

## District Chairman's Message

*Yet another late Boomer!*

*It seems this is becoming the norm rather than the exception – so much so, that we have had a rethink on the timing of due dates, but as this is your last Boomer, our class of 2010, we will talk to our 2011 Outbounds about that rather than in this message.*

*Unfortunately, again I didn't receive all reports on time, the last few arriving after our printers closed for the Xmas break. They have only recently reopened as I finish my message to complete this issue. And as you can see from the front cover, Xmas and New Year have come and gone, you have all said your goodbyes to your adopted countries, families and friends and you are all home!*

*At the risk of sounding overly biased, having read your reports, I am continually amazed by this wonderful Rotary programme and the life-long affect that it has on so many young lives.*

*Of course, it is exciting to read in your reports about the amazing places you have visited (I am truly envious!) that so many Aussies (of all ages, not just teenagers) can only dream about seeing. You were not tourists - you were 'locals', and often you were with other locals, who are now your close friends and adopted families. That is irreplaceable – such places will hold so much more meaning for you than a tourist experience could ever convey. These new families and friends are now forever a part of who you are: the young Aussie who left all that was safe and familiar to embark on a 51 week journey that taught you a new language (can you remember the first time that you dreamed in your adoptive tongue?); that forced you out of your comfort zone on more occasions than you can remember (maybe?); that made you realise how different other cultures and customs are from your own; that gave you a greater appreciation of those back home who you love and who love you; that brought tears of both laughter and sadness to your eyes over what would probably seem inconsequential to others, but will remain etched into your psyche.*

*So, yes, Rotary and your exchange has changed you and you probably know, understand and found out more about yourself in the last 12 months than many of your peers who haven't had the benefit of your experience.*

*But now reality bites! You are home! You are not only a returned RYEP student but a Queenslander. So many around you are faced with challenges that are unimaginable in the aftermath of our recent flood crisis. Some will have the strength to move on; unfortunately some will not. Empathise with your fellow Queenslanders and put your challenging adjustment period in perspective.*

*I know that this period will be difficult for some of you and your parents and friends. With all those personal emotions of your exchange at the fore, use them positively to move on with the next phase of your life. No doubt many of you will already be formulating future (return) travel plans, but you should also be thinking about what you can give back.*

*As I mentioned in my message in the last Boomer, as Rebounders, your period overseas may be over, but your exchange obligations aren't. Besides your Debrief and Graduation Dinner (12<sup>th</sup> Feb), District Conference in Ipswich (18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> March), 2012 Interviews (28<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> May) and September Camp (16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Sept), you are asked to play a major part in the future of our program in our district, by visiting schools and clubs, telling your story, promoting YEP and encouraging more clubs to share in the benefits that come with sponsoring and hosting a Rotary Youth Exchange student.*

*And don't forget incoming RI President, Kalyan Banerjee's goal "for Rotary to become the preferred organisation for today's generation to join and to participate in, to make the world better, safer and happier". That's you, guys! Rotaract and Rotary are calling you, your youthfulness, vibrancy and enthusiasm to continue your association with the organisation that gave you your exchange opportunity.*

*To finish, welcome home, thank you for being (and hopefully continue to be) great ambassadors for Rotary and we look forward to you sharing more of your exchange experiences with us and celebrating your achievements on February 12<sup>th</sup>.*

*Signing off with the words that we use most often when talking to our students,*

**Take Every Opportunity**

*Joe & Dee*

## **BELGIUM**

### **Millie Ganko**

*Host Club : Namur  
Sponsor Club : Goodna*

Today was a Monday just like any other here, except, as I walked out of gym I realised

I had just finished the last gym class of my life. It made me think about how close the end really is. I have 1 month and 9 days until I leave Belgium and when you think about how long a lifetime is, 40 days is really not very long at all.

Since my last article I have been doing a lot. It's like everyone has realised that I am leaving really soon and wants to do as much as they can with me. With the beginning of the school year I restarted at a different school which is great, I learnt a lot at the old one but here I have many friends and the other students and teachers are incredibly nice and helpful. I feel I have made a lot of progress there with my French.

My family came here from Australia at the beginning of October which was amazing. To be honest I was a bit anxious about them coming but it was great and I'm glad they did. It was good for them to be able to meet my host families and friends here and I know my host families enjoyed meeting them too. I was lucky enough to be able to go with my family to Poland for the wedding of one of my cousins. It was great to see all my cousins again and the wedding was a very different experience!!! The reception party went until 5am in the morning and after a little nap started up again at midday until about 10pm!!!!

After my family left I changed host families. My new family, or host parents are amazing. There are no children which everyone was a bit anxious about but it is fantastic. I already knew my host parents as my host Dad is the responsible for Australian students in Belgium and also the father of my first host siblings whose parents are divorced. I love being with them in the apartment, it is a very different experience, living the single child life and I feel very spoilt, it's the first time since I was about 10 that I haven't had to make my own lunches for school.

At the end of October we had school holidays for one week and I went on the Rotary trip to Paris. It was an amazing experience which only made me love Paris more, if that is possible!!! It was a great trip which was over far too quickly. We saw some amazing sights, The Louvre, The Musée d'Orsay, Eiffel Tower but it was also great to meet all the new exchange students from the Northern Hemisphere countries who had recently arrived in Belgium. I made lots of new friends once again and am sad that I will be leaving them so soon.



After the week of holidays, during the first week back at school we had a long weekend with Thursday and Friday off. My host parents decided to take the opportunity to take me and two other exchange students (from Australia and New Zealand) to Amsterdam with them. It was amazing and not what I had expected, in a good way. We spent the 4 days riding around everywhere on yellow bikes and seeing the amazing sights of Amsterdam. There was the amazing canals, architecture, wonky buildings and of course the famous "Red Light District" but the most amazing things we saw were the Jewish Museum, The Van Gogh Museum and the house in which Anne Frank hid during the German occupation of Holland. This was incredibly moving and I don't think we spoke of anything much else for the rest of the day.

The weekend after this (I never stop!!) my second host family took me to see the French region of Alsace, specifically Strasbourg. This was amazing and while we were only there for one night we still saw many things and tried many different dishes of the region like tartiflette which is a kind of potato bake with reblochon cheese, cream, lardons and often onions.

The next weekend was a little less exiting but great none the less. After a quiet Saturday we had a very exciting Sunday.

## **BELGIUM**

**Millie Ganko**

*(cont.)*

Sunday morning we rose early and got cooking for the Rotary exchange students Exotic Lunch. Us Australians put in a big effort with an assortment of dishes from Damper to Rissoles, Potato salad and Meat pies!!!! It was a great event and everyone got to try many dishes from all over the world. My favorite was definitely the South American and Indian foods.



The weekend just passed I got the chance to go with the family of another exchange student from New Zealand to Cologne in Germany for the famous Christmas Markets. I remember seeing Christmas Markets in movies, photos and paintings but I never thought they would be exactly like I had seen, maybe we just got lucky. The first evening we went to see the markets by night and as we walked through the streets covered in Christmas decorations, the smell of mulled wine in the air and Christmas carols being sung it started to snow. It was a beautiful sight to see and it was really like we were in a fairytale.

My time in Belgium is nearly finished and although I am looking forward to seeing my family and friends I will be very sad to leave my host families and friends here, as well as this funny little country which I have come to love. I will always remember my time here and I will be sure to make the most of the time I have left.

Camilla Ganko  
Outbound to Belgium 2010

## **BRAZIL**

**Scott Wieland**

*Host Club : Arapongas Gralha-Azul*

*Sponsor Club : Carindale*

This Boomer issue comes as the hardest to write yet as I know it's the last. With just over a month left to go on my exchange thinking about what to write has really put my exchange and my self-change into perspective. After talking about the honey moon period of exchange and the crossroads in my first two reports it falls to this one to talk about the finish. As I am currently on a bus with 50 other exchangers, most who are finishing in a month or two as well, I have a lot of experience to draw upon. However first things first.

