



The Patron of our tour, His Imperial and Royal Highness Karl von Habsburg-Lothringen, Archduke of Austria, Royal Prince of Hungary, introduced us to the term ‘Middle Europe’, a concept familiar to the Habsburg dynasty. In his letter of 15th June 2022 to Angelika Elliott, HIRH Karl welcomed the group. He referred to the current military challenges facing Ukraine and the historical significance of countries in Middle Europe, four of which we visited over a period of 16 days, as we learnt more about the Habsburgs who ruled this part of the Continent for centuries.

Dear Mrs Elliott,

15 June 2022

In the next few days, the Tour of the 20-Ghost Club will take you to Vienna. Unfortunately, my schedule will not allow me to meet you there. The war of Russia against Ukraine requires my full attention, as I run a radio station in Ukraine, Radio KrainaFM. As you can imagine this is a special challenge during these times of war. Additionally, I am currently neither in Vienna nor in Ukraine but promoting peace talks in several South Eastern European countries.

Your Tour, which eventually will end in Budapest has itself a Middle European dimension. The term Middle Europe enjoys a revival, although sometimes for nostalgic reasons or for nationalistic propaganda. But in connection with Ukraine, the term has political significance.

In a few days Ukraine will apply for membership of the European Union. For the Ukraine the decision will be crucial: it will be a judgement as to whether Ukraine belongs to Europe or not. A part of it the ‘Bukovina’ and ‘Galizien’ regions once belonged to the Habsburg Empire. Other parts have suffered from the powerful ‘embrace’ of Russia from which they have always wanted to free themselves. In recent history these have included ‘The Orange Revolution of 2004’ and the ‘Revolution of Dignity of 2013/14’. Since 2014 the country has been in a military defensive fight against Russia – a fight for its own freedom – but also for the freedom of Europe.

During your Tour you will visit numerous historical places of Middle Europe. All of them and your Tour itself are the expression of the kind of freedom for which Europe stands – both in the past and in the present. For this, we have to make commitments again and again. For now, I wish you pleasant days in Vienna and a good onward journey to Budapest.

Yours, Karl von Habsburg

Introduction

The 20-Ghost Club has published this book as a record of the tour, with text written and photographs taken by participants on the tour. It complements the tour's Route Book.

The attractive route embraced parts of four countries: Germany, starting in Bavaria where Empress Elisabeth (Sisi) was born and raised, Austria, Slovakia and Hungary. The hotels were excellent, the gala dinners magnificent, the food, wine and music much enjoyed and special events exceptional in their nature, also involving contact with two descendants of Habsburg Emperors. Markus von Habsburg-Lothringen gave us a guided tour of the Kaiservilla in Bad Ischl and Joseph von Habsburg-Lothringen showed us the Habsburg Palatinal Crypt in old Buda Castle and then joined us, with his wife, at our final dinner at the Halászbástya Restaurant with its sensational view over the Danube River and Pest.

The weather was good throughout the whole tour and the troubles in Ukraine did not affect the availability of petrol or other purchases. There were no major mechanical hiccups and our tour engineer, Roy O'Sullivan, had no sleepless nights, although he helped out on a number of occasions where his knowledge of the marque and his maintenance skills were much appreciated. It was sad that Covid impacted on the enjoyment of a few participants, but we have heard that all who contracted the virus have now, thankfully, recovered.

Nine 'vignettes' (short talks) were given by participants to introduce the Habsburgs and the countries to the group. Clare Corbett wrote a comprehensive and interesting account of the tour, and, in this book, her text is interwoven with the route and with photos provided by participants. In this connection, special mention must be made of Kimberly Shadduck many of whose exceptional photographs, together with those of others, enhance this book. Thanks to Mary Narvell for proofing this book for spelling and punctuation.



