

DELIRIUM TREMENS.

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A TOUR OF NORTHERN HANDBOM by EDWIN MACDONALD.

In the middle of August I received information from Douglas Webster to the effect that one Erik Needham had been posted to Banff, about half-way between Aberdeen and Inverness, that the Webster ménage was spending some holidays there and that Doug hoped he and I could spend the weekend of the 21st there with Erik, and make whoopee. Accordingly I set out on the Saturday morning, taking with me a SCOOP booklet to peruse on the train. This turned out to be so highly amusing to my distorted sense of humour that it was with great difficulty - and all but asphyxiating myself in the process - that I refrained from exploding in laughter every minute or two, not wishing to alarm the other occupants of the coach with fears for my sanity.

At Elgin I changed trains and found myself in the company of a typical East Coast fisherman and another gent, in one corner, and a tart opposite me. As the tart was a pretty scabby bitch I transferred my attention to the conversation which ensued between the two males. The tubby gent bemoaned all the horrors of modern warfare, while the fisherman at intervals ejaculated "Aaa-ayeeee!" They came to the conclusion that "This Nineteen Age should nay-uh ha' been invented." Again at Ballynagait I had to change and temerarily entered a compartment housing a gang of labourers. Here I was treated to a cussing competition with the cusses directed at those people who will travel for

pleasure. I shrank into my corner....

Mr. Webster, Snr., and son Tony discovered me trickling out of the compartment in the rear of a stream of navvies, when we arrived at Banff, and conducted me to the Fife Arms Hotel. In the evening we met Doug on his arrival in bus, and went to bed after a little snack. Next morning we took a bus to Macduff and went on to the swimming pool where some of the party took a dip. We sat for a while and admired the legs and things of some wenches very considerably displaying large bare expanses. Then we walked and climbed along the cliffs, admiring the scenery which was very nice!

After we had stowed our guts back at the Fife Arms, we walked around the town, having given up hope of seeing Erik, who had been moved nearer Elgin, and was apparently unable to make it. In the hotel garden, the guests were treated to the spectacle of Douglas and myself valiantly attempting to climb a tree, and, when we had attained our precarious positions, dangling from the branches. Tony took a nice picture of us. We took one or two more snaps, sipped coffee, gossipped, and so forth; eventually, I roused myself out of my armchair after enjoying Tony's rendering of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 to discover that Doug - who had gone out to secure a place in the bus queue - must by now have departed, without taking a formal farewell.... The following morn saw me on my

way back to Inverness; change again at Tillynaught, fortunately, for by this time there were so many people in the compartment that I was half-way out of the window. An hour's sojourn in Elgin, another hour in the train, and my journey was complete.

After hearing of Doug's various excursions, I determined to have a trip round the northern portion of fandon myself, and early on Wednesday morning I set out for Edinburgh, having despatched warning notes to Michael Rosenblum and Johnny Burke, (who would be passing through that city on his way to the Orkneys, on Tuesday) I established myself in the neighbourhood of the Zoo, and in the evening went out to look for Osmond Robb. Finding his residence, I was informed that he was on duty and was directed to the N.F.S. Station. There Osmond took me on a tour of inspection and talked very interestingly. I retired to my H.Q. to find a telegram from JTB awaiting me with instructions to meet him next day 2 p.m. Scott Monument. This was good. In the morning, being so near the Zoo, I paid it a visit. Half of the enclosures were gung up for victory and lack of animals, but I was attracted to one spot by the interest and hilarity evident among a few girls admiring a certain species of ape. "What a face it has," quoth one, "just like an old man's!" But 'twas obviously not its face they were intrigued by!

Being a Scot, I had to get my money's worth at the Zoo, so was late in getting back for dinner, and toppled out of the tram at Scott Monument at 2.20. No sign of any fan. I was about to break down and weep when I saw a figure wending its way through the traffic from the other side of the street, a figure

which was obviously Johnny Burke. We went down to the station to see about my train, then explored some bookshops, though we couldn't find very satisfactory second-hand ones. John didn't miss any opportunity to hurl insults at Scotland and the Scots, and it put the lid on things when we were crossing a street & a double-decker roared at John, who narrowly escaped with his life. We had refreshments in a bar - a milk one - and sat down in the Frances Street Gardens, John vilifying the Scott Monument on his way past it. But we admired a Municipal Building we came across, a quite impressive erection which, I am since informed, was St. Andrew's House. Soon I was seeing John off, rushing to collect my goods & chattels, and on a train once more.

Leeds was reached about 4am, where quite a decent Waiting Room housed me until such time as I thought life might be rampant at Grange Terrace. I was hospitably received by Mrs. Rosenblum and the cat. Fans seem to be fond of mad cats. I was amused by the antics of this feline, only called "Pussy" as far as I know, stalking flies, then springing upon and mauling them with its claws, conveying the remains to its mouth and devouring them with fiendish relish. I was turned loose among Mike's books for a while and then given directions to find my way to his place of work. (Oh yes, Mike starts at some unearthly hour and had long ago left the house.) Miraculously, I found the place, where I stood in awe for a few moments, watching this seemingly ordinary person busily digging, this great man who had kept British fandon together in times of stress. I made myself known and left with instructions for finding bookshops. In the evening Michael came home, and