My time before this trip has been split up into two significant parts, my time in my own town and a trip with my family around the major parts of Brazil (again). My own town has 100,000 people and in comparison to Brazilian towns is smallish erring on the medium. While it means there aren't that many interesting things to always do, everybody knows everybody else which means you can create your own fun without too much hassle. My role as an exchanger has changed also going from the newbie in my town to the oldie and showing the new exchangers, one from Mexico, United States and Germany each, the best places to go, who to know etc etc. While this has been very much like Australia in the respect of going to school then finding something to do on the weekends and afternoons there are two major differences for me. Firstly is my host family, I live with my host parents, host sister and two aunts. This makes the family set up a little strange because while my parents are generally in charge of me my host aunt is the one who has 'charge' over me with rotary. Also the dynamic of who I see during the day is also changed, generally I will have breakfast with my host parents/sister then go to school, come home for lunch with them, but after 3 pm my aunts will be the ones home and my host parents won't get home til 6 pm or later. So other than being different and getting used to the family dynamic, it has helped with my communication skills, as I may have to repeat myself between the morning and afternoon if I have to explain something important. The other way my general exchange life differs from my Australian life is the ability I have to go

# BRAZIL

## Scott Wieland

(cont.)

to a bigger town half an hour away on the weekends. My host brother from my first family studies there so I go stay with him and join in the activities he does or visit the exchangers in that city as there is more of them there being our district centre. This has given me the opportunities to not only make friends in one city but basically all over our district and the chance to see how Brazil life is in a smaller town and a big city.



Getting along with your siblings is sometimes a hard thing luckily I've been away from mine that when they actually got to South America I actually sincerely missed them. With my mum, brother and two sisters I travelled to Buenos Aires, Foz de Iguacu, Rio de Janeiro and good ol' Arapongas. It was truly some of the best times I've had in Brazil and Argentina not just because it was with my family or that I was travelling but just having those people you love most around to share with them what is now a part of yourself and also to gain a part of yourself that has been missing the inside jokes that only they get or the little mannerisms that you all have coming from the same family. It was also nice to show them my little part of Brazil too. A lot of memories and a lot of shoes on the girls' part were gained and I'm sure we'll remember it for years to come.

Now to this bus ride I am on now. One month travelling around with fifty exchangers to some of the greatest beaches and cities Brazil have to offer. LET'S FESTAAAAA! I'm currently 10 days in and going strong. Being exchangers everyone has become best friends over night. I think it's that knowledge that we have to say goodbye eventually as we are exchangers that makes us really want to get the most out of the time we have when we meet like minded/ great people.



Basically the trip goes from Brasilia, the capital of Brazil in the middle of the country over to the coast and travel part way up the northeast beaches and back down all the way to Rio de Janeiro, stopping off at such places as Fortaleza, Natal, Recife and Salvador. Most of us on the trip are Aussies with the rest consisting of Danes, Germans, Americans, Canadians and the Latinos, I say Latinos and not their specific country because they are all basically brothers that you wouldn't be able to tell one from the other.

As I said earlier the finish line is in site to my time in Brazil however I have a lot of hurdles along the way to get over to keep my mind off of it. This trip is called the dream trip for a reason and I look forward to the rest of it (hopefully there are enough undies in the suitcase). Then I have Christmas, which from the decorations around the different cities I've already been to looks like a big deal and New Year's as well! After that is my birthday, turning 19, almost out of my teens and it's already making me feel old. After that however is the plane ride home and while it'll be a sad time all of the Aussies on this trip have decided that after we have all stopped crying we can have a party on the plane! That's it from Brazil! Feliz Natal and Ano Novo! Boas Festas tudo mundo!



# CZECH REPUBLIC

**Zoe Buchanan**

*Host Club : Ceske Budejovice*

*Sponsor Club : Sumner Park*

## BEERNATION

Some know Czech Republic as a nation of models, a hockey nation or even a food nation. It is, however, most prominently a beer nation. Everything in this little country from bathing to cleaning is associated with beer. The Czech Republic, which holds the world record for beer consumption per capita, is fittingly named the belly of the world as the center point of Europe can be found within its borders. A more plausible theory would suggest the origin of this name is a result of the visible prominence of large bellies caused by excess beer drinking. Everything in this little host country of mine is indeed influenced by or has something to do with beer. This is a little snippet into my life in a beer nation.



Historically, from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, nearly every town in the Czech Republic nurtured some kind of beer brewery. Previously monasteries played a major role in the production and distribution of beer to the public. Nowadays there are very few Czech monasteries brewing and selling beer to the public. Perhaps that is the reason for the rapid decline in church attendance in recent years to that point where only 14% of the Czech population attends church regularly. Beer is so deeply embedded into Czech culture that it was even considered a determining factor in the split between the Czechs and the Slovaks in 1993. It is said that the separation was a natural result of difference in opinion and practice in many areas of life including the fact that Slovaks don't drink enough beer.

Within Czech Republic I live in Ceske Budejovice which is one of two major beer brewing towns, the other being Plzen. Consecutively these towns brew Budweiser and Pilsner two of the most well-known and tasty beers in the world. This famous amber liquid is so cheap and readily available in my neck of the woods that my host grandmother even adds a cup of Pilsner to soapy water to clean the indoor plants. This multipurpose liquid apparently gets rid of unyielding dust particles better than your average household detergent. It doesn't stop there by any means. In sickness (a glass before bed will always make you feel happier and healthier) and in health (when we cheers in Czech we say 'na zdravi' which means 'to your health') beer is as much a necessity of life here in Czech as water. In fact a half litre of beer sells for about one euro which is less than the price of bottled water in Germany or Austria. In the movie My Big Fat Greek Wedding Toula's father, Mr Portokalos, swears by Windex as a product that will fix anything from psoriasis to poisonivy. Beer is the Czech Republic's version of Windex. A liquid that serves as a purpose for almost anything!

In the summer, I visited a town in the west of Czech Republic with my host family where we bathed in a bath of beer while enjoying some of the local brew. It was certainly a unique experience that was not only relaxing but tasted delightfully good as well. So the Czechs even inject a little beer culture into their holidays and relaxation rituals. Beer is also a prerequisite for social occasions. In times of celebration beer is equally as important if not more integral to the celebration than whatever is being celebrated. That said, the Czech mentality towards beer consumption is refreshingly relaxed and commonsensical. To drink and be merry and to enjoy a beverage that raises the spirits is best done with a group of friends, in moderation and not for the sole purpose of becoming legless.

Czech People have many peculiarities that distinguish them from other beer nations likes Germany or Ireland. Czech women are renowned for their beauty, is there any coincidence there given the copious amounts of alcohol consumed here? Czech men, although not as gifted in the looks department, tend to have particularly toned arms that come from repeatedly transferring beer from the table to their mouths. Well there is no real evidence to back up that last part, but from observation I can tell you it is highly likely to be true! In addition, Czech people seem to enjoy anything that makes them thirsty. From

## **CZECH REPUBLIC**

### **Zoe Buchanan**

*(cont.)*

their world famous glass industry to their overachievement in the field of Architecture to their well earned place as musicians on the world stage, Czech's will rightly make any excuse to sit down and chug back a glass of this ice cold beverage.



Beer is completely integrated into Czech Culture. It has a long standing history within my host country and as an outsider I can see just how much of a part it plays in defining and shaping Czech people and their culture. It may seem farfetched to suggest this but you only have to step off the plane in Prague and see a huge billboard saying 'Welcome to Prague, home of (insert beer brand here)' and you know you have entered into a truly unique place where beer really is the belly of this culture's world.

## **DENMARK**

### **Bridget Taylor**

*Host Club : Vejen  
Sponsor Club : Jindalee*

And now for the third and final Boomer report of the year! The last few months have been unbelievably hectic. I've had every weekend planned for months in advance just trying to fit in all the last things I want to see or do in my time here, as well as spend time with all the amazing friends I have made while on exchange.