But, very special thanks should go to Angelika Elliott, the inspiration behind the concept of this tour who worked tirelessly, supported by her husband, Michael. I was pleased to assist in the organisation, particularly those parts of the tour in Slovakia and Hungary, also supported by my wife, Lesley. Thank you for your participation, your companionship and the fun times we enjoyed together.

Sir John Stuttard, August 2022

A Reflection by Clare Corbett

The Austro-Hungarian Empire Tour, aka the Habsburg Tour, was a Tour de Force. An intimation of this arrived with the Itinerary and Route Book. Not only detailed driving instructions but a beautifully illustrated introduction to the history of the region and the family Habsburg - The Good, The Bad and the Ugly. The traumas underlying this work of art and instruction can be gleaned from the three-year gestation period due to Covid cancellations and the fact that the Route Book went through no less than 26 versions before being finally issued. Our gratitude goes out to Angelika Elliott and Sir John Stuttard for the hours of work and agony which led to its production. Thanks also to John Narvell for producing a TomTom friendly route directions guide.

The flavour of the tour was established early at our meeting place at the Hotel Kaiserin Elisabeth in Feldafing, Germany on Friday 10th June. This charming hotel had been adapted from the Strauch Inn where The Empress Elisabeth (known as Sisi), wife of the Emperor Franz Joseph, and her entourage stayed no less than 24 times in the summer months to be close to her family in Bavaria. The terrace where we met for drinks had fine views over Lake Starnberg. In the distance there was a statue of Elisabeth.



