it was red-hot under its surface crust!

The terrace had 2 corners at its far end - one corner was a physics school lab. for heat, light & sound studies, with the other corner a chemistry school lab. - these were used for the tutor schooling of the children - every convenience to hand.

Which brings me to the children - all seven of them. Before this long list perhaps a diversion relating to the Krupp name - Bertha was the sole heiress of the Krupp fortune before her marriage to Gustav von Bohlen und Halbach and the Krupp name would die if she married. The German Kaiser wasn't happy at the thought of this happening so he issued a decree whereby Gustav & the first male descendant had the right to the name of Krupp. Other members of the family would be known as "von Bohlen und Halbach".

We finish up with -
Gustav Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach
Bertha ditto but she always wished to

be known as Bertha von Bohlen.

The children were —
Alfried, the eldest, & therefore Krupp
von etc.

Claus
Berthold
Irungard
Harald
Waldtraut
Eckbert

All the others were "von Bohlen und
Halbach" but in conversation only "von Bohlen".

Sorry for this rather long winded
explanation.

Going back to the mansion, there
was also every other adjunct to living
well that you could imagine —

horses & many stables, garages & many
cars, kitchen gardens, laundry, tennis
court, 3 lakes in the grounds, sailing
boat on the Ruhr lake, and the final
touch prior to the use of cars — their
own railway station on the local
railway line with gated access to the
estate where horse drawn carriage would
await the arrival of guests.

Of major interest to me, as a motor
car addict from the age of seven, were
the motor cars that were there. Needless
to say, all the cars were convertibles:

Kinde of place was given to a Zeppelin
Maybach - a V12 of 8 litres capacity
developing (in 1935 remember) 200 horse
power with an enormously long bonnet
& capable of 100 miles an hour - don't ask me
about the brakes! A bit of automotive
history here - Wilhelm Maybach designed
the first Mercedes car but later resigned
from his unappreciated position several
years later & went off to design aero-
engines for Zeppelin airships. He
subsequently produced luxury motor
car chassis complete with engine for
coachbuilders to put bodies on. His
chassis prices were apparently twice
the price of pre-war Rolls-Royce chassis.
The Maybach name has been revived
in recent years by Mercedes Benz for
enormous luxury saloons priced at
over £500,000!

Alfried's car was a Mercedes-Benz
Type 540 K. K means "mit Kompressor"
(Supercharger) on a 5.4 litre straight eight
engine giving 180 Horse power or 200
horse-power when you pushed the
throttle pedal to the floor for a short
time.

Claus's car was a Mercedes-Benz
Type 500 K. Slightly smaller engine than
Alfried's but otherwise very similar
in performance.

Berthold's car was much more
mundane Mercedes-Benz again - but

a 3.2 litre straight six engine.

Elder daughter Ingrid was always chauffeur driven.

Harald's car befitted his spirited (i.e. mad!) approach to motoring - Mercedes-Benz again but a sport chassis special with a 3.8 litre straight six engine "mit Kompressor". Harald had a rather coarse sense of humour - on his car dashboard was a spring loaded flap with a bas-relief of St. Columbus (the patron saint of travellers) on it. When the flap was lifted it revealed a printed message in German of the lowest calibre possible. Harald's comment to me when I lifted the flap was (in impeccable English - he went to Oxford) "That'll teach you to be curious!" He reckoned to wear out his rear tyres every 3 months with spirited driving.

Finally there were 2 Mercedes-Benz 2.3 litre 4 cylinder cars - 1 a saloon & one a convertible for general chauffeured running around.

Being 1935, it was the year when the Olympic games were held in Berlin. All the holders for the Olympic flame runners were made by Krupps in stainless steel.

Basically they were a tube about 1 1/2 inches in diameter, about a foot long with a flat top skin to catch

any drops from the canopy were
itself stuck into the tube. Engraved
along the outside of the tube was
the runner's route with the capital
towns of the countries thru' which they
ran also designated.

There was a joke in the family
that they were three fifths of the
Olympics because the three ringed
interlinked Krupps organisation symbol
was three fifths of the five rings of
the Olympic symbol! Bit feeble I know.

We went in the 2.3 litre convertible
to a hunting lodge south along the Rhine
river between Bonn & Coblenz. The lodge
was in an area east of the Rhine, hilly
& forested called the Westerwald (Western
Forest).

The lodge was quite large with 2 build'g
spans enclosing an open ended glass roofed
area that was perfect for meals in the
open — just right for me with my large
appetite, all in the middle of a forest
area. My box Brownie picture from my
bedroom showed wave after wave of
forested hills to the horizon.