So just after my last Boomer I changed families for the last time. I moved only a street away from my 2<sup>nd</sup> family so it still nice and close to school. It only takes 10mins on my bike to get to school. Unless of course it's snowing like crazy and the tires on my bike freeze, forcing me to drag

my bike through two feet of snow and thus taking 45minutes to get to class (as it was for me a couple of weeks ago). Now I live with the Lorentsen Family: dad Benny, mum Annette, sister Anne 20 and brother Claus 19. They're avid soccer fans and they've even got me calling it 'football'. Just after I first arrived in the family they took me with them to Copenhagen to see København FC play in Denmark's biggest stadium. It was really fun, and we've been following almost every game since.

In November I got the chance to visit my Swedish 'sister' Mia, who had been my exchange student in Australia. She lives in the south of Sweden, only about 4 hours on the train away from my town. It was so great to see her again, I had been looking forward to it all year. I met her friends and spent time sightseeing in Malmö and Helsingborg with her. I was even able to understand a little Swedish and talk Danish to her and her family which was amazing. I've already planned to visit her again when I come back to Europe with my sister Aidan in a few years time (hopefully). It was such a great trip.

I'm very lucky that my current host family owns a summer house at Blåvand, which is one of the nicest beachside vacation spots in Denmark. I went there for a weekend with my host mum and dad to see the house and see the sights. Blåvand has a lot of history and was a point of defense during WW2. There are still a lot of military training areas around Blåvand, but it is now more famous for its beautiful coastline and enormous off shore wind farm.



A few months ago I was also involved in my school's Musical production this year. I was in the choir singing entirely in Danish. It was musical written by some of the teachers that was based on the 'X Factor' television show and contained music entirely from the classic Danish rock band 'Gasolin'. It was so fun to be involved, and it was a really funny show – jam packed with that special brand of dark Danish humor.

# DENMARK

## Bridget Taylor

(cont.)

Last week myself and three of the other exchange students in my school made a video to present to our school during morning assembly. It was a short film about what it was like to be an exchange student in Denmark, and it highlighted some of the cultural differences that we found confusing, entertaining and utterly hilarious. It was sort of a thank you/farewell gift we had made for our classmates in preparation for our return home.



At the moment I'm getting set up to move back to my 2<sup>nd</sup> family as

my current family is travelling to the Dominican Republic for Christmas. I'm really hoping for a white Christmas, no one is really sure what the weather will be like since all the snow that was here only a couple of days ago has now melted away, I even started thinking that I had imagined all the snow, until of course I was painfully reminded when I slipped over on some of the remaining ice outside of school, resulting in an impressive bruise and a red face.

The lead up to Christmas and the whole Christmas season in Denmark is really special. Everyone gets into the decorating, even at school, almost every classroom is covered in decorations and the school even has a giant Christmas tree which my class had the privilege of decorating this year. The towns are covered in beautiful lights and decorations, it's like living in a snowglobe. Danish people also have a lot of really nice Christmas traditions, like Christmas Calendars, Advent gifts, special television shows for children that they only show at Christmas time, and of course the food. I'm really looking forward to spending Christmas here in Denmark. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of December my second family is taking me with them on a skiing holiday in France, we'll be there until new years eve and then we come back to Denmark on the 1<sup>st</sup>

January. After that it's only two weeks until I fly home.

So now I have to think about what I'll take with me and everything I'll leave behind and both a literal and metaphorical sense. I came to Denmark with my life in a suitcase, and a sense of adventure in my stride. I have since built a life here, with family, friends (and apparently lots and lots of stuff) and it seems I have now come full circle. Once again I have to pack my bags and leave my life behind, not entirely sure of what waits for me when I step off that plane. Of course there will be the smiling faces of my family and friends who I have missed and grown more appreciative of over the year, but I have changed so much over the year and I wonder if it has at home as well. One thing I know for sure is that I am excited for the future, excited to see how the new me (who is not really so different from the old me) is going to fit into my old world. I'm looking forward to starting university, learning new things, making new friends and moving on to an entirely new chapter of my life.

I'd always imagined what my exchange year would be like but all my wildest dreams couldn't compare to the love and generosity I have experienced from the Danish people, as well as the amazing things I have done. I have truly made friends for life - not only here in Denmark, but all over the world - and lived with families that I will always be considered a part of, and whom I will always carry fondly in my heart. Words cannot describe what a challenging, life changing and unbelievably rewarding experience my exchange has been. I wish that everyone could and would go on exchange. It has been the best thing I've done in my life so far, and I've grown more as a person than I could have imagined. All I can do is thank Rotary a thousand times over for this opportunity, and of course my family who have supported me all year and whom I love dearly. Thank-you everyone, and I'll see you soon!



# DENMARK

## Sarah Salvesani

Host Club : Pandrup  
Sponsor Club : Archerfield

### Denmark seen from Down under

It has now been 3 months since my last report and how incredible this seems for me. I have exactly 6 weeks left of my exchange and it's starting to become a little hard for me to face this fact. It is now December in Denmark and I would like you think of the colour white for a second, because it is a winter wonderland here and this is only one of the reasons for me having become so attached to this beautiful country.

Winter in Denmark is stunning but this year the snow has come a little too early, I have been told. Usually the snow only comes in December around Christmas, but on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November I woke up to fluffy particles falling from the sky. I couldn't believe it and I stood at the front door of my family's house mouth wide open in shock. Immediately afterwards I got out my phone and texted my friend (despite the fact it was 6:00am). This is how the text read, "IT'S SNOWING! ☺" Obviously I was excited and he probably thought I was just a crazy Australian, but the snow excites me that much! Three things I thought about when the snow arrived:



1. Sleeping with the heater on and a big quilt wrapped around me.
2. Hot cocoa with cream.
3. Making snow angels and snowmen (I enjoy this thoroughly).

Three things I didn't think about:

1. Late buses or buses that never come because of the amount of snow in some areas.
2. Not being able to wear jeans without having to put thermals underneath.

3. It gets darker earlier in the day, goodbye to sunlit mornings when getting up for school.

So as you can see there are ups and downs to living with snow and just yesterday (28<sup>th</sup> of November) I waited in Aalborg for 1 hour and 35 minutes for a bus that never came. That's the morning I decided I wouldn't wear thermals because I thought I would be getting on the bus straight away. By the time I made it to my friend's house I was frozen! It took a while to get me warm again, a heat pack, cup of tea, body heat and a big quilt. But anyway enough about the snow I have better things to tell of.



On the 20<sup>th</sup> of August I moved in with my third host family, Morten and Dorte Nysted. I had one host sister (Kathrine), who is 11 years old and one host brother (Emil), who is 14 years old. I was living in a small town called Pandrup and was lucky to have my host sister's room as she and her brother don't live with Morten much, only every second weekend. The room was beautiful with a soft bed, TV and I even had my own bathroom. My host dad, Morten owns part of a company called "Pan Pac engineering" and they make robots to package wholesale goods. Dorte is a German teacher working at Fjerritslev School. We all got along very well and in the afternoons when I got home from school Dorte and I would take a bike ride together or go to the gym. Straight away we realised we had the same interest in second hand shopping, luckily Denmark has many small second hand stores in every town so this was a frequent hobby for us. Living with Morten and Dorte was fun and I got to experience a life with a father who was away from home alot. Morten frequently worked late hours or was away from home to sell the robots and have meetings with people. He was once away for a weekend because he went to Venice, he also went to Germany for a couple days on business.