Summary of Itinerary

Friday 10th June to Sunday 26th June 2022: 16 nights

Distance: approximately 1,100 miles

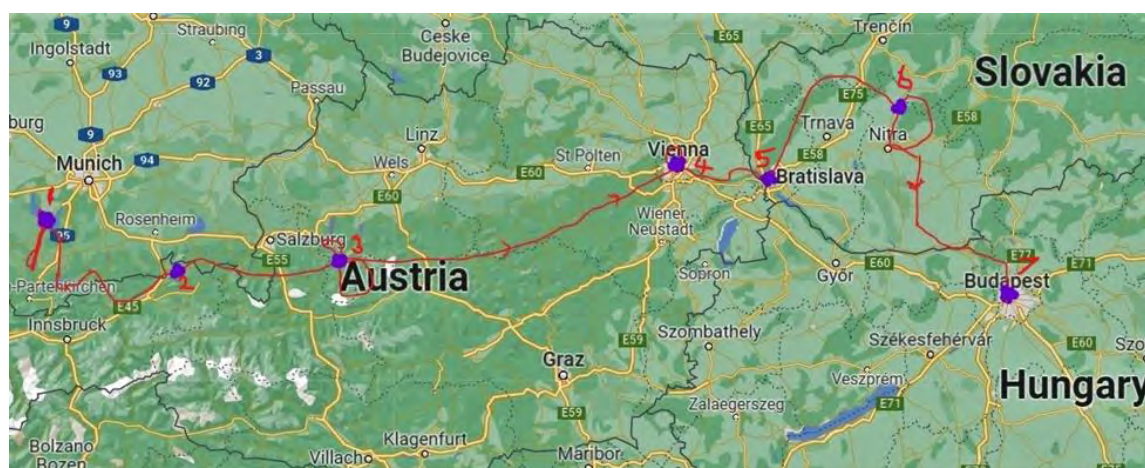
June

Friday	10	Arrival and unloading of cars	Golfhotel Kaiserin Elisabeth, Feldafing, Germany
Saturday	11	Tour of Ammergau & Neuschwanstein (103 miles)	Golfhotel Kaiserin Elisabeth, Feldafing, Germany
Sunday	12	Across the Achenpass, Tratzberg Castle to Kitzbühel (118 miles)	Hotel Kitzhof Kitzbühel, Austria
Monday	13	Across Loferer & Leoganger Berge to Irdning (125 miles)	Schlosshotel Pichlarn, Aigen im Ennstal, Austria
Tuesday	14	Tour of Ausseerland, Kaiservilla & Ischl (81 miles) Reception at Kaiservilla with a performance of "The Matured Empress"	Schlosshotel Pichlarn, Aigen im Ennstal, Austria
Wednesday	15	Tour of Sölker Tauern National Park (102 miles)	Schlosshotel Pichlarn, Aigen im Ennstal, Austria
Thursday	16	Via Gesäuse & Voralpen to Vienna (167 miles) Dinner at "DasMezzanin"	Palais Hansen Kempinski, Vienna, Austria
Friday	17	Day in Vienna Evening "Audience" at Imperial Apartments, Hofburg then Dinner at Plachutta's "Gasthaus bei der Oper"	Palais Hansen Kempinski, Vienna, Austria
Saturday	18	Day in Vienna "Free evening" (Restaurant/State Opera suggestions)	Palais Hansen Kempinski, Vienna, Austria
Sunday	19	Vienna Woods Tour (42 miles) Coach transfer for private guided evening tour, and Gala Dinner at Schönbrunn Castle (jacket and tie)	Palais Hansen Kempinski, Vienna, Austria
Monday	20	The Marchfeld Castle Tour to Bratislava (68 miles) "Free evening"	Grand River Park Hotel, Bratislava, Slovakia
Tuesday	21	Bratislava through the Moravian countryside (84 miles)	Chateau Appony, Oponice, Slovakia
Wednesday	22	Tour of Moravia (66 miles)	Chateau Appony, Oponice, Slovakia
Thursday	23	From Moravia via Esztergom to Budapest (117 miles) "Free evening" – suggested restaurants to be advised	Kempinski Hotel Corvinus, Pest, Budapest, Hungary
Friday	24	Day in Budapest Coach journey in the evening for guided tour of, and Gala Dinner at the Royal Palace of Gödöllő (jacket and tie)	Kempinski Hotel Corvinus, Pest, Budapest, Hungary
Saturday	25	Day in Budapest Morning: loading of cars for transport to the UK (30 miles) Short coach journey in the evening to Buda Castle then final dinner at Magyar Halászbástya in the Buda Hills (jacket and tie)	Kempinski Hotel Corvinus, Pest, Budapest, Hungary

Atlas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1910



Map of the Austro-Hungarian Empire Tour in 2022



A few hardy participants drove to the start of the tour in Feldafing on Lake Starnberg, south of Munich. But most had their cars transported from the UK to Feldafing by EM Rogers. The transporters and our cars arrived on time.

A list of participants, together with details of their cars and a photograph of each car, is displayed at the end of this book.

Hotel Kaiserin Elisabeth, Feldafing (10th & 11th June)



The Hotel Kaiserin Elisabeth, formerly The Strauch Inn, in 1899



Roy O' Sullivan assists with the offloading of cars transported by EM Rogers from the UK



The two Swiss 20HPs (the Müllers and the Velvarts) find a cosy parking place together.
Meanwhile, right, the hotel lobby has 'Sisi' memorabilia for sale



The Forbes 1924 SG (68RM) and Doug Magee's 1912 SG (2092) are lined up on the lawn

In the foreground of the hotel's garden, Angelika, Sir John and 20-Ghost Club chairman, Ken Forbes, welcomed everyone to the tour and to our first hotel.



Then Mary Jo Heckman (shown right) stepped forward to give a fine rendering of Susanne Halusa's vignette, *The Bavarian Connection, Ludwig II and Sisi*. Sadly, Susanne was unable to be there in person but joined for the second week. These vignettes, the imaginative idea of Angelika Elliott, were an original feature of this tour. No, they were not Austrian motorway stickers (with which we were thoughtfully provided), nor were they baby vine leaves, but brief evocative descriptions to capture the subject for the following day and to be confined to ten minutes or thereabouts.