Going back to the mansion in Essen
it was the first time in 1935 that I
went up in an aeroplane. I'd had a
game of tennis with Eckert in the

morning when Alfred suggested we all go for a flight in the afternoon — we drove to a nearby small aerodrome where their private aeroplane (a twin-engined 6 seater monoplane) was parked & Alfred would be the pilot. It was weird for me — somehow I had imagined that the earth & sky would stay still & the aeroplane would move around relative to them — it wasn't like that at all — the aeroplane stayed still & the earth & sky moved around — we were only turning a bit sharply — no aerobatics of course. I felt a bit queasy & only found out later why — after our tennis game Eckbert & I had a tumbler full of grape juice to quench our thirst — only it wasn't grape juice, it was white wine — the bottles had the same label.

Alfred's piloting skills were tested a few days later. We had gone to an Industrial Exhibition in Duisburg, an industrial town to the north of Köln on the Rhine & in the evening went to an amusement fair adjacent to the exhibition.

Piloting skills could be tested on a device that consisted of a short dummy fuselage complete with controls & control surfaces with an electrically driven propeller at the front.

The whole unit was mounted on a 10 foot diameter gimbal system which allowed the dummy fuselage to change its

altitude in any plane as a result of the propeller airstream to react on the control surfaces. You were strapped in with a bar to allow for inverted "flying". I carried out various manoeuvres & finished upside down, unable to alter the controls to get myself upright. As the propeller was noisily roaring away it took a little while to get people to switch it off so I could climb out. I obviously thought that I was doing something wrong but Alfred took my place & finished upside down like me. My pride remained intact although we didn't know why it went wrong.

When we returned to Essen from the hunting lodge I was told that we, father, mother, Waldtrant, Alastine, Eckbert & I, were going by night sleeper to Austria to a place called Schloss Blühnbach.

We embarked at 11 pm from Essen & woke up at daylight in Munich with electrical power lines above all the railway tracks. From there by electric loco to Salzburg & then south along the Salzach river flowing north thru' Salzburg, to a small station called Werfen, about 30 miles south of Salzburg:

We were met by a couple of open touring cars for our journey to the

Schloss. I showed explain more.
Blühnbach means Blue Stream & we
could clearly see where the Blühnbach
came into the swiftly flowing muddy
coloured river Salzach for about 6 feet.

The journey to the Schloss was
via a single track road running
westward up the Blühnbach valley which
is about $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles long with mountains
all round, blind ended at its western
end.

A magical place with the 88 roomed
Schloss Blühnbach half way along the
valley.

There were so many marvellous
things about Blühnbach that I feel
I have to explain something — in
all those 5 years that I went to
Blühnbach my recollections of all
the many events are still astonishingly
clear but I can't always pin down
the year that they took place.

I found out later that all of
the 120,000 acres of Blühnbach valley
originally belonged to the Austrian
Archduke Franz Ferdinand whose
assassination in Sarajevo in 1914
started World War I.

The Austro-Hungarian empire
disappeared in WWI & the Krupp
family purchased Blühnbach valley

and the Schloss as a "Small Summer residence (88 rooms & 120,000 acres!)"

As you come up the valley it opened out - soaring pine forests up to the tree line & then on up to mountain peaks all the way along the valley sides & its blind western end.

There were 12 peaks, 7 of them over 7,000 feet, 3 of them over 8,000 feet & the 2 remaining at over 9,000 feet. The highest peak at just under 10,000 feet was on top of a long glacier parallel to the valley & called the Hoch König (High King)

Schloss Blühbach itself was at 3,000 feet.

In case you wonder where in heavens name I got all these details, the answer is simple - I have a detail map of the area. Unfortunately for myself as an Imperial measure man, I had to transpose all the heights from their wretched metres to the paper one of feet!

Talking of mountain heights, we had a rather peculiar experience many years ago - we were staying with our friends from Goring-on-Thames in an Austrian village close to the highest mountain in the whole area called the Dachstein -

my prewar detail map quoted its height as being 2995 metres.

We went up the cable car to the Dachstein glacier and I noticed that everywhere quoted the Dachstein height as being 3000 metres. In subsequent enquiries I was told that when Hitler invaded Austria in '38 he was informed that Austrian mountain heights were taken from the mean water level of the Mediterranean, whereas German heights were taken from the mean water level of the Baltic. The difference I was told was 5 metres lower in the Mediterranean. I frankly don't believe this story — I think that the Dachstein's height sounded much better at 3000 metres than 2995 metres! What's 16 feet between friends!

Back to Blühnbach (Blue Stream) — all you could hear was the wind in the pine trees & the murmur of the stream at the bottom of the valley — lulling you off to sleep at night.

Adjacent to the Schloss was a tiny Rococo chapel, together with the Posthaus where the telephone came in — in those days the phone number was simple — Werfen 5.

The Schloss had a formal entry on its north side, going up a grand outside staircase to the first floor — we never used this — we always used a simple entrance on the ground floor

on the southern side of the Schloss, Bedrooms were on the ground floor & I found myself in a four poster bed with a wooden white dove hanging from the bed top. I was woken every morning at 7am by the sound of gravel raking outside the window. — gravel round the Schloss was raked every day except Sunday — car tracks weren't allowed to be seen.