## DENMARK

**Sarah Salvesani**

*(cont.)*



On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September, my exchange student friend Sarah McPherson came to visit me. She is living in Århus, a good hour and a half train ride and then an hour bus ride from where I live. So from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> she visited and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dorte and Morten took, Sarah, Emil, Kathrine and I to Bjørnø, a small island with only a population of 33 people. To get there we had to drive a couple of hours to the island of Funen, from where we caught a little ferry to Bjørnø. The island is so small and scarcely populated that people living there don't even lock their houses and no one has a car. Sarah and I stayed in a house owned by a nice old lady and she said she has never had a key for it. The small shop on the island was also unoccupied and if you wanted to buy something there was a bell outside you could ring for service. On Bjørnø we visited Morten's older brother, Leif and some family friends. The first thing we did the next day was fishing on the jetty, fishing for starfish and jellyfish, then we went double kayaking. Sarah and I decided on being in a kayak together, we kayaked 11 kilometres all the way around the island, but with great difficulty. Half way around the island we started fighting because we couldn't work the kayak together. We were the slowest pair out of everyone and even managed to get ourselves bogged by kayaking to close to the shore. Now when I think about it I just laugh, but at the time it was no laughing matter. But we did eventually make it the whole way having sacrificed a pit stop because of our slowness. In the afternoon we just relaxed and even played a game of Soccer, the kids against Morten and Leif. This was some game and very competitive, I gave up after Leif kicked the ball into my stomach twice; I was definitely not trying for a third time. That night was cosy, we

ate a lovely dinner and Sarah and I talked with Julie and sat around listening to Leif play the guitar. The next day (5<sup>th</sup> of September) we left Bjørnø and dropped Sarah off in Århus on the way home, it felt sad saying goodbye to her because I don't get to see her much.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of September my school (Nørresundby Gymnasium) had idrætsdag (sports day). But this wasn't a regular "sports" day like in Australia, instead we did silly teamwork activities and each class competed with each other and for every activity the classes were awarded points, depending on how well they did. One of the activities involved making a human pyramid using everyone in your class. On this day each class could also dress up as something, my class dressed up as thieves, so everyone wore a black mask. It was a fun day, but unfortunately it rained all day so I went home in wet clothes once it was over. A couple weeks later the points were tallied and the winners from every year level (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>) were announced and my class (3.z) won out of all the 3<sup>rd</sup> year classes, we were stoked!



On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September I took a day trip to Copenhagen, which turned out to be not only interesting about also distressing. Ever since I lost my passport in Berlin on Euro tour I had been struggling to get a new one, so much paperwork had to be filled out and then I had to be identified by the Copenhagen Embassy, hence my trip to Copenhagen.

# DENMARK

**Sarah Salvesani**

(cont.)

On this day I got up early and took a bus to Aalborg to then catch a train to Copenhagen at 8:02am, unfortunately my bus was 20 minutes late getting to Aalborg so I had to wait for the next train at 9:02am. The train ride was about 4 and a half hours long and because I missed my first train I didn't have a reserved seat so I sat on a small fold down seat the whole way to Copenhagen, bags in between my legs. When I got to Copenhagen I caught a taxi from the station to the Embassy for a 2:00pm meeting. After the meeting I took a taxi back to the train station and had 2 and a half hours to waste so I decided to do some speed shopping. Luckily I still remembered how to get to Strøget, having been in Copenhagen for the summer holidays. In my shopping time I managed to get presents for my family and get back to the station in good time to catch my train at 4:50pm, as I waited on line 7 I couldn't help but notice the slightest commotion with the DSB officers (these guys help people get to their trains ect..) and by the time I noticed my train had already switched to line 6 and left the station... GREAT! No problem I caught the next train, but this was the slow train and there were many people on it being a Friday afternoon. I ended up having to sit on the stairs, it was the most



uncomfortable ride I've ever had and by the time I got back to Aalborg I got home I was angry and tired. But there were two things that were nice about this day, the first one is that I learnt how to read the train boards fast after having missed my train twice and secondly I realised that I can understand when people from Sheiland speak Danish to me. In Denmark there are so many different dialects, depending on where you live, I live on Jutland and people from

Jutland speak a little differently from people living on Sheiland, so I was surprised when I could understand when people spoke to me. But never again will I ever take a one day trip to Copenhagen, alone.

The next exciting event in my Danish life just happens to be the day of class photos, you're probably thinking what's so good about that? Well let me tell you... Having a photo with your class in Nørresundby Gymnasium equals having a theme to go with your year level and its letter, for example my class is 3.z so we decided we would all dress up as rich people, living the high life, JET Z style. It was great and the photographer let us pop a bottle of champagne while he was taking the photo. See below...



From the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October all of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year classes were on a trip called Hyttetur. For this the school rented out cabins at the Rødhus sports centre and we stayed there the whole weekend, my class got issued two cabins. Basically all we did was partied for the 2 nights, running from cabin to cabin, dancing and listening to music. During the day time we would either sleep or walk to the swimming hall and swim in the indoor pool, where there was a water slide and heated spar. There was also a small park near the swimming hall where there was a jumping cushion. It was an exhausting weekend but was so great to hang out with my class and get to know people from other classes; it was the kind of weekend I would never experience in Australia and it was great because we got to experience time on our own with no parents and we cooked and cleaned for ourselves. For my class it felt like a family holiday looking after each other.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October I was lucky enough to be invited on a day trip to Sweden with my friend, Jeppe, his brother, grandmother and parents. To get to Sweden we had to catch a 3 story ferry for a couple of hours. Getting closer to Sweden Jeppe took me to the top deck of the ferry and showed me

## DENMARK

**Sarah Salvesani**

(cont.)

the view, absolutely beautiful. In Sweden at the moment everything is pretty cheap compared to Denmark so we shopped all day. The only thing I bought was a new pair of boots for winter, but Jeppe bought a gorgeous suit for the school Galla party (that will be explained very soon). The weather for this day turned out to be great, but I heard it was snowing in other parts of Sweden. Going home on the ferry was crazy, for dinner we had a buffet and after we had finished the boat started to rock back and forth, because of the stormy weather. The whole time I was going over the safety exits and safety rules in my head that had been announced earlier, I was that afraid, but later we went to the games room and I forgot all about it, until we were finally home.

From the 29<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, I went to a Rotary get together in Holbæk. Personally I didn't much enjoy the weekend because I was missing out on a lot of Halloween parties, but it was ok. Over 100 hundred exchange students living in Denmark came so it was great to catch up with everyone. Friday I caught the train to Holbæk with other exchange students from my area and we met our guides when we got to the Holbæk train station. All of the exchangers stayed at Stenhus Gymnasium for the weekend and we engaged in such activities as pumpkin carving, shopping in town and on Saturday night we had a Halloween party where I dressed up as a ghost, there was also live entertainment and a DJ, unfortunately I missed out on some of the night because I went to the hospital with my friend who had become very ill. Sunday was a sad day for all of us old exchange students, because for some of us it would be the last time we would see each other before we have to leave Denmark. So as Jacqueline sang a farewell song we all huddled together, around her crying and saying goodbye, I cried so much I got a headache it was a sad day.



On  
the  
9<sup>th</sup>  
of



November I worked at the Fjerritslev School, with one of the classes. On this day I played teacher and took on a class for 3 hours all by myself. The night before I had organised games and a quiz about Australia, I was also expected to talk about myself, where I come from and the differences between Australia and Denmark. I also showed them vegemite and some of the boys were game enough to taste it, this resulted in them running out of the room to get water, I can't understand why foreigners hate the taste so much. At first when I entered the classroom the kids were too shy to speak English but me being my talkative self encouraged them to talk. It was a great experience and the kids loved the day, they told their teacher she was boring and that they wanted me to come back to Denmark and teach. They were a good class and they appreciated my visit so much that they bought me a present, it was really sweet. The next day I moved to my last host family, I live with a host dad (Per), host mum (Tove) and I have a host sister (Thea), I have a host brother (Tobias) but he left this year to go on exchange to Canada, so I have his room. They are a great family and I got to like them straight away. Since living here I have had Galla fest at my school and my family also celebrated my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday with me. They held a small night with my second host family and counsellor where we had coffee and cake together. Tove baked me a special cake, called Kagerman in Danish. This cake is bread with sugar and syrup on it topped off with candy, it's traditional to bake a kagerman on your birthday. Everyone also sang me the Danish birthday song. I had a great birthday, my two best friends (Gitte and Charlotte) took me out after school and surprised and during the day Tove had given me muffins to share with my classmates. But enough about that I would now like to tell a little about Galla..