The Bavarian Connection: Ludwig II & Sisi – Neuschwanstein by Susanne Halusa, presented by Mary Jo Heckman

Welcome to Hotel Kaiserin Elisabeth in Feldafing. As I'm sure you are already aware, this is a historical place. Kaiserin Elisabeth von Österreich, widely known as Sisi, spent 24 summers in this hotel, often for several weeks or even months. The main reason for her extended stays was that throughout her life she remained closely linked to this area where she grew up.



Castle Possenhofen is less than two kilometres away from here. As Empress of Austria, Sisi never travelled alone, but always had her core Imperial household with her. That meant somewhere between 40 and 100 people, their coaches and luggage, and often the Empress's favourite horses. Unsurprisingly, they did not all fit into Possenhofen. However, they tried so hard that on one of the occasions when Sisi stayed there, her father lost his patience and asked her to finally grow up and find a different place – hence she came here.

Sisi had grown up in the aristocratic, but very liberal, household of the Duke and Duchess, Max and Ludovika, in Bayern. Sisi was born on Christmas Eve, 1837, the second daughter of eight siblings. It was her older sister Helene who was identified by her aunt Sophie, the Archduchess of Austria, as a potential candidate to marry Sophie's son Franz Joseph. He became Emperor of Austria at the age of 18 and was still unmarried at 23. Between her mother Ludovika and Aunt Sophie, a meeting was arranged in the summer of 1853 in Bad Ischl (which we will visit in a few days), and history says that Franz Joseph instead of warming to Helene fell in love with the 15-year old Sisi who was taken along, there and then, and for the rest of his life.

Sisi was, in contrast to her older sister, not prepared for such an important role and the attempts to groom her within the few months before her wedding to her cousin in April 1854 resulted in the fact that she was perhaps less confident than ever when she left her parental home. Sisi was an avid traveller, mostly because she wanted to escape the Viennese Imperial court's strict rules that limited her personal freedom. From the very beginning of her marriage to Emperor Franz Joseph she had significant difficulty adjusting her lifestyle to the requirement of the Viennese court.

She returned to Possenhofen for comfort and solace when she could and spent many summers in this beautiful place. Bavaria was a kingdom at the time, headed by an equally famous and strikingly good-looking monarch, Ludwig II. Sisi was King Ludwig II von Bayern's cousin, and she was eight years older than him. As she left Bavaria at the age of 16, they hardly knew each other, partly also because the relationship between their royal and ducal families wasn't always friendly.

Their friendship began when Ludwig visited her while she stayed in the spa town of Bad Kissingen in 1864. Allegedly they got on so well that Ludwig extended his stay from a few days to a few weeks. Their main common interest was poetry and literature, they were rooted in the cultural era of Romanticism. Both read Schopenhauer's philosophy, they were anti-militarists and had a liberal view regarding religion. They exchanged many lyrical letters, often in the form of poems. Both despised their respective court entourage and tried to escape from their duties of representation whenever they could. Each of them preferred to be alone, and they showed their likes and dislikes openly.

The two of them looked striking together: he was 1 metre 92cm tall, very handsome; she at the time arguably the most beautiful woman in the world. However, sources agree that there was no sexual relationship between them. Ludwig called himself the 'virgin king' and he remarked on several occasions that he had no sexual interest in women. Ludwig had crossed the line between normality and craziness already in the 1870s; Sisi increasingly developed strange behaviours when she became a more mature woman. In June 1881, Sisi took a boat from this hotel to a little island over there, called the 'Roseninsel', to visit Ludwig who loved to spend time there. They sat together and enjoyed the beautiful scent of the roses, and this inspired her to write one of her many poems she dedicated to her cousin Ludwig.



Ludwig increasingly became estranged from the 'real world', wouldn't see his people, and focused on building lavish castles such as Neuschwanstein, Linderhof and Herrenchiemsee in order to realise his belief in absolute monarchy, following the example of the French kings of previous centuries. It was his denial of constitutional monarchy, his inaccessibility and his spending on castles and culture, such as the support of Richard Wagner, that caused his downfall.