There were 2 cars originally, both open tourers, with engine braking in low gear for long downward gradients — no disc brakes remember.

Having then a very good appetite, I was pleased to hear that meals were fairly frequent. — Breakfast at 8 with a wake up call at 7:30 — Midmorning snack by wandering into the vast kitchen — lunch at 1 — coffee/tea and cakes at 4 and dinner at 7. Despite their wealth, the food was relatively simple.

The cook, Frau Tizel, was a large jolly Austrian with the almost inevitable throat goitre but with an ability, among other dishes, to produce the most delicious Apfelstudel — the house-keeper wrote out the recipe in copperplate German but over the years I've lost it — we would watch Frau Tizel pulling out the pastry over a cloth

on the table with the pastry so unbelievably thin that you could easily see the cloth pattern underneath. All the delicious ingredients of apples, sultanas, currants, spices like cinnamon were then spread on the pastry & the cloth was then pulled up to produce a long sausage which was coiled up like a snake in a vast frying pan.

Beautifully thin & crisp pastry - lovely! With cream of course - what's cholesterol?

4 pm tea was served on the large grassed terrace in front of the Schloss under which were the "cellars" which were above ground because of the slope dropping away down to the Blühbach river.

To prepare me for walking in the mountains I was kitted out with -

Thick pullover

Lederhosen

2 pairs of thick socks

My "stout shoes" had another leather sole attached by 2 rows of tiny wooden pegs (like cocktail sticks) & all round the heel & sole edges were attached metal edging studs (Moulded rubber soles were a post war phenomenon)

Conical rain hat - function good, sartorially bad.

Cape made of Loden, a coarse woollen cloth which sheds rain & doesn't make you hot like a coat.

Climbing stick about 1 inch dia wood
by 6 feet long with metal point at
bottom end.

1 pair Zeiss 8x30 prismatic binoculars.

I didn't need a map or compass
because we always had someone with
us who knew the way. They came later
on in England! And before you say,
ah, but he hasn't got lederhosen, I
have but my stomach growth stops me
wearing them.

Inside the schloss, beginning at
the southern entrance, there is a
most extraordinary wooden circular
staircase built round a central stone
column going all the way up the three
floors with a stair width of about
5 feet. All round the outer wall
are etched pictures of alleged mutations
of all the creatures to be met in the
valley - I did say alleged.

Eckbert & I experimented "in" an
exercise wheel comprising 2 tubes in
circular form of about 8 feet with
cross tubes connecting them.

Inside this circle were 2 pads
& straps for 2 feet with 2 handles
on the opposite side of the circle.

So you got "in" the large circle,
put your feet in the pads, gripping
the two handles, finishing up in

the form of an X. You made the whole device roll by cyclically moving your body within the large circle. To stop (hopefully) you reversed the cyclical motion.

The tricky part was changing your direction — theory said you "rocked" the whole device, it tilted over slightly, slewed round a bit & you rocked it back. If you didn't rock it back quickly the whole arrangement ~~was~~ ^{would} turn on its side whilst revolving, like a spinning plate settling down, with either your face or your bottom buried in the grass — great fun if you're young & don't care.

Every year at Blühnbach there was a Shooting Festival — it was quite an event. Family, friends & local huntsmen & their wives attended. There was target shooting during the day, 0.303 single shot rifle with telescopic sight & twin triggers — you cocked the front trigger & then "just touched" the second hair trigger to fire — the hair trigger was incredibly sensitive.

The target was at 300 feet & although I didn't score any bulls at least I was

on the target.

Virtually all the local hunters spotted large Austrian Hapsburg moustaches.

I was decked out in Lederhosen & a smart light grey flannel jacket with green faced lapels & cuffs and wearing a smart hat with the obligatory "Gamsbart" (Chamois beard) clipped to the side of the crown.

In any chamois there is a line of grey tipped hairs running along the ridge line of its back, and these would be clustered together like a slim shaving brush gathered into a silver thimble. In a recent article I read that the genuine article costs now about £600! Chamois are obviously getting scarcer.

In the evening of the Shooting Festival it was the ladies turn - underneath the terrace in front of the Schloss were the cellars in which a dance was held, with Eckbert & I doling out beer from the casks - by the end of the evening (too young to drink it alas) we were both squiffy from the fumes.

I was initiated into the Viennese Waltz (14 years old remember) by the hulking great chief huntsman named

Huber wearing an extraordinary "pink silk" tie & the mandatory moustache - by the time he put me down (literally) the whole room was spinning.

Huber was a born optimist - Gustav Krupp at 60 years old ^{would} go off hunting chamois about one morning in three at 6 am and a single shot from his telescopic rifle would be heard at about 7.30 am indicating success. Gustav would only go for the old chamois, an indication of which was the width between the tops of their curved horns - 13 centimetres was good - Huber was convinced that every chamois they saw was a 13 centimetres one - and this was looking at them through 8x30 binoculars - anything greater than 8 times magnification was difficult to hold steady, had a restricted field of view & on a hot day you also got "air density shimmer".