# DENMARK

**Sarah Salvesani**

(cont.)

So on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November Nørresundby Gymnasium had their birthday party, otherwise known as Galla, to celebrate the



founding of the school. On this night all of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year students get dressed into beautiful dresses and for the boy's suits and dance a traditional Danish dance called Lancier. The students learn this dance prior to the event in gym class. There are 6

parts to the dance and you dance in a group with 4 lots of 2 pairs. On the night we only danced 5 parts, but it was a nerve racking because with our partners we danced in front of over 400 parents and students. I was so nervous I kept asking my partner what came next in the dance, he was very nervous too as we marched into the hall I had to keep asking him if he was ok. But after the dance was over it was a relief and we partied the rest of the night away. As usual the school had hired a DJ and another band. After the school party we went into town to party some more.



Now if you have read my other reports you're probably still wondering about rugby... right? Well yes the season for rugby has just ended, because of the snow and cold. The last couple of weeks the field has been completely covered in frost and at training us girls begged the coach to not make us tackle, because the ground was so hard. But on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November we had our last match in Copenhagen, against their

girl's team. We played 2 matches, the first one we lost 4-0 but the last we made a comeback and won, but I'm unsure of the score. I really enjoyed playing rugby this year and I hope that I can go back home and maybe find a girls rugby club to join.



Soon it will be Christmas in Denmark and looks like we will be having a white one. I cannot wait! Every Sunday in December until Christmas I will receive a small gift from my parents. It is also very popular to have an

advent Calender; I have been given two, one from my family and one from my friend's family. Danish families also burn a candle slightly every night until it is burnt out on Christmas day. I have been told of so many traditions for Christmas and it's very exciting. But soon after Christmas I will have to return home. I think it will be great to see my family and friends after a year away, but in my heart I will always miss my second home, that special place called Denmark...

*Jeg elsker dig Danmark <3*

By Sarah Salvesani ☺



## **FRANCE**

### **Anshula Dang**

*Host Club : Tours*  
*Sponsor Club : Toowoomba Garden City*

We have all now arrived at the last moments of our eventful and life changing exchange. The question that now runs through my mind is where shall we go now? For me everything turned out to be exactly and nothing like I had imagined, but if I'm happy, then everything is and was how it was supposed to be. The act of reflection must take a back seat now and new plans should be made. New hopes and dreams must be fulfilled like every new years and congratulations must be given out to yourself for all that you have achieved yourself during this year away from home. All I can say is that the excitement is fresh in my blood for moving on which makes me all the more excited about returning to Australia. After a year away, I began to realise just how lucky I am to live in Aus. and to have the ability to head down any road I please which is often a right that even the most developed countries don't possess. As for the adventures, Christmas is almost here and that means busy, busy, busy! Everyone wants to see you and you can't realise the an entire year has already passed. And even though I'm leaving soon it doesn't mean I can be slack about my homework and all those presents to make, too! I changed my last family because it was a really difficult environment for me but now I'm with an incredibly generous family that took me to Brittany at the beginning of my exchange and who I'm now going to stay with till the end of my



exchange... all my exchange families still keep in touch so I'm pretty happy about that. Since I've changed my family, I've been really enjoying 'family' life and I do some English courses with the grandchildren and I teach English for my class too which they seem to enjoy very much. I have also been given unlimited chances to visit the makers of haute couture and learn something. Over all I feel a lot more sure of myself and the insecurities that I possessed before going away, which allows me to see things more clearly. All I can say now is thank you and see you soon!

## **GERMANY**

### **Hayley Skerrett**

*Host Club : Mindelheim*  
*Sponsor Club : Archerfield*

I'm pulling out my winter woolies, the snow has arrived in monstrous amounts, the Christmas stuff is nearly all set up and the baking is under way! This is all marks the start of the festive season, and sadly the end of an amazing year. At the start of my exchange when the snow tragically melted, I said to myself "don't worry, I will see it again, but when everything will be nearly finished, but don't worry, that's ages away!" ...and it couldn't have come faster. And just saying now, if I am was to tell everything great that happened this "third of the year", you will be reading a thesis. I was also tempted to write it in German, just to be a show off... so here are hopefully the most important and best bits (I will probably forget heaps too).

# GERMANY

## Hayley Skerrett

(cont.)

The last third of my exchange started off extremely well with a Euro tour. The sun was always shining, it was so warm, the food was scrump-didly-umpsious and the people, like always were fantastic. There was hardly a time when we weren't singing, dancing or laughing. I met a couple of aussies on the tour that were simply awesome, and the time I had with them was definitely unforgettable and are now some of my closest friends. Each city that we visited were all so incredible, and each completely different from another, offering a totally different experience. Every time we got to a new city we'd all say "oh this is defs my favourite city EVER!", so by the end everyone was just like "I LOVE EUROPE!", which then made me really happy that I had chosen to be in Europe.

The end of Euro tour also brought another change in family. They were so sweet and always went to so much effort to show me around where we lived and made sure I saw everything typically Bavarian. We went hiking, to Oktoberfest themed, or traditional bavarian parties, Oktoberfest



itself, and many site seeing tours of the famous castles and sites in this area. My host grandpa is like a walking map, and has taken me on so many site seeing tours, it is so cute! I think I am his new best friend.

Going back to school was conveniently timed well with the start of Oktoberfest. Being the responsible exchange student that I am, my first taste



of Oktoberfest was with my host grandpa! It actually turned out to be a really



beautiful day, and gramps and I really bonded. It turns out that he met his wife there on the first ever time he went to Oktoberfest, and every single year since, they have come together, and I thought that was really special. Just goes to show that Oktoberfest isn't just for the tourists! We spent the day eating chicken, going on the ferris wheel and enjoying the atmosphere of Oktoberfest. Of course, I was back again the weekend later where I met up with Zoe (outbound currently in Czech republic), Magda and Julia (inbounders from last year in this district). It was so fantastic to see them again and I really enjoyed catching up with them and simply having a fun time. Even though it is mostly a tourist event, Oktoberfest still shares many Bavarian traditions that I have learnt throughout my year, so for me it was a really unforgettable experience.



I always knew I got it lucky with my district in Germany because I was in a perfect place, and the Rotarians and rebounds are simply fantastic, but they really topped it off when we had a routine meeting... in the alps! Yes, we had two nights in a hut, and everyone had heard that the previous year

## GERMANY

Hayley Skerrett

(cont.)



was not so great, so I really wasn't looking forward to going. It took about a 15min drive to get from the train station to the hut, and even that was just gorgeous. We arrived and all the exchange students were so excited to see each other again, as they always are. The next day we set off on the "dreaded hike". We walked up a never ending hill, through rivers and forests and over rocks, which was actually really fun. Then, we walked through some trees out



into the open, only to be greeted by mountains and mountains and mountains all topped with snow and all with multi-coloured leaves. I was just gobsmacked. I had never seen anything so beautiful in my life. That day I really felt so lucky to be an exchange student where I was, and it turned out to be an amazing weekend, "wie immer".

Life continued on, going to school, meeting my friends, and enjoying the many

celebrations that my school found need for, including "a massive party to celebrate the conclusion of our ONLY assignment ever in our schooling", but I'm not complaining. The new school year really showed me how lucky I was with the friends that I had made, and I simply love going to school everyday to be with them. Knowing that I would be coming home so soon was actually a good wake up call (but sometimes a bit of a freakout), and I made sure I was always doing something on the weekend and making the most of the time I had left with my friends. It's unbelievable to think how close you can get to some people who come from a completely different background and have different values and opinions, in such a short amount of time. I really think that shows how special exchange is. It's also really cute because I think my host mum is dreading the thought of parting me her only daughter. She didn't really understand the true meaning of "university is starting and my family is waiting for me!" when we had to re-organise my visa... telling me that I can happily for a another year. The look on her face was adorable when I said (just jokingly), "I will ask rotary though!", she really has hope. My relationship with my current host mum has developed so much since I got there, and she is such a mum to me. I will really miss having more than 1 mum!