On 8th June 1886, Ludwig was declared mentally disturbed and incurable by a group of four doctors who, in fact, never examined him. A day later, on 9th June, the government declared him incapacitated. The following day, Ludwig's uncle Luitpold took over his role as Prince Regent. Ludwig was appalled, but at the same time he did not show much resistance and remained passive despite urgent calls, for example from Bismarck, to go to Munich and present himself to his people. Ludwig was then held as a prisoner in Castle Berg on the opposite side of the lake.



On 13th June, he and one of the doctors, who confirmed his mental incapacity, went for a walk together, near the lakeside. They never returned. Both bodies were found in shallow waters in the lake. The official version of events was that the doctor tried to hold Ludwig back from suicide and died accidentally; but that would not explain why the king's pocket watch stopped working at 18.45 due to the penetration of water, while the doctor's watch stopped later, at 20.10.

Sisi stayed in this hotel when the drama on the other side of the lake evolved. There were rumours, partly confirmed by recent research that she might have been involved in a plan to free the king at the last minute. We will never find out, but we know from the diary of her daughter that Sisi was very distraught at Ludwig's death. The little bouquet of jasmine that Ludwig held in his hand on his deathbed was her last greeting for him.

The author continues:

Susanne's information on Ludwig and his friendship with his cousin Sisi illuminated the following day's drive which was a tour of the Ammergau. For those who had booked it, a visit to Schloss Neuschwanstein revealed all its Wagnerian glory. For those who had not booked a tour, or who could not face the walk up the hill, a sighting of that fairy-tale castle was its own reward. Ludwig was known as the Mad King but was conveniently declared insane by a pair of psychiatrists who had never met him. This was largely due to his extreme extravagance as well as his eccentricity. His castles are now the most visited attractions in Bavaria so, as many of the party thought, he was not so very mad at all but in fact a marketing genius. News of his death, in mysterious circumstances, in a boat with the psychiatrist assigned to cure him, was brought to Sisi while staying at our hotel. Why were their watches telling different times? Nobody knows. Hohenschwangau Castle in neo-Gothic style and Linderhof gardens provided other attractions. Optional was the Wieskirche, a rococo confection in white and gold described by Ron Elenbaas as 'baroque on steroids'. The final suggested stop was Kloster Andechs with the church on the peak and beer from the monastic brewery. This, too, a tourist honeypot on a hot June afternoon. Our party bags in addition to motorway vignettes and Hungarian florins for car parks included two fine thermos flasks, emblazoned with the tour emblems, so hot drives and dehydration were anticipated by our medical advisor, Dr Michael Elliott.



Michael and Angelika were next to hold the floor with an expose of the *Dramatis Personae and Places of Action on the Tour*. Fine portraits of the various players: a youthful Franz Joseph and the glamorous Sisi, were held up by Michael. Poor Emperor Ferdinand fell into the category of ugly but was apparently

renowned for very good handwriting - not the most important attribute for an Emperor. Franz Joseph was decried for his failure to understand the female psyche. Sisi, a poor choice, clever, brilliant at languages and poetry, rebellious at stringent court etiquette, obsessed with her appearance was certainly a challenge too far.



The Habsburgs' Last Act - A Tragedy by Michael & Angelika Elliott

This is a tragedy of Emperors, Kings and Queens, of Archduchesses and a Crown Prince who all get caught up in their destiny and have a bad ending. Defeat in war, conspiracy, murder, suicide, assassination, fatal decisions and the loss of Empire is the stuff of which this last Act of 'The Austrian Empire' occurred during the final century of its long existence – with only a few moments of happiness and glory. We will explain the **Dramatis Personae, the Matchmakers and the Places of Action.**



Dramatis Personae

Franz Joseph (portraits reproduced above) became the Emperor of Austria at the age of 18, in December 1848. This was the year of a Europe-wide revolutionary movement which finished the monarchy in France and nearly swept away the Habsburgs in Austria. The 1848 revolution in Austria was not so much a proletarian uproar but rather a bourgeoisie democratic one and it was driven by Hungarian nationalists. Freedom of speech, the end of absolutism and the establishment of a constitution were the demands.