We went one day on a mountain adventure by car - the Tyrol area of Austria has broadly a range of mountains running from east to west with originally only one route across them in the form of a railway tunnel thru' which cars would be taken on flat trucks.

In '35 a military road was driven over the mountains from north to south

with an offshoot spur to the
glacier at the foot of the Grossglockner
mountain, the highest in Austria at
12,500 feet. This new road was only 60
miles away so off we went.

I've been motor car mad from the age of
7 and here I was getting into Claus's
car - a Mercedes Benz with an enormously
long bonnet.

Don't bother to listen for the next few
minutes if you don't want to hear details
of a magnificent motor car.

A 4 seater convertible, engine 5 litres
& 8 cylinders with a supercharger engaged
by pushing the throttle pedal to the floor
which increased the power from 150 HP
to 180 HP - one of the few cars that could
reach the magic 100 miles per hour at
a time when most cars were struggling to
reach 60/70 miles per hour.

Claus's car unusual in that it also
had an exhaust cut out - a foot operated
flap which could open the exhaust pipe
in front of the silencer, giving extra
power & very considerable extra noise.

I shall never forget hurtling up
the slopes and bends of the road with
the supercharger howling above the
unsilenced exhaust with the noise
bouncing off the mountainsides.

Needless to say, we rocketed past any traffic.

In the hotel by the glacier we had lunch but unfortunately the cloud base was nearly down to the glacier level and we didn't see the Gross Glockner peak. I did see the peak in subsequent years & it was a genuine sharp spiky mountain.

We did many other car trips to the lakes & mountains of the Salzkammergut area to the south east of Salzburg.

The best thing about Salzburg was the fact that every August there was a Music Festival that was absolutely superb.

My abiding memory of my first visit to the city was when we went and saw a morality play called "Jedermann" (Everyman) in the square in front of the cathedral.

Essentially it was the story of a rich man who at his wedding feast was taken away by Death.

The enormous wedding feast was laid out on a long table on a stage set up in the square with the various guests arriving.

But Death in his black apparel and scythe came for Jedermann.

There were buildings around the 3 sides of the square and suddenly there were cries of Jedermann, Jedermann,

coming from all sides in the buildings — even after all these years I can still feel my neck hairs rising when I think about it.

My musical education started in Salzburg — operas — Don Giovanni in Italian, Figaro's Hochzeit in German, Mozart & Beethoven's Symphonies, together with plays in the area where the von Trapp children sang in "The Sound of Music".

Don Giovanni in Italian I found very impressive — the main tenor was quite slim — no diaphragm bulge and the singing was so liquid, full of vowels — it didn't matter that you couldn't understand a word.

Needless to say, being at a very impressionable age, my favorite composers are Mozart & Beethoven in equal measure.

In a later year Berthold took me to a play at Salzburg and on the drive back at 11 pm or so he ran out of petrol near the mountain pass between Salzburg & Blühnbach — no matter, it was a fine night so he left me sitting in the open car while he walked back to the nearest village to find a phone. He phoned the Schloss and a car finally arrived with a can of petrol somewhat later.

As I said, it was a fine summer night, although the Blühnbach car

driver probably had a different view at midnight.

Coming back to the name of Salzburg, Salz is German for salt and it was the nearby salt mines which were the source of power for the bishops of Salzburg.

We were in Blühnbach for several weeks and it was announced that we were all going north to a valley parallel to Blühnbach but about 8 miles away, on the Salzburg side of the high pass where Berthold + I ran out of petrol near the village of Golling.

We went west from Golling to the base of the mountains at 1700 feet and then climbed via a single track road with 22 hairpin bends to finish at 4600 feet at a group of log huts, simply built but very comfortable.

When I say hairpin bends this is no exaggeration. Because the road in effect was climbing thru' rock the upper rock wall side of each hairpin couldn't be simply cut away to get the "sweep" of each bend so it had to be built outwards on large buttress walls to allow for this sweep. Even with this addition several bends required toing + frowning of the car. The road was pretty steep as well — bottom gear most of the way for cars.

The log cabins were above the

tree line so the views in all directions were tremendous. The place was called Torrenor Joch — Torrenor being the stream further down the valley & Joch being the German word for col, a dip between mountains.

The col itself at 5700 feet is the frontier between Austria & Germany in the Berchtesgarden area but it was only reachable on mountain paths via people or mules because the road stopped at the log cabin colony.

Colony is the right word — 2 sets of bedrooms connected by a large living room formed one unit. Another unit was the main suite, a large living room plus a large bedroom looking straight down the valley. A third section was a kitchen plus staff accommodation & finally a small recreational log cabin for the huntsmen.

A water powered electricity generator only switched on in the dark evenings comprised the total.