Once again, I was lucky enough to go on yet another trip... Berlin! It of course proved to be like any rotary trip, filled with practical jokes, irritating singing, corny photos but most importantly great amounts of fun. The tour not only turned out to be really fun but extremely interesting, visiting heaps of museums and historical sites. It was a very funny tour though that I won't be forgetting anytime soon. I have to admit that I am dreading the final weekend together, the Christmas markets weekend. The amount of fun I have had with exchange students was more than I could have dreamed of. I could never how imagined myself even starting to say goodbyes... I still feel like the newby! I will never ever forget the feeling of being so comfortable with random people yet having the best time of my life... it's like they are magic! This is really corny and cliché, but I LOVE being an exchange student (and I will miss getting away with so much stuff!). I will probably ball my eyes out at that weekend...

## GERMANY Hayley Skerrett

(cont.)

Coming to the end of the year, you generally start to assess yourself, and what you have done and learnt over the year. They say you mature on your exchange but I think they should be careful to who they say that too. I thought, I could leave my old clumsy embarrassing self at home in Australia and start again in Germany, and all was going well until the day my host sister and I sucked glass cups to our faces. I didn't think it was possible for girls to get black goaties, even if only temporary, but yes I managed it. Not even 10 layers of make up covered up the mummified of a bruise I got on my chin for a week after that incident. They say you learn a lot on exchange, and I would definitely agree! Never suck a cup to your face...ever. I have also learnt never to run up twisty stairs in socks with your hands in your pockets too fast as that also leads to a nice multi-coloured face for a while.

But this year I truly have learnt a lot, more than I ever could have imagined, and it is something I am really grateful for. The most important thing being how truly lucky I am, that I got such an amazing opportunity. Being on exchange has made me so thankful for the place I live in, the people in my life, and the opportunities I am given. So in saying that, I want to finish by thanking Rotary, for giving this incredible experience to me. The places I have been, the people I have met, and the knowledge I have gained, is something I would never give up, no matter what happens from now on. It's been no holiday, but overall I've had such a fantastic year!!! . So thank-you Rotary, for giving me this once in a lifetime experience.



Aussie . . .  
Aussie . . .  
Oi! Oi! Oi!



Aussie . . .



## GERMANY Nicholas Panzram

Host Club : Menden

Sponsor Club : Gatton & Lockyer

"If you could go back into some point in your exchange and repeat it would you??" asked my Rotary president. After some thinking my reply was no, and judging by the surprised look on his face it was not the answer he was expecting. Perhaps you're wondering why I said no too?? Each and every moment on my exchange has been something special! There are some moments that particularly special, some that are funny, some that bring tears and others that make me smile. Each of these moments you can only live once and then treasure them. After explaining this to my Rotary president he smiled, and said I never really looked at it that way.



As the month of November comes to a close and the temperature here struggles to get to 2 degrees at midday, I have come to the realisation that I am going to have to leave Germany soon. And as I think back I'm pretty sure I have achieved everything I wanted to on my exchange, if not more. I've learnt a new language, new culture, friends and family, I've learnt about myself and about how to face situations that are perhaps a little out of the ordinary. Yesterday I met up with a future exchange student from my club and he reminded me so much of myself 12 months ago, a little shy, and not too sure what he's getting himself into. But that's what makes exchange so amazing you never really have an ordinary day!!

10 of these extraordinary days were spent on Germany Tour. This trip was unbelievably fun, with 54 other exchangers, most of which were brand new in Germany we travelled around getting to know each other and our new (or slightly older) home. Our first stop was in Hamburg, the harbour city. Here we visited the St. Michael Church and climbed its multiple steps for an absolutely breathtaking view of the city.

# GERMANY

## Nicholas Panzram

(cont.)

The sunsets and sunrises here are amazing with the huge ships and cranes in front of a blazing pink, red and orange background. We went on a boat tour through the Harbour, with a boat so small that against the towering ships it looked like a speck of dust against Uluru.

Watching the boats being loaded was also quite fascinating, how the cranes pick up these 1000 ton containers and load them with pin point accuracy onto these boats. Just to give you an idea on how big they are, the biggest one has its bridge (so where the captain sits) in the middle because if it was at the end (where they are normally located) the captain would not be able to see the horizon because the boat is too long!! We also had the chance to visit



the fish

market early one morning; this place had an awesome atmosphere. Full of bright lights, people and everything from asparagus peelers to lollies, from fish to fruit! We wandered our way through the crowds, trying the typical Hamburg lollies, a marshmallow and jelly specialty called "Speck" the German word for Bacon. It got its name because it looks a little like a bacon cube. Our next stop was Potsdam, here we visited Schloß Sancoussi. Now for those of us who visited Versailles on Eurotour this was like a trip in the past because this castle is modelled on the Versailles Palace, right down to its somewhat unappealing yellow colour. The huge garden provided a chance for 54 exchangers who were already sick of sitting in a bus to stretch their legs and have loads of fun with the awesome sculptured plants. After our stop here it was onto the crown of our trip, Berlin. This has been by far my favourite city on my exchange. It has a history that would fill several libraries, a feeling of upbeat modern culture and a subtle hint of old world feel. Although a tourist hot spot, it doesn't really feel like a tourist city. We visited the Brandenburg

Tor, the German Parliament building, of course Check Point Charlie and followed the trail of the Berlin Wall through the city. This was exceptionally moving because these two lines of bricks which now run where the original wall used to be symbolises so much for the German nation. Visiting a place where the wall still stands in its original position was even more impressing, how just this 5-6m high piece of concrete changed a nation forever. Our time in Berlin really was indescribable, and for me was a very special view on Germany and just how it came to be the amazing country it is. Our tour then took us into Weimar, the snugly little village where Goethe and Schiller, two famous German poets, once lived. Both their houses still stand today and as we wound our way through the little town it is quite clear why they chose to live here, it's a beautiful area, yet quiet and simple. It was a nice break after the hustle of Berlin! We then visited KZ Buchenwald, a former Nazi concentration camp. This was one of the most indescribable places I have ever been. I still get goose bumps simply thinking about it, you walk through the gates, and the buildings where not even 70 years ago hundreds walked, slept, were tortured and sadly died. I left there with such an incredible understanding of this part of Germany's history, you walk back through those high metal gates with such a feeling, it's simply not possible to describe. We left Weimar then and made our way into Dresden. The city of Dresden was considered the most beautiful European city pre-WWII, but it still remains exceptionally beautiful. It even had an Australian restaurant, although upon closer inspection it seemed the most Australian thing on the menu was Four X Beer!! The opera house in Dresden was definitely a highlight, breathtakingly beautiful, filled with marble and gold and a chandelier which weighed nearly two tonnes! Also impressive was the Church of Our Lady, a circular church which was completely destroyed in WWII and was rebuilt, using mostly new stones, but the old stones which were still usable have been placed back in the exact place where they originally stood!!



## GERMANY

### Nicholas Panzram

(cont.)

And we left the best til last with our visit to Munich, the city Germany is perhaps best famous for, put on her best weather.... This was my second time here and the second time where I froze and got drenched, just must be something in the air. Although Oktoberfest was sadly over we still got to experience the typical Munich culture, with a trip to a 200 year old beer brewery. We had dinner there that night a cellar that even the most claustrophobic person would be able to handle! This place was huge, here we managed to score some pics with a group dressed up in the stereotypical Munich costumes, Lederhosen! ☺ I had such an amazing time learning a whole new group of people, another one of the positives of being an Aussie on exchange, you meet twice as many others as normal!! After arriving home at 1am due to some very bad planning and several missed trains, I can honestly say I have never appreciated my own bed and room so much!!

