

## WEST LANCASHIRE SECRET MONITOR on TOUR Pt. 3

**Well Well Well**, here we go again, after last years' adventure it defies odds that we are daft enough to do it again! But we did.

After deciding to go to Spain because of the rain, we decided on the Conclave at Torremolinos – in the same hotel as the bar which is convenient or risky, depending on your viewpoint.

Good planning meant that we had time to circulate this round the conclaves to open out this trip to other Secret Monitors, but then the Supreme Ruler of Spain (no the other one not the King) declared U.D.I. (Unilateral declaration of Independence) from UGLE.

So Spain was off and we looked round for a suitable alternative.

Dates being critical, there were few options, then Jersey became attractive with convenient dates – so Jersey it was.

After last year's flight I had a few Qalms (2 tablets 3 hours before flying) about going to



### Jersey Here We Come!

So here we go again the intrepid band of –  
Ian Hamilton Taylor - Provincial Supreme Ruler

Brian Wood - DPGSR

Kenny Brookfield - Non Masonic Friend

Alan Briggs - Prov Guide

And me Mike Hamilton SR Warrington

Conclave

Kenny is a friend and neighbour of Ian's and a great guy full of tales to regale you with. He comes from Longridge near Preston, so we were thankful for Ian who acted as interpreter of that ancient dialect and translated into English. Which was great; as we were then able to laugh in all the right places.

Then we had a little upset with a big volcano, you know the one – Eyjafjallajökull and for those that don't speak Icelandic (*like wat I do*) it

is pronounced Eyjafjallajökull with a hard 'Kar' and a soft 'rol'--easy! Anyway this thing started gushing everywhere and the week before flying all air traffic stood still, till risk assessment prevailed and the guy on the ground (safe) said it was ok for the pilots up there in planes (not so safe) to fly. So after standing by to cancel it was all go again.

A few days before flying Brian rang to say his wife had fallen down and broke her hip, which I thought was a lame excuse but Ian assured me it was for real and we offered our best wishes and fraternal sympathy and oh! Can you pay for your ticket - tough! It's really is a cruel world.

Liverpool embarkation went without a hic-up this time, but the economics of two things puzzled me.

1 – How come the car park fee costs more than the flight? and  
2 - How come the tax on the flight is twice as much as the flight costs?

And to add insult to injury I was asked to pay a donation to the Carbon Trust to offset my greenhouse gases – this didn't offset my greenhouse gases I can tell you. The 50 minute flight passed without incident and as we landed and as the ailerons motorised to house on the plane's wing the black volcanic powder and dust streaked stains disappeared from view, we were soon there collecting our bags and looking for the car hire desk.

We had a big Galaxy people carrier booked – “no you've cancelled Mr Hamilton – **no I haven't here's my confirmation**, we have no record of this, **yes but I have**, well we don't have a Galaxy available, **what do you have**, a Focus, **will we fit**, yes its deceptively big, have you come for the line dancing - this last comment surprised me but I realised she was trying to sweet talk me as the tramadol was wearing off.

I thought the lady played bingo as she had one of those dresses on – you know! This atmosphere was spoiled when she looked up and saw Ian in a cowboy hat and we looked like the Village People. To defuse this uncomfortable moment Ian said we had come for the undertakers' convention, this seemed to put a damper on the conversation.

So off we went in our Focus, which is deceptively big, but you already know that, off to the Merton Hotel. What a great hotel, first class or 4 star, with excellent facilities and an aqua park attached - not literally but across the road, which is a bit cold in your cossie and towel to get to.



Merton Hotel and Pool

Book in and our room wasn't ready - no problem off to explore the Island the east half first. Again Jersey is beautiful in a different way from Guernsey which has a quaint feel about it, Jersey has a nice air or feel to it difficult to quantify, the beaches were glorious with few signs of the minefield and the views from the gun batteries across the approaches well covered from every bunker. On this Island, unlike Guernsey were you are 10 minutes from anywhere, Jersey is twice as big and you are only 20 minutes from anywhere.

30 minutes later we were on the other side of the Island. Anyway after our east of the island tour it was back to the hotel.



Gorey

Progress is called an automatic programmed hotel card pass key - personalised for the extent of your stay, low cost and auto cancelling when time defunct, this is what you get in place of a key nowadays. I prefer a key, you know where you are with a key, and you're never in a hole with a key. So off we trot to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor card key in the door lock reader - no green light - back to the reception, re-programme the cards, back to the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, no green light back to the reception - re-programme the cards and low and behold the housekeeper has opened the door in my absence - blow, and I was blowing after all those stairs. A quick change and its hello St Hellier.

A meal in a seafront restaurant famous for its beer and fresh fish, 3 beers and a soft drink for me, what no beer we asked for 4 different ones before they had one at the bar, Mexican root beer a bit weird but you take what you can get. 3 of us choose a different fish meal, but out of luck we had chicken, we were told this place was famous for its beer and fish but it is better remembered as the German Naval Headquarters.

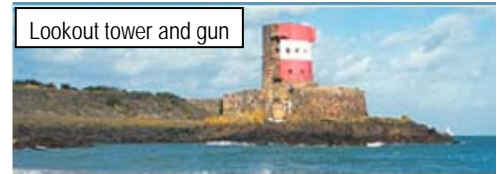
Then on to the town - I can't say where in case they sue - but in Guernsey they wear a woolly jumper thing, here the traditional dress on the locals should be called pelmets but a few were wearing belts the skirts were so short. For some reason I can't fathom this club became our local.