Being at the end of the road in the mountains meant that the distances to various peaks etc were quoted in hours instead of miles — 1½ hours was quoted from the log cabins to the Austrian/German border.

Supplies to the big house on the Austrian/German border were taken up on the back of mules. Mules were used instead of horses because mules can walk with their feet closer together than horses along narrow paths.

Looming over the log cabins was a peak called the Schneibstein going straight up from the valley floor nearly 3000 feet.

We climbed to the top one day to 7500 feet starting out at 4 am when it was still dark — as we climbed up the valley the sun came up behind the mountain peaks tinging them all a lovely pink. $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours later we were at the frontier with another 2 hours to go to get to the top — we were lucky, a clear day with no clouds to spoil a wonderful view.

Looking south across the lower peaks we could see the Hoch Konig glacier in the Blühnbach valley 8 miles away — we came back down, tired but happy.

Another day we climbed to the frontier, over the border into Germany, without reference to passports, westwards along the ridge called the Jenner.

At 6150 feet we came to the end of the ridge & overlooked the highest lake in Germany called the Königsee (King lake) — beautiful dark green in colour.

At its northern end is Berchtesgarden infamous for its association with Hitler.

At its southern end is a small lake called the Obersee (upper lake) & then there are mountains all round. There is a path going straight up 4600 feet via zig-zags to an opening at the top of the mountain at 6600 feet. This opening is called the Blühnbach Tor (Blühnbach door) from which you can go down 4000 feet to the schloss in the Blühnbach valley — when I spoke to the son Harald he had done this climb up & down and it took him 10 hours!

Eckbert & I and a huntsman guide went one day very early up to the frontier again & climbed in the opposite direction of the Schneibstein along the frontier line to the top of a mountain called the Hoher Göll, at nearly 8500 feet one of the highest mountains around.

Marvellous views from the top with good weather again. It was about 3 hours from the frontier post so we were all very tired after the 9 hours round trip.

The next year (36) I remember going up ~~the~~ hair pinned road in pouring rain — we were Krupp father & mother, myself and a leather coated Mercedes-Benz test driver demonstrating a 1.7 litre open four seater (with the hood up) newly introduced by the car company.

I felt sorry for the test driver — I don't think he knew what had hit him — pouring rain, unknown very difficult road, trying to demonstrate how good the new model was to the customer, & barely able to get round a fair number of the hairpin bends in one go without having to reverse in the middle of the bend & having to have another go! They did buy the car & it was superb. It was nicknamed 'Mitzi' for reasons that are beyond me.

A reduced shooting competition took place at Torrenor Loch using an air powered rifle firing at a foot square target. I had the task after each shot (everybody had to take part) of reporting the score & then retiring smartly out of range for the next shot.

My abiding memory of the

event was the lady chef from Essen, frightened stiff at the thought of pulling the trigger, having the air rifle held up for her by two other people and pulling the trigger with her eyes shut. I can't remember whether the target was hit! I kept well out of the way in any case.

We also visited a waterfall near the village of Golling. It came straight out of the side of the mountain - its source was alleged to be from the Königsee - sounds reasonable - there was a lot of water coming out.

Schloss Blihubach again - I thought after my "winter-spots" holiday (of which more further on) that I would not see the schloss again but to my surprise I received another invitation for the summer holiday of '36. We were joined in Essen by Eve, an English girl from Chelmsford, who arrived in style at Köln airport in a DeHavilland DH.86 4 engine biplane courtesy of Imperial Airways.

We picked her up & on the way back to Essen stopped for tea & cakes at an extraordinary 6 sided restaurant near Köln literally hanging out over the Rhine river -

I wasn't really worried except that the river flows really fast.

The English girl was charming with the most incredible "wasp waist". Made me think of Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* & her 19 inch waist.

Another aspect of the mansion that I haven't mentioned before - it had a sea green tiled swimming pool in the basement of the Big House in which I must confess I swam naked (after locking the door).

My brother & I had done this a few years earlier - we had a male student staying with us who belonged to the YMCA & they had a swimming pool in their Tottenham Court Road establishment where costumes weren't mandatory.

In '36 my "room" in the Big House at Essen was a suite of rooms squashed in between the ground & first floors & dubbed "The Swallows Nest." Access to the suite was via a lovely spiral wooden staircase which climbed up beside a wonderful model of a sailing man-of-war about 3 feet long. The staircase banister was smooth all the way up and I was always trying to work out a way of sliding down - unsuccessfully!

Having as I thought in '35 "blotted my copybook" in talking German with Eckbert, I was even so surprised to receive an invitation to go to Essen & then Blühnbach in the snowy winter.

To Essen on Boxing Day & then on via the night sleeper to Munich & on to Blühnbach in the snow.

We, were Waldtraut & her friend Hildegard, Eckbert & I & a lady to keep an eye on us. We stayed in the Post House as the Schloss was too cold ~~to~~ heat it all.