next day, after I'd slept in the midst of rows and piles of magazines and books, we went through to Manchester. I saw bomb damage for the first time - or its effects - in Leeds, where portions of the wall along the railway line had been replaced with new brick, and in the skeletal sections of ---- Station and nearby buildings. We found Beresford Road after some searching and banged on the door of No. 22. The door opened and there stood a typical fan, voluminous hair standing on end, bristles sticking out of chin, wild glare of eye. Ron Lane ushered us in. He had just got up, it seemed. We chatted and looked over some books and things. The only other occupant of the house at the time, Ron's grandmother, produced a jam tart and stuff which we promptly scoffed, and then we three left for the abode of George Ellis. George was at the pictures, and we were going away when whom did we bump into but George. He protested that he wanted his tea, but we dragged him away towards the habitation of Ron Bradbury. We thought we'd arrive there just about the time that Ron got home from work. Somebody remarked that Ron might even be on the same tram as us, and wouldn't that be funny. We looked but saw not. Getting up with the idea that we should get off somewhere about here, whom should we see but Ron B! Ron was rather stunned to see this procession of four fans descending after him, and before he had recovered sufficiently to do anything about it, we were all in his house. His Ma was misled enough to put out before us platesful of toothsome home-baked raspberry tarts and fruit cakes. What with Mike and Ron L, and I not having eaten for some time, and George having had no tea, and Ron B. just home for

his, the mounds of cakes disappeared, I fear, like Hey Presto! Then Ron B. showed us some of his well-executed paintings of a science-fiction nature, and I took some unsuccessful photos.

Now Mike, Ron L., George and I had to move again. We were next seen trying to break the door down and climb through the windows at 41 Longford Place. But the Turners had apparently seen us coming for the place was locked up. Enquiry at a neighbour's, however, solicited the information that nobody was at home, so we reluctantly departed.

Mike and I were soon in Leeds again, where we unsuccessfully tried to force an entry into Ron Chadwick's lair, then went to bed.

Next morning I foolishly agreed to go out to work with Michael. I was placed in a pair of wellington boots several sizes too big for me and had to journey across Leeds with these things slipping down my legs at every step, so that I had a horrible feeling they were coming off, that I would leave one behind somewhere. The task was to gather in a good crop of several hundred cauliflowers. Mike had a large, evil-looking knife which he handled with a disconcerting dexterity, and proceeded with his boss to decapitate the long rows of cauliflowers. By this time I was smothered in a piece of sacking, tied around me to protect my clothes. I was to help loading the barrow and propelling to shed. Michael demonstrated: by some marvellous knack he stuffed about a dozen huge cauliflowers up under each arm & deposited them in barrow. I ventured to emulate this feat. I managed to get about five dirty wet, frog-infested cauliflowers under one arm and perhaps two under the other, and with this load staggered to the bar-

row, frantically hanging on to the veg. Then to pull the rope attached to this great barrow, uphill to the shed. When this had been done numerous times I was in a state of exhaustion and fell into the tram seat to recuperate on the way back. I discovered that there was a train to Glasgow that afternoon, and, since I was supposed to be working next day, decided to take it.

On the way back to Grange Terrace we again called at Ken Chadwick's and this time got in. Ken came with us, and so to the station. We said our farewells and the train chugged out one hour late. I had to catch a connection at Glasgow Central a few minutes after arriving at St. Enoch. I was sitting opposite a little man with moustache and bowler hat, who related a long story about the impending death of his mother-in-law. He once produced an old cigarette tin, fastened with an elastic band, containing hard-boiled sweets, and drew diagrams on the newspaper for me, showing me how to get from St. ENOCH to Central. The train was late and I charged on to the platform at Central two minutes late, to find that at least one train was running to time. So I looked for a waiting room to inhabit until 5.15 a.m. when the next train departed.

There was none! I groped my way back to St. Enoch to find it was being shut up for the night. I set off in search of Buchanan Street Station, to be informed on asking directions that it was closed for the night. I looked for a tram to take me to some friends I have in Glasgow. There was none. I looked for a taxi. There was none. So here was I, at midnight, in a strange city with an evil reputation, in the blackout, nowhere to go. It was cold. It began to rain. I was on the verge of

collapse, when I saw a bright torch flashing. Knowing that only a policeman would dare show so much light, I approached him with some idea of asking for a cell for the night, but was directed to a "private hotel". Here the crooked-looking proprietor said I could have a bed. "Eight and six!!" I paid. "You'll have to share a room with these two fellows." Following the direction of his greasy thumb my gaze alighted upon two big hefty blokes looking stonily towards us. "All right," I whispered, and followed them up to the room. The guys started jabbering in some foreign language.... I had visions of being found murdered in my bed in the morning, or at least overpowered and all my money taken, but the Norwegians were quite harmless, and I survived all right.

On the train once more; change at Perth; thence to Inverness. Entertainment was provided by a newlywed couple who fought the whole way, but were evidently very much in love with each other. And before I knew it I was striding over the Ness, rather dirty and weary, toward the "Family Mansion", after many very interesting and enjoyable experiences. I like fans, and may I put in here a word of praise for the fortitude and kindness of their families....

ASTRONAUTICS PUBLICISED !!

Did you observe that most interesting article on rocket flight, which appeared in the Sunday Express a few weeks back?

This sheet edited and stencilled by Dennis Tucker, of "Wicklow", 87 Oakridge Road, HIGH WYCOMBE, Bucks. You see it only by kind courtesy of J. MICHAEL ROSENBLUM, who, we are pleased to say, does the dirty work of duplicating and stapling.....