Saturday and the visit to Channel Island Provincial Meeting and what a grand welcome we received, we were well and truly looked after with a guided tour of the Hall. Our many thanks, to all the brethren for their warm welcome. The temple was and is magnificent with a large domed barrel vaulted ceiling 50 feet high above the chequered pavement, with good acoustics. The walls were decorated with large pictures of past masters. So large that the Germans couldn't take these down from the wall and transport them to Berlin, as they did with the smaller pictures. It was nice and cool in here, which is probably why the ground floor and basement were used as a wine cellar by the occupying forces but why the temple was used as a store for the biggest mountain of empty wine bottles is a mystery.

After the meeting and meal it was round the corner to the nearest pub. Here we meet up with the West Wales Secret Monitor contingent. I learnt that as well as liking sheep they like a wee wet. Some of us don't remember the next few hours. In a mist later it was again back on the town and traditional fish and chip supper from Dom Alfredos eaten al fresco with the liberation stone tablets at our feet. Inscriptions on the stone tablets quoted wise words of wisdom from the clairvoyant Neville Chamberlain 'Peace in our time' and Winston Churchill's 'co-operate with the occupying forces' and 'they didn't fight let them starve'. On to our local and more refreshments. Wow it was tough staying to the very end and a few of us had to call it an early night and hitched a lift back to our hotel with the milkman, leaving the diehards behind.

Sunday bright and breezy and a boat trip round the south western side of the island which is just the thing for a hair of the dog as the bar opens as soon as you leave harbour.

A gentle cruise past the fort, the gun embankments, the bastions, the concrete gun emplacements, the concrete lookout towers and some beautiful unspoilt beaches. Out to the lighthouse at Corbiere point, past



Lookout tower and gun

Jack Higgins house on the hill, Derek Warwick's bungalow, Nigel Mansell's bunker and ammo magazine store - no he really does have these which he has bought to preserve - and past numerous millionaire residences.

Then a cruise back, when it was discovered that Alan could sleep standing up with a full pint in hand on a rolling sea without spilling a drop - extraordinary.

In the car and it's a tour round the western side of the Island down the green lanes. But first to lunch and more liquid; then off to the German Hospital tunnels.



Cordiere Lighthouse



Ho8 Tunnels

This was a moving experience; your entrance ticket is an I.D. card of an islander in 1940 and his or her story is told somewhere within the displays and tableaux within the tunnels or at the memorial. Mine was a survivor, Alan's was a successful escapee to England, Ian's another survivor and Kenny's unfortunately died whilst attempting to escape, it was heart rending reading their stories. The remembrance garden was a place of quiet contemplation to sit with the facts -

- English civilians killed during the conflict 330,000,
- German civilians 5.7m!
- One German Soldier for every four Islanders.
- A few tears were shed here for dearly departed islanders.

After a suitable pause it was back on the road down the narrow green lanes. At one point we had to reverse a few hundred metres narrowly missing scraping a newly pointed stone wall to let a big SUV 4 wheel drive monster pass.

A stop at Bergerac's Bar and on leaving we had to reverse to let a big SUV past, the same guy, who stopped for a chat blocking the road for 5 minutes, because that's what you do in Jersey, they are so friendly.

"You know you nearly knocked Geoff Boycotts wall down; if you had have done he would have been out and battered you with his bat".



There are only 84,000 islanders and I think we meet 32,531 of them, so many times did we see the locals and the same faces.

Back to the hotel, past David Coulthards' mothers' penthouse flat, I hate name droppers. Hotel pass key - failed again back to reception - re-programmed, back up, back down new card, back up, back down, re-programmed, back up, and the housekeeper has let Alan in (blast).

Change of dress and out to supper in a specialist fish restaurant renowned for its delicacies of exotic fish meals, after 3 of our party had chosen meat I felt guilty not having fish so I did and it didn't taste too bad with ketchup but the chef seemed upset with our party over something.

Somehow we found our way to our local by the longest short cut known to man; don't try navigating by the stars when there's halogen street lighting and you can barely stand.

But eventually we got there and it was not worth the trek as it was empty - where had everyone gone?

Then it was back to the hotel for a nightcap before turning in.

Monday morning came round so quick; time to go home. I left the Eurocar hire car in the Avis car park - find that what no booking!

The flight was smooth with the commentary from the jockey in the jump seat up front, a lot different from the commentary going out. Then it was "we are now flying at 35,000 feet, at 410knots on a SW heading of 195 degrees with a flight time of 48minutes". This was really professional – I was a bit worried coming back when this jockey said "we are flying quiet high over some blue wet stuff then some green and brown bits, a bit more of the blue then green and brown, we come down a bit and at the green bridge turn left on our approach to Liverpool".

Well whatever it was we flew onwards and descended banking over and turning at Runcorn by a big green bridge, what he would have done if it was cloudy I don't know, he could do with a Tom Tom GPS or that new-fangled stuff called radar. The landing was as smooth as butter and from his accent probably Lurpak.

A safe return from the adversity of our trials.

Good food, good drink, the best of Company.

What more could you ask for?

Here to our next merry meeting!  
Cheers!