My mother had made me a ski outfit from navy gabardine so I was all set — I was supplied with wider shorter skis of ash instead of Eckbert's narrow longer stiffer skis of hickory — he also had skisticks — not for me, they would have got in the way.

Unlike modern ski resorts we had no ski lifts so we had to plod our way upwards to go downwards.

The Schloss was on the north side of the valley so got the best sunshine.

About 11 am if the sun shone, we'd go up the sunshine slope, a very gentle one otherwise we'd slip backwards,

On the move back downwards, gently because I didn't know how to stop! it was a marvellous feeling — not a

sound except the wind when moving!

I got up early outside the schloss & decided to jump a mound of $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet high — didn't lift the front of the skis & slid along on my face — good job it was slippery.

A fairly short time later it was decided that we would all go to the top of the southern slope, ski down to the village of Weifen & come back by sleigh to the schloss. By this time I had ski sticks which I needed.

There were 6 of us — Waldtrant, Hildegard, Eckbert, myself, lady tutor & Rudolph a huntsman. We set off up the southern slope with seal skins clipped to the underside of the skis — going forward the hairs were smooth, going backward was stopped by all the seal skin hairs standing up.

As the slope was quite steep we had to go up in a series of zig-zag — what to do with the skis at the turns was tricky — I simply can't remember!

Being skiers the lady tutor, Waldtrant, Hildegard & Eckbert went on down to Weifen (less seal skins!) to wait for yours truly — a very patient huntsman & I got there sometime later.

We went back to the schloss

in bright moonlight in a horse drawn sleigh — all you could hear were the bells on the horse to warn of our otherwise silent approach.

The sleigh ride was unbelievable with the moonlight being the finishing touch.

In front of the schloss is an enormous meadow sloping gently downwards.

One pitch black evening we decided to go down this meadow each carrying a flaming torch. I shall never forget Waldtraut's friend Hildegard's torch disappearing in the blackness wailing in German "I can't stop". It took her some time to get back to us.

New Year's Eve was suitably celebrated within the limits of mine & Eckbert's ages related to alcohol consumption — nil in theory — let's leave it at that.

Back to Essen in summer of '36 — two events left a lasting impression on me — being in "The Swallows Nest" one day I went to put my shoes on & found they had been removed for cleaning so I shinned down the circular staircase & went across the vast parquet floor of the main hall to the entrance "office"

where I knew they would be - I'd forgotten that Krupps were holding a tea-party at the other end of the hall for 500, yes 500, employes & wives. Nobody saw me but Gustav: Krupp complained that evening that his hand ached from shaking hands with so many people!

The other event that I found mind-boggling - earlier in the year Krupps had "hired" the world's biggest airship, the Hindenburg, to take 50 family & friends for a trip round. Eckbert showed me photos that he had taken whilst in the air. This airship was enormous - just over 800 feet long - 10 times the back garden length of 43 Slough Lane. The airship was originally going to have Maybach engines fitted but in the end they fitted more powerful Mercedes-Benz engines. So the saga of Wilhelm Maybach turned full circle - from Mercedes-Benz to Maybach then back to Mercedes-Benz.

I have a childhood memory, aged 7, of seeing the Graf Zeppelin airship in 1928 circling Wembley Stadium during the Cup Final football game - an enormous silver cigar floating in the sky. And the Hindenburg was twice its size!

Back to Blühnbach - we drove round the Salzkammergut to "The

White Horse Inn" on the Wolfgang lake — we were sitting on the verandah jutting out on the lake when Eve suddenly said —
"Excuse me but I've just seen my local vicar in Chelmsford sitting at a nearby table!"

Another day we drove to the end of the valley & up to an aln (summer pasture area) which was covered in wild strawberries — a couple of hours work & we had a big bowl full of tiny sweet strawberries — lovely.

A little later on we had a cloudburst over the valley which created havoc on one bridge on the road round — the bridge had 2 spans with a centre pier — the spans were steel members with cross-wise baulks of timber forming the road — the rocky stream bed was only quite gradual in gradient but the force of the water generated by the cloudburst was so great that 3 rocks all about a 10 foot cube were propelled down the water course — 1 rock destroyed one side of the bridge & finished up 100 yards downstream — a 2nd rock destroyed the other side of the bridge & the 3rd rock finished up against the centre pier.

Yet the following day there was virtually no water flowing down the water course. The "centre" rock was removed by drilling for explosives & blowing it

up
a fantastic photo of bits of rock
going out in all directions.

Talky of detonations, an event took
place one morning which was rather tragic.
I went outside after breakfast, heard a
light aircraft but couldn't see it because
of low cloud. A couple of hours later a
climber appeared at the schloss and said
he'd heard a light aircraft crash into
the mountain in the clouds near him.
I confirmed the light aircraft noise & a
number of men went up the valley &
found the wreckage & the bodies of 2 men.
We watched the following day thru a
telescope the salvage operation of the 2
men. Another 50 feet & they would have
cleared the mountain.