The week after Germany tour I travelled, with my host family, to a small town called Heidersdorf, which lies on the German-Czech Republic border. The border here is an area known as the Erzgebirge, a mountain region which is made up of tiny little towns dotted along the top of mountains. The Erzgebirge region is known for its wooden Christmas decorations, in particular the town of Seiffen. The workshops where these are made are astonishing places; every tiny detail is hand carved and breathtaking! We stayed with my host Aunt and Uncle for the three days, who were the nicest people you could ever meet, with just one problem. Heidersdorf is in Sachsen, which means everyone speaks German with a Sachsen accent; this is very similar to a Scottish accent. The German's themselves sometimes have trouble understanding them, so that left me with little hope. And surprisingly they found my Aussie/German accent also very hard to understand, but with a little help from my host parents we managed to make ourselves understood. We also visited Dresden while we were here, (a second time in a week!!) It was a little warmer this time and just as beautiful. It was here where I think I finally grasped just how seriously crazy the Germans are about soccer. So German police are formidable enough normally but fit them out with riot shields, masks, big looking guns and pack them in large groups and they look they

mean some serious business. After what I take was a win by the opposing team (ie not Dresden) the main street to the train station from the soccer arena was blocked off and the fans were escorted onto the trains by the police. They were followed from the air, by two helicopters and were completely surrounded by police cars. It was quite impressive!! And all over a game of soccer!! ☺ The mornings in Heidersdorf were particularly beautiful; with the frost glinting off the grass as the sun slowly rose. Yes it was quite cold, and they were expecting snow soon (this was in October) the get so much snow that they have 3 metre tall red spikes on the road side so that when it snows they can still see where the road is!! The weekend here was



unforgettable and simply amazing! On October 27<sup>th</sup> I celebrated my 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday here in Germany. My day was full of friends and family from all around the world, an experience which I will always hold very close to me. After Skyping with my Australian family and opening their presents, although thanks to customs I already knew what was in them, I made my way down to breakfast, to find the table set as if the king was coming, it completely blew me away. That evening I had all my host parents and other "older" friends over for coffee and cake. German's also have a story like us that when you hit the bottom whilst cutting the cake you have to kiss the nearest girl/boy, theirs is however that if the piece of cake tips over on your plate you will have not so nice parents in law.... ☺ That night I had a party with my "younger" friends, I had loads of fun and realised on this night just how much I was going to miss all these people who had become part of my life!

## **GERMANY**

### **Nicholas Panzram**

*(cont.)*

This weekend we had our district Christmas weekend. This was also the goodbye weekend for the Australians, as we won't meet up with many of the others again before we leave! Our Rotex leaders had us singing (not particularly well) at the local Christmas market and had us getting lost walking to the ice hall. I had a great time catching up with everyone as they skated their way around the ice rink. We had a Christmas party, where we were asked to dress up. It seemed like the Santa and angel convention, with 20 or so Santa's and 25 angels, we had a ball!! The goodbye was quite hard; as the snow began to fall outside we began for the majority our goodbyes. Together we wrote our best wishes on the mountain of flags and hugged (at times cried) our way through the group.

Yesterday (Sunday 28/11) was the first Advent, a day which means it's time to go Christmas crazy in Germany! And they really do, go all out. This time in Germany does have a very special feel to it, the snow falling, along with the temperature and the warmth of the houses, which smell amazing as German mums love cooking at this time of year!! It really is magical. Next weekend we are going Christmas tree finding!! I am really possibly more excited for this than my host family can believe!!

So, as the snow outside keeps falling I shall bring my last Boomer for my exchange year to an end, it really has been an experience you have to have lived, to know what it's like, the up's and down's, the tears and the smiles is all worthwhile when I think just how much I've changed for the better. Although one thing has definitely gotten worse (and I think possibly every exchange student will tell you this) and that is my English..... I keep capitalising every noun and saying sentences backwards. I am looking forward to regaining my Aussieness upon my return, but hope to forever retain a little piece of Germany inside of me. Tschuß!



## **HUNGARY**

### **Mishal Hinde**

*Host Club : Kecskemet  
Sponsor Club : Wishart*

Wow, I cannot believe I am writing my last Boomer ever, the thought is really very scary! It's hard to think how fast time goes, well, since the last Boomer I have been doing various things. I met the new group of exchangies, I think in a way it's nice being from Australia, because we start in January and leave in January, whereas the rest of the world start in July, it gives me the chance to know two very different groups of people. Although the bad part in my opinion is that I have to say goodbye to two groups of people I have come to love.

I have been to Vienna and Venice on Rotary trips with the new exchangies and it was brilliant fun! The culture and food in both cities were so different to Brisbane, I especially loved going on a Gondola ride in Venice. The weather is getting colder and colder, although at the moment Hungarian weather is quite bipolar because one minute it's cold and rainy and the next it is pleasantly warm.

I



celebrated my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday in Hungary last week, and for the first time in my life it was cold on my birthday, it even snowed! Definitely a shock for me! I ended having an amazing day with my Hungarian friends and my family, but I did get a bit sad toward the end of the day because I realised the 1<sup>st</sup> of December means that it is only a month and 14 days until I come home ☹. It's almost as if I am having more fun than ever because I know I'm leaving soon, I have really started to not take

## HUNGARY

**Mishal Hinde**

(cont.)

everyday for granted, I keep trying to make everyday special and memorable! Because the thought of going back to Australia and becoming a responsible adult terrifies me!

This week in Hungary we had Santa Claus day, and I got sooooo much chocolate! More than I can eat, but I love it! Although my jeans are becoming a bit too tight now, so I'm worried! I am really looking forward to the Hungarian Christmas traditions and I am also super excited to have a white Christmas, I think I'll be happy that I'm not sweating all day on Christmas, for once!

Well I have been doing a lot but it's just so hard to think of it all on the spot, but all I know is that time is running out!!!

Having an unbelievable time in Hungary  
Lots of love Mishal



## SWEDEN

**Ben Byron**

Host Club : Landvetter-Råder  
Sponsor Club : Toowoomba North

### The Rebound from Summer

By Ben Byron – Mölnlycke, Sweden – 30<sup>th</sup> of November, 2010

Another four months have come and gone in Sweden since the last time I sat down to write for Boomer at the end of July and since then a definite changing of the guard has taken place in more ways than one. In the more significant sense, the bunch of us exchange students who arrived in January have become honorary 'oldies', a default title (and responsibility) apparently

inherited upon the intake of the new exchange student cohort in early August. Our district received a staggering 19 new exchange students in the intake, bringing our new district total to 24, with only 5 of us Australians staying through the change over period!

In terms of weather related changeovers, the brief patch of summer that we had gave way to a decidedly darker and wetter autumn season and now winter is taking over, although in all fairness we have had patches of quite nice weather. Right now, as I am writing, the sun is going down and it is about 3pm, an ominous sign that we are heading for another dark and cold winter. Some sources seem to be convinced that it will be the coldest in 1000 years... so bring on the snow and a white Christmas!

Since I last wrote, I have commenced a new school year (their school year starts in August) and have moved into a new class in the Society/Economy line. It is really nice to meet a new bunch of people, whilst having about half of my old class stay on at the same time. We had a really relaxing and fun first week, with a sort of school Olympics competition between classes called Hulesärken. It consisted of a whole bunch of activities meant to promote bonding between new class members and it was just a generally fun week. Our class opted for a military theme, parading around the school shouting army war-cries for the entire day. Over the summer holiday period I got quite into rowing, my newly-found sporting hobby. I trained about three times a week and that effort culminated into a chance to row at the Swedish National Rowing Championships. I rowed in a double with another 17 year-old guy from the club and we placed a respectable 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 3. I use the term respectable quite sincerely, given that with only a few weeks of training under our belts, we competed against two other pairs of guys who had been rowing together for several years. Despite the result, it was a great experience to get a feel for what competitive rowing is all about, and it was a great chance to bond with some of the other people in my club and watch them compete over the course of the weekend. I have to



# SWEDEN

**Ben Byron**

*(cont.)*

say that our gruelling 2000m race put great strain on my body, and I had to appreciate the effort of some of the seniors who did up to 6 different races each at that distance. They were completely insane!



