



## 53rd Manchester Amicus Group Czech Republic Trip 2000

*The 53rd Manchester Amicus group enjoyed a trip to the Czech Republic last summer. They raised the money to finance this themselves and tell us below some of their experiences.*

On the Monday morning we were up early and took a 2-hour coach journey to a concentration camp. This was a disturbing experience we will all remember as we were given an insight into the shocking conditions and abuse the prisoners of the small fortress had to endure.

Tuesday saw us visiting a crystal factory where we were given the opportunity to see how crystal products are made. We all came away with a souvenir. Later on we were given freedom from the adults as we went paintballing and then to a cave complex. 10 minutes after arriving, we were kitted out in full army gear and split into 2 teams. After the 1st game it became clear that the yellow team, led by Reverend Commander Stokes, thought that World War 3 had broken out,. The sniper vicar conducted a battle plan and, even when Steven Gorst pleaded his gun was broken, Commander Stokes showed no pity and proceeded to shoot him.

The teams responded differently to the situation, whereas the yellow team was very serious, the red team took the more laid back approach and, although they did not win a game, they had much more fun. Not everybody showed the same aggressive enthusiasm:, Sarah, and Emma were soon dubbed the "Combat Barbies" as they decided to sit out after the first game in case they broke a nail. However, Sarah's younger sister Katie was totally the opposite and soon became known as 'GI Jane'.

That night during another major thunderstorm, we experienced a blackout. Stan fell down the stairs in his enthusiasm to find his camcorder and capture the atmosphere.

On Wednesday we took a train journey to a water park in a nearby town. Yet again, Stan provided humour by falling straight off the train holding his camcorder. He was rather upset when the group walked off and the locals on the train just sat and looked at him out of the window. After paying to get in, we realised that, much to our surprise, not only humans swim here, but also big fish, which gave the girls second thoughts about going in. After a day of swimming we headed back home and later tried to find the bowling alley again, but this time we decided to walk. Bad idea! There was no set path to the alley, only dark roads and no light. This prevented Janet from seeing the ditch at the side of the road, which she later fell into:, she still has the scars to prove it.

Thursday was our last day so of course we had to get up early and get ready for our day out to Prague. We had to catch the train and the underground metro and then later had to walk through the town to get to the centre. After hearing many stories we decided to wear our bags on the front of our bodies to avoid the town pickpockets.

After the difficulty of getting into Prague we were pleased to be there as we saw what a stunningly beautiful city it was. We walked to an old fashioned

market place in St Wenselas Square where we were given some time to look around and buy gifts. We also saw other beautiful parts of Prague as we walked through the town towards the river for a cruise and a meal.



Once again Stan managed to get in trouble with his camcorder for filming for too long and getting himself, Julie and Big Gorst lost in the incredibly busy city! When we all finally arrived in one piece at the river we entered the boat and sampled a Czech meal. After eating, we went up on deck to see the stunning City beautifully lit up in the dark: very romantic and a perfect opportunity to take photographs. Once back on dry land we strolled across the famous Charles Bridge, and then unfortunately, back to the coach. Everyone was disappointed, as we knew that this would be the last trip on the holiday. We returned to House Komenski for our farewell party.

Next day we got up early as we had to clean the house from top to bottom, Reverend Commander Stokes had the job of organizing his troops into work gangs ( a very difficult task), but eventually the job was done and the homeward journey commenced.

The journey home differed from the outward journey, as there was a sense of anticlimax and a huge disappointment to be going home.