Eckbert & I and his tutor went down
the valley to the river Salzach & climbed
for 2 hours up the other side of the
main valley to a place in the mountain
that consisted of a series of ice caves
going deep into the mountain — boor!
was it cold — nowadays there is a cable
car, saving you 4 hours of walking.

Magnificent frozen waterfalls going on
& on.

Mention of cable cars triggers another
memory — we went to a castle on the
outskirts of village Weyfen — situated on
a commanding hilly position above
the river Salzach — this Burg Weyfen
was used in the film "Where Eagles

Dare" with Richard Burton & Club Saswood.
The film fiddled the Cable car — it
never was there — sorry to spoil the
illusion

Being up in the mountains means
there are a lot of alpine flowers, mostly
protected. Inside the toilet door was a
large colour chart showing all these
flowers — it could be studied at leisure!

The famous edelweiss (white treasure)
flower is extraordinary in its capacity to
stay unchanged for many years despite
being cut off from its roots. We had
a large bowl of edelweiss on the meal
table which had been taken from an
illegal "collector". When I first came to
Blühbach in '35 I sent a letter to my
mother in which I threaded an edelweiss.
I've now got this letter & the edelweiss,
after 70 years, is unchanged, its white
velvety petals still intact — perfect!

From Blühbach it was not far
to the Berchtesgarden area & Krupp's
obviously were well in with the
government personnel. We went over one
day when Hitler was not in residence &
were shown round the outside of his
house called the Berghof. Gangs of men
were busy starting to build the road
leading eventually up to the access
to the Eagle's Nest near the top of
the Hoher Göll mountain. We went

up the rough track in a half track open vehicle, caterpillar tracks on the rear wheel system but normal steerable wheels on the front. You certainly got a good view of everything from the open deck.

During the next year (37) we made a return visit, this time with an English girl named Peggy from Leeds. Hitler was in residence this time & stood about 50 yards away from the four person deep queue that passed slowly along the solid line of SS men between us & Hitler. The SS men would pluck someone from the queue, walk over to Hitler where a photographer would take the mandatory picture. Peggy was very attractive, clad in the classic Austrian dirndl dress, & she was plucked out & presented to him — I have proof of this in the form of the photo that was taken of Hitler & her.

As I shuffled to the end of the line there was a young Youth Mädchen in hysterics — "he spoke to me", she said, "the Fuehrer spoke to me" — needless to say I didn't share her enthusiasm.

Back in Blühbach the next year '38, a many dayed trip was planned to the Austrian province of Carinthia, an area of warm lakes & more mountains to the south east of Salzburg, on the

southern ~~side~~
which the Gross Glockner road was built.

There was a railway tunnel thru' the mountains at their eastern end thru' which cars could be transported on flat car trucks.

We went thru' tunnel & then carried on past lovely lakes — in particular one lake which was warm — into the lake via a massive slide — lovely. We drove round Lake Klangedfunt with a peculiar climatic effect involving low thin clouds shrouding the mountain tops as if you had laid blankets over them.

We drove back a different way by means of the original one-in-three gradient Katchberg pass — unmade road (we were going up) so steep in aspect that we felt we had to lean forward in the open car,

I shall never forget — on the way up we passed a lone cyclist pushing his laden bicycle upwards & displaying a tiny Union Jack flag — he was a long way from home! I gave him a cheer!

We went to Torrenor Joch again, this time with a French girl Yvonne, Berthold & a family friend called Zita, a bubbly blond who helped us to dam a small stream to form a very small swimming area — just sufficient for 2 strokes

which was just as well — it was so cold that it virtually stopped your breathing — I did my 2 strokes on 1 lungfull!

A point of interest here — the elder Krupp daughter got married in the following year & Claus met Zita at the wedding & they subsequently got married.

On 15 1939 & Austria now part of Germany. I was back in Essen but didn't go down to Blihnbach immediately — instead I went with Krupp's chauffeur Lindemann down to Stuttgart by train to collect a brand new Mercedes-Benz 770K from their works — ignore the next technical bit — a straight 8 cylinder engine "mit Kompressor" of 7.7 litres capacity installed in a massive 7 seater convertible weighing in at a mere $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons. Power output was 180 horse-power rising to 230 horsepower "mit Kompressor". Being well before disc brakes were invented, stopping this monster was a problem — maximum speed when run in was 108 miles per hour so it was just as well that traffic density was low — your chance of hitting another car was also low!

When Lindemann & I arrived, the works driver took us out in a

lanes at impossible speeds. I don't know about Lindemann but I was definitely frightened. A language point of interest arose — Stuttgart is in Swabia & they have their own German dialect. The drivers were intrigued that this young Englishman could speak & understand German, so they switched to their dialect — it was like a man from Newcastle switching to Geordie — even Lindemann could barely understand a word.