Yet another fantastic opportunity arose from my involvement with the Drum corps in Mölndal, with a chance to travel to Germany in early September. The trip was over a long weekend and we played in a town music festival that spanned over two days in a town called Borken, near the west coast of Germany. We were hosted by a number of German families, and I made many remarks about the weird sensation of being on an 'exchange within an exchange'. After an epic bus trip of about 15 hours, we had a great first night there, getting amongst the party atmosphere with the locals and enjoying a lengthy set from an awesome Genesis tribute band. The next day the drum corps got out and about as we marched through the streets of the town in our bright red blazers, smashing out our extremely loud brand of music to a very entertained crowd of locals. We made a repeat performance the next day in the town square to cap off a truly memorable weekend.

A few weeks ago, I was lucky enough to be standing at the train station in Göteborg waiting for a train that would bring my parents to visit the town where I had been spending the last seven months of my life, and certainly by far the longest part of it where I had not seen them. It was a feeling that is impossible to describe, it was just like... "oh yeah, there are my parents right there walking towards me..." and it was almost as if I hadn't been away at all. I imagine this was just a small taste of what coming home will be like. Anyway, I spent a really nice two weeks travelling around with

them – we visited Stockholm and Oslo, and then some smaller towns on the west coast of Norway that host what must be some of the best natural scenery in the world. One particular town we stayed in, Balestrand, was a place where I struggled in vain to find a part of the town that didn't have a fiord-view. Stockholm and Oslo were also amazing of course, they were real port cities, and it was great to finally see the capital of the country that I had been living in for the majority of the year.

Just recently I got my first chance to properly meet, and spend time with, all of the new exchange students in our district. We had our district conference in Varberg just two weeks ago, and this was a great opportunity to get together as a group and spend some quality time with each other. It was quite a festive attitude just through weight of numbers, with the 24 of us staying in a hotel that had been converted from an old jail – each of us had our own cell. It is an amazing sensation and feeling of warmth when the exchange students gather, even though it was, for the most part, the first time we had met each other, you just got the feeling that we were a big family. Teenagers from all over the world at the same point in their life, as very like-minded people all crazy enough to want to jump ship on our respective lives for a year and get amongst another culture. Although it is so much fun to hang out and meet Swedish people, there is just something about not having a language barrier that makes time spent with the other exchange students a touch more special. And I don't mean that it's not fun with the Swedes, but you know what I mean.



Anyway I think that is an update on all of my activities, the rowing, the drumming, the footy has been pretty quiet. My exchange friends, my school friends my other friends... So many groups and so many things to do, I'm going to try and get

## SWEDEN

### Ben Byron

(cont.)

everything I can out of the last few months here. But now I'm definitely on the home stretch.



## SWITZERLAND

### Greta Piddick

Host Club : Zurich Dietkon

Sponsor Club : Redlands Bayside

#### The first leaves begin to fall

As the seasons start to change from summer to autumn and as I'm starting the second half of my year, I got to see and experience a lot of amazing things.

August proved to be a tough but exciting month for me. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of August, I had my 18th birthday, which was my first away from home. As my birthday is in the Australian winter time, it was strange to have it in the summer holidays. The day was low key but nothing less than amazing. I spent the day with my friends, opened up presents from home and had dinner with my host family.

Two weeks later, all the exchange student (oldies and newbies) got together for the last Rotary Conference of the year. It was the first time that the Southern Hemisphere exchange students could see the Northern Hemisphere exchangies. With over 80 new exchange students and 140 in total, it was a big event. We sang songs, waved our flags and talked with Rotary Clubs from all over Switzerland. It was great to finally meet all the new exchange students and good to catch up with the others.

At the Start of September, I had my third and last family change. The change wasn't that drastic as the first as I only moved two houses down. It was a sad moment as I knew that this last change of family meant that my exchange was soon coming to an end.

During the Autumn holidays, my host family organised a little tour of southern

Switzerland. For two nights, we stayed in a youth hostel in the mountains in Kanton Graubunden. We went walking through a forest. At this time of the year, the trees weren't just green any more but different shades of brown. After about 2 hours, we reached a glacier. The following day, we visited St Moritz which is a popular place for skiing. Then, we just popped over the Swiss border to a little town in Italy called Tirano. We ate pizza, pasta and did a bit of sight seeing as well. The next stop was Tessin, in the Italian part of Switzerland. This is the only place in the tour that I've visited before but it's a place that I love so much. Last but not least, a little town, Gondo, in Wallis. The drive from Italy back to Switzerland was one of the most scenic drive I has ever taken. We saw mountains and drove along side Lake Como. 10 years ago to the day that we visited it, Gondo was ripped in two by a landslide caused by two weeks of non-stop rain. Since then, the town has physically recovered but the shock of what happened still remains. So after numerous hours on trains and buses, we were finally back home after 6 days.



As the seasons start to change, so does the types of sport being played. In November, I went to a soccer game with my host family, St Gallen versus Basel. I felt like a proud Australian when Scott Chipperfield, an Aussie soccer player took to the field for FC Basel. The game was an easy win for Basel but a good game none the less. Two weeks later, I went to an ice hockey game with some friends. As I was in the fan section, we chanted and waved the team's flag and although it was sometimes a bit crazy, it was a lot of fun.

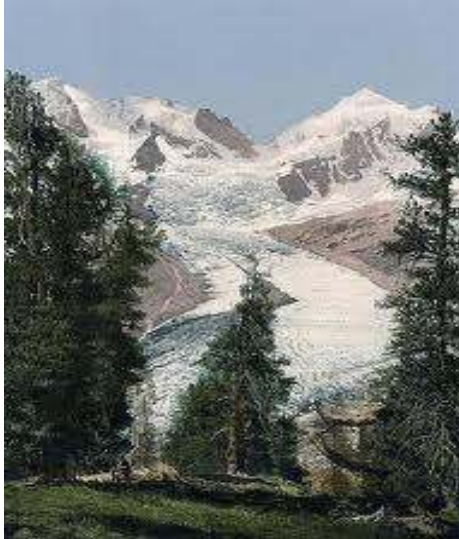
During November, all the exchange students came together for one last Rotary weekend. For one of the last weeks of our exchange year, there is an organised trip to the Matterhorn, the most famous mountain in Switzerland and also one of the most in the world. Although it plays second fiddle to the Euro tour, it is still promises to be a wonderful weekend. As we took the cable car up to the mountain, it wasn't visible as

## SWITZERLAND

**Greta Piddick**

*(cont.)*

the weather was bad. Fortunately, after we had eaten lunch, the Matterhorn appeared. As my exchange year is coming to an end, there has been a rush to see all parts of Switzerland that I haven't seen yet. That included most of the French speaking part, Appenzell and Liechtenstein.



As the only city that I have visited in the French speaking part was Geneva, it was nice to see the other parts that I haven't seen yet. I saw Chillon Castle, the chocolate factory in Freiburg and the castle and churches in Neuchatel.



Appenzell is a must see city as it is unlike any other in Switzerland. Although the city isn't a high tourist spot like Lucerne or Zurich, people visit this area as it is what Switzerland use to look like. This is where typical Swiss houses and buildings are the only infrastructure with a couple tourist shops and cafes scattered here and there.

Liechtenstein is one of the smallest country in the world. It is as big as a small town

with about 6,000 people. In Vaduz, the country's capital, there is a castle where the prince and princess live. You aren't allowed to see the inside of the castle but the outside was beautiful. As it is Christmas time, there are Christmas stalls scattered throughout and Carols can be heard from one side of the town to the other.

As the leaves start to leave the trees and the snow begins to fall, I realise that my year is officially coming to an end. But before it does, I still have so much to do. In a couple of weeks, I will have my last day at school, I'll experience my first white Christmas and hopefully, I'll finally be able to ski. I believe I have accomplished so much this year, some of which I wouldn't have accomplished if I was home. I have made new friends, learnt another language and I have also learnt more about myself. There are so many things that I have experienced this year that I will never forget and I am glad that I was able to experienced this beautiful place.



***Rotary District  
9630 Youth  
Exchange***

