



Taking the initiative, your correspondent swept the Mayor onto the floor for a lively waltz and polka only slightly hampered by her fur-lined snow boots. The resulting unsteadiness was solely a consequence of the Mayor circling in only one direction for the entire sequence.

Our final morning saw us eventually at a "Tourist Farm" for lunch. Everything from the home-made rose petal liqueur to the new-born (live) lamb brought in to meet us, was produced organically on the farm. **The friendliness of our hosts was typical of every aspect**

of our whirlwind tour. Zreče has much to offer to its visitors and at very reasonable prices. Much useful information has been collated and is available from the delegates. Please get in touch. A full report with video and displays will take place on January 14th. There are exciting times ahead! SG

CONTEXT

In 1991, Slovenia declared independence from a then rapidly disintegrating Yugoslavia. In May 2004, Slovenia was admitted to full membership of the EU. In 13 years, the country has made a series of spectacular strides towards compliance with the whole range of EU harmonising regimes.

Whatever images we may have had of Slovenia, we found a community bursting with energy, commitment, and zest for life. Zreče is neat, efficient, modern - most houses in the area have been built to high-grade modern standards but to traditional mountain steep-pitched, pantile roof designs in the last 30 years, set in wonderful scenery, real fairy-tale village and farm clusters, onion-domed / towered churches, beautifully maintained and decorated, with clean, tightly scheduled bus services, an excellent well sign-posted main road system, with excitingly off-beat side roads, and access to skiing and snow boarding and many other winter sports, plus mountain biking, a HUGE sports complex, health and fitness centres to rival the best in upland Europe, thermal springs and spa facilities. SMM

DELEGATION MEMBERS

Garth Steadman	Local industry/agricultural links
Alison Brown	Educational exchanges/systems
Vic Hopkins	Parish council/police/fire/beekeeping
Nigel Close	Business links/sport
Susan Garnett	Art/conservation/drama
Sue Richardson	Tourism/accommodation/women's groups
Stuart Manger	Cultural links/music/media

PLEASE CONTACT US FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Sedbergh Visits Zreče

November 11-14 2004

Your Delegation Reports.....



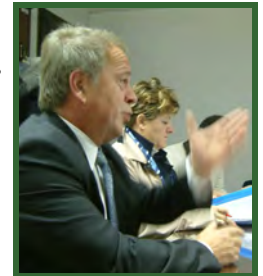
Our first contact with our Zrečian friends was at Graz airport where we were met and presented with be-ribboned carnations, a special Slovenian flower. An hour's drive on a remarkably traffic-free motorway took us across the Austrian border and to a very warm welcome by a mostly brass band. Blueberry liqueur was consumed and pleasantries exchanged with the Mayor and other officials. It was particularly good to greet most of our visitors from September. Our

accommodation was in a recently refurbished hotel, very comfortable and spacious. The feast of St Martin is celebrated at this time and it marks the time when the wine is ready to be consumed. Traditionally duck or goose is eaten as these creatures apparently revealed the hiding-place of the Saint prior to his demise. That evening was spent in a family run rural restaurant. Throughout our visit the Zrečians were anxious to show us as much of their traditional local produce as we could consume. Admittedly this was a challenge but your delegates managed to do their duty. To our delight Samo, his wife, his brother, his cousins and a cousin's wife entertained the assembled company with close harmony songs ranging from folk traditional to American jazz.

At 7.45am Friday morning we met in the Mayor's office for his introductory address on every aspect of the area, industrial, economic, demographic, geographic and expertly summarised and translated for us by Urban.

Factory visits were next on the schedule. Three major companies are located here. Comet produces abrasive discs and Unior car parts and tools. A subsidiary of GKN is also in Zreče. As the home market is only 2 million strong, exporting is very important and several major EU companies are supplied. The companies also sponsor tourism and educational facilities, an enormous advantage to Zreče's highly motivated population. Memories linger of fiery Dantéan furnaces with brilliant reds and oranges of flames and molten metals as they were forged into tools and the glowing waste tossed, Homer Simpson fashion, by green-overalled operatives, into bins. **Considering the presence of 3 busy heavy industrial sites in Zreče there is no evidence at all of air or water pollution. Both domestic and industrial recycling are important factors in the local ethos of healthy living.**

Thence, at a brisk walk, we headed for the "primary/elementary" school (6-14). Ines and Barbara led an all-too-brief tour of music department (headed by Samo's mother), computer department, library with cosy story-telling "grotto" and giant sports hall. We were entertained by both 13 and 8 year-olds singing to us in English and said "dober dan" (good-day) to policeman Saso's young son. **Student exchange ideas were outlined between venues.**





We left, at a trot, via the fire station (retained firemen) to the next level of schooling in Zreče. Students can opt for engineering (with particular emphasis on tool-making) or “house-keeping” which is in reality very similar to the hospitality and catering courses offered at Kendal College. Those with academic ability go on to schools in neighbouring towns. Some of their specialities were offered as finger food with the ubiquitous blueberry liqueur. Musicians appeared and Sue R danced a fetching polka with the Mayor. We obligingly tucked in (it being lunch-time) and concluded our tour with visits to an art room and a presentation on the educational system. **Contact was made here with Zlati, professional artist and teacher, who would like to arrange exchanges of artists and exhibitions, and Simona whose students will embroider part of the new Sedbergh panel.**



Zreče’s thermal baths and health spa complex: the former a series of warm pools, indoors and out, with jacuzzis, exercise baths and exercise equipment. Three of your valiant delegates took the plunge, wisely avoiding excessive exercise after consuming so much. After a brief respite back at our hotel we returned for our evening meal accompanied by more top-class musical entertainment. Good manners required that we work our way through 4 courses preceded by blueberry liqueur and a number of local beverages. Once more the Mayor whisked Sue off her feet in a lively polka.



Saturday dawned cold and wet and our first early morning appointment was the Tourist Office with its windows displaying photographs of Sedbergh and its citizens. Zdenka had appended captions in Slovenian: probably just as well! Nearby was a farmers’ market with local produce at very reasonable prices. A minibus tour followed visiting historic sites (some offering blueberry liqueur) en route. Many of these have been restored by local industrial sponsorship. Low cloud added to the surreal atmosphere in this steep and wooded region. The next stop was a deer farm and sawmill. **Farmers in this region gain additional**

income from sustainable forestry under licence from the government. Cold meats, bread, blueberry liqueur and other beverages were served accompanied by the son of the house on his accordion. Space and the absence of the Mayor unfortunately precluded polka-ing. Off again to the ski resort of Rogla. Rain had turned to snow with altitude and by the time we emerged from a substantial lunch (with blueberry liqueur) white-out conditions prevailed. As our minibus still had its summer tyres, we were packed into 4WD vehicles and whisked off to another part of this very impressive complex for dessert and blueberry liqueur. Rejoining the minibus at a lower altitude we headed off to the village of Gorenje. After visiting its church and legendary priest, we toured a youth centre. **This very well equipped and extensive site has beds for 72 youngsters and should prove an ideal venue for our school exchanges.** Tea and home-made cake and biscuits were the required eating here. A brisk walk took us to another first-class hotel. After inspecting the excellent accommodation we settled down with our glasses of blueberry liqueur to join a considerable number of revellers for another traditional St Martin’s Day celebration. An attractive and extensive meal was served and we did our best to show our appreciation. **All these more informal gatherings were ideal opportunities for further exchanges of ideas.**

