



On the Road In England

7 Date Diary...

SEVEN DAYS ON THE ROAD, EACH BAND MEMBER PLUS MARK TAKE A DAY APIECE TO PRESENT YOU WITH THE INSIDE INFO AND THE SALACIOUS GOSSIP DURING THE BAND'S RECENT, SELL-OUT TOUR.

Words: Iain, Malcolm, Calum, Rory, Bruce, Brian, Mark. Photographs: Andrew King and Band.



Friday 4 February
Bristol, Colston Hall
IAIN

What goes down, must come up. We came from the North; Aberdeen to be exact, leaving on a brisk winter's morning. The day before had been spent in meetings, but not all was bad as we got the chance to catch up with Marlene and get her news. As ever, her take on the world was as unique as always and it was good to see her again. Retirement has not blunted her edge!

So we were Heathrow bound for the first concert in Bristol. The Runrig circus had already arrived at the Colston Hall and was being erected by the time we set off. First night nerves made me wonder if the crew had installed a safety net in case of any catastrophes, but I'd have to wait and see.

Heathrow was our first port of call as we had to meet Andy Smith, our driver. He had recently acquired a 'New Bus' from Graeme,



who had driven us often enough in the past and Andy had to go to London for it. It's a short enough jaunt along the motorway to Bristol and the ubiquitous book in hand always helps the time to slip away.

Soundcheck time loomed ever closer, and the feeling of trepidation crept silently among us. You see, the first night inevitably involves a degree of experimentation with the running order of the set. Getting it right is never easy, especially when there are sometimes six opinions as to what will and won't work. Naturally, the best course of action was agreed upon; "let's just run it and see how it feels, we can easily change it tomorrow". Well we all know what that meant!

The concert hall was full, a sell out on the first night. That's a good start I felt. What's more, we performed pretty well under the circumstances, and the time seemed to fly past. Before you could say *Celtic Connections*, the encores were upon us.

Isn't it strange sometimes when you see someone doing something out of character? It's not necessarily a bad thing, more of a surprise matched only by the feeling of, "what happens now then?" Well I have to say all

these things sprung to mind simultaneously when Bruce went walkabout in the audience during *Loch Lomond*. As I said, nothing wrong with that, but it was a five foot drop off the front of the stage, and like a gazelle, he deftly landed on the floor. At this juncture, smiles were creeping across the faces of us all on stage. Bruce was in his element, calmly strolling up and down the aisles, mic in hand..... a man among his people.

Only when he began to make his way back toward the stage did the awful reality hit him. How the hell was he going to get back up there again? Well firstly, he asked a gentleman in the first row if he wouldn't mind standing up so he could use his chair to jump from. Alas... too far from the stage! Plan B, take a run at it and see what happens, too tricky with a microphone in one hand and jet lag had taken a bit of spring out of his legs. So what does a desperate man do in a situation like this?

"Malcolm could you give me a hand up please?" Of course Malcolm thought he was joking but the pleading look in Bruce's eyes told him otherwise. By this time we were almost helpless with laughter and disbelief. I think it took three good hauls from Malcolm to eventually reinstate Bruce back on his knees onstage. It was not to inconsiderable applause that he rose to his feet and resumed his rightful place.

He certainly gave us all a laugh and I dare say I would not have fared much better but the difference being, it wasn't me and therefore I'll laugh as loud as I want.

So there you have it. The first night always throws up a few surprises, but there's no better surprise than getting a kick out of seeing one of your band mates making a bit on an ass of themselves. Thanks Bruce, I hope I'm never in a position to reciprocate.



Saturday 5 February
Birmingham, Symphony Hall
MALCOLM

The morning of the 5th February saw me awake in Bristol, and after the usual hearty breakfast I braved the wind and rain to walk up the long, steep road to that miracle of Victorian engineering, the Clifton Bridge, suspended between the cliffs overlooking the Avon gorge.

I've visited this structure on several occasions, and it never ceases to amaze.

It was designed by the then fledging genius Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who in fact did not live long enough to see the completion in 1864 of his bridge spanning the River Avon, but nevertheless in his lifetime become the most innovative and famous engineer in the world.



Designed originally for horse traffic, it is extraordinary that it now copes with many thousands of vehicles per day.

As I stood at the vertiginous west end of the bridge, it was slightly unnerving to feel the sag and sway of the bridge as the traffic hurtled over and the suspension did its job.

A mad dash down the hill and it was all aboard Driver Andy's sofa-on-wheels for a smooth drive North East to Birmingham, in the heart of the black country.

So-called because of its history of coal mining and heavy industry, this area in the middle of England (the 'Midlands') can lay claim to an equal standing alongside Liverpool and Glasgow as the birthplace of some of the most famous names in 60s and 70s rock music.

Perhaps because of the gritty reality of working class life in the area at that time, many of the bands were of the harder rock and soulful persuasion, in contrast to the more tuneful efforts of the Liverpoolian groups.

Step forward Led Zeppelin, Motorhead, Spencer Davis Group, Ozzy Osbourne, Black Sabbath, Slade, Judas Priest, The Move and many more.

However, the venue we were heading for was the home of an altogether more civilised 'Brummie Band', that of the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, more of which later...

Conversation on the journey up revolved around the latest changes to the set (of songs) we would do that night.

This was to become a daily feature of