The following day Lindemann drove the car back to Essen, very very carefully. The main petrol tank held 42 gallons & the reserve was 5 gallons, Miles per gallon was probably about 8! I well remember post war when I played hockey for the Old Boys of my school, our hockey captain was a fellow called Jack Lemon-Burton who was "the" Bugatti man in Britain. Jack used to turn up in various exotic motor cars, the most exotic being a Bugatti Royale of $11\frac{3}{4}$ litres engine capacity. It was a huge car but well proportioned & when we asked Jack what its petrol consumption was, he said "5 mpg if I push it or 8 mpg if I lift my foot."

We all went down to Blühbach that year in a Maybach 7 seater convertible of "only" 3.8 liter straight six cylinders engine — relatively small compared to the 1935

Zeppelin Maybach of 8 liter V12 engine. We drove down parallel with the Rhine thru' to Würzburg & from there south on the apparently so called Romantic Road via mostly walled small towns called Rothenburg on the Tauber river, Dinkelsbühl a 1000 year old town, Nördlingen & finally Augsburg. From there to Munich & thence to Salzburg. Fascinating little towns full of medieval houses & beautiful wrought iron signs hanging from every sort of building.

When we were at Blühbach, Claus came up the valley in his single seater aerobatic biplane and proceeded to give us an inspired display (between the mountains remember). He then went back to Salzburg airport and we went and fetched him. In the main hangar I saw a Heinkel III bomber — Germany now of course.

The next time I saw a Heinkel III was when in 1940 I was working near the Gillette tower on the Great West Road and was leaving to cycle home 7 miles,

There were 2 of us getting our bicycles out when we saw a formation of Heinkel III's approaching from the Richmond direction with fighter aircraft diving down among them — we too dived, into the air raid shelter, but the Heinkels never reached us — they were scattered thank goodness.

Back to Blihnbach again — we were visited by Bormann, a very high up Nazi — roaring up the road in a hood down Mercedes-Benz 770 K driven by an SS officer. Bormann himself was hatless as was his habit apparently — his wife & two young children in the back.

Whilst Bormann, after being introduced to us, went off to consult with Gustav & Bertha, we were left with looking after the kiddy-winkies — a boy brat of about 9 years old named, you've guessed it, Adolf, and a girl about 2 years younger. The whole family departed the same afternoon.

Quiet descended on the valley again until August 23rd '39 when the main German newspaper announced in letters 3 inches high that Germany & Russia had

signed a non-aggression pact. Whether before or after this date I shall never know, my mother sent a telegram saying that my twin brother Peter was ill & could I return immediately. He was ill with pleurisy but not that bad. Krupps put me on a train to Munich where I changed to an express going through to Flushing in Holland from whence I would take a boat to Harwich.

In Stuttgart 2 Dutch girls got on the train to a tearful farewell from their grandmother — One girl was about 13 yrs ~~old~~ old, with her younger sister. The train went via Rotterdam where the 2 girls got out — I've often wondered whether they survived the Germans murderous air attack on their city.

I had no inkling of world events until I got to the Dutch/German border. — On the platform I bought a copy of the New York Herald Tribune and suddenly realised that all hell had been let loose — no inkling in any German newspaper of course — Please, no war, said Roosevelt, France was mobilising — it was unbelievable.

The Channel steamship was full — every English person on the Continent was trying to get back — I made it

back to English soil on August 28th.
We learnt later that Hitler invaded Poland
on September 1st.

I can only thank my mother for
sending her telegram — if she had not
done so, I was then of an age which
meant that I would have been interned
in Germany when war broke out.

As a postscript in time, the Krupp family
suffered during the war — Claus as a
Luftwaffe officer was killed early on during
a test flight. Eckbert as an Army
lieutenant was killed in Northern Italy,
and Harald in the Army was taken
prisoner in Russia and spent 10 years
in prison as a possible hostage because
of his being a Krupp.

Waldtraut wrote to me when Bertha
Krupp died in 1957 and was quite
nostalgic about the pre-war years of all
of us together and how good it was.

Marvellous memories that I can still
enjoy — that's life.

Buenos Aires
San Isidro F.C.R.M.
Uriburu 644

October 20th, 1957

Dear John.

Thank you very much for your letter full of sympathy for the great loss, which happened to my family. It came all very suddenly, though my mother did not have to suffer and could leave life, which had brought her so tragic times, in a happy and peaceful moment.

Just a week ago I have been a few days in Biliacabach and the Torrevecchia, which I have not seen since the previous times. Showing everything to my eldest (13 year old) daughter I was so much reminded of the

happy holidays, which you, Eve, Eckbert
and I had have together. In a moment
like that you feel very old!

Since 1948 my family and I are
living 1/2 year in Potsdam (Germany)
and the other part of the year in Buenos
Aires. I am glad that I have seen my
mother very often, when I stay in Germany.

Yours sincerely

Nelk van der Vliet