In 1848 Franz Joseph's uncle **Ferdinand** was the Emperor. He had ruled since 1835. Ferdinand was unsound, had hydrocephalus (water on the brain) and suffered from epilepsy since childhood. But the law of primogeniture had destined him to be the successor to the throne. As an epileptic his thinking was slow and awkward, but he was good natured and tried to please everybody. He loved music and gardening and had beautiful handwriting. He was certainly not the right monarch to handle the 1848 revolution. Ferdinand finally abdicated in Franz Joseph's favour in the turmoil that resulted.

Franz Joseph's father **Franz Karl** who would have been next in line of succession renounced the title in an act of Imperial dignity, being self-aware that he was unfit to become the Emperor. Finally, the revolution within the Austro-Hungarian empire was brutally suppressed militarily, by the most eminent generals of the time: Prince Schwarzenberg in Vienna, Prince Windisch-Grätz in Hungary and Bohemia and General Radetzky in Italy.

Franz Joseph took no part in the troubles and the resulting bitterness of these events. At the age of 18 he was a good looking, intelligent young man with a clear mind, aided by significant help from his mother, Archduchess Sophie. He seemed to be the right choice to continue the Habsburg monarchy. Franz Joseph ruled the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the second largest nation after Russia in Europe, with a population of 51 million composed of 11 ethnic groups for 68 years. Franz Joseph died in 1916 in the middle of WW1 at the age of 86.

The initial spark for World War I was Austria's declaration of war on Serbia after the assassination of the heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, in Sarajevo in 1914. **Franz Ferdinand** was Franz Joseph's nephew. He was destined to inherit the throne primarily because Franz Joseph's only son **Rudolf** had committed suicide at Mayerling in 1889 and, secondly, because Franz Ferdinand's father **Karl Ludwig** a brother of Franz Joseph had died in 1896. So, after Franz Ferdinand's assassination in 1914 and Franz Joseph's death in 1916, his great nephew **Karl** became Emperor and was the last Austrian Emperor. His reign lasted for just two years. His father Otto (Franz Ferdinand's brother) had died in 1906 of syphilis. In 1918 Austria and her ally Germany lost the war and Karl had to abdicate – actually, he refused to formally abdicate, but only renounced any participation in future state affairs in Austria. This was 642 years after the first Habsburg had set up his standard in Vienna. Karl and his family finally found exile on Madeira, where Karl died in 1922 at the age of 34 suffering from pneumonia.

The Matchmakers

Sophie was the most important woman in Franz Joseph's life. She was a Bavarian Princess by birth and Archduchess of Austria by marriage: a strict mother with an obedient son. She was ambitious, clever and hungry for power, a manipulator of political and family matters at the court in Vienna, with the reputation to be the 'only man at the Viennese court' at that time. For Franz Joseph, she carefully planned his ascension to the throne; for herself, the position as his political advisor and the manageress of his private life including his marriage.

Ludovika was Sophie's sister and her conspirator, a Bavarian Princess unhappily married to Duke Maximilian of Bavaria. She was a modest and busy mother of seven children whom she raised under difficult circumstances mostly at the family's country manor in Possenhofen, whilst her liberal and bad mannered husband toured the world and enjoyed a frivolous life.



In 1852, both sisters, **Sophie** (above left) and **Ludovika** (above right with Duke Maximilian Joseph of Bavaria, her future husband) were looking for suitable spouses for their eldest children. A marriage within the family would be to the benefit of both sides. So, a match between Franz Joseph and a daughter of Ludovika's was planned. Of the two daughters Franz Joseph chose Elisabeth, his cousin then aged 15 – a fatal choice: one year later he was the husband of a difficult wife called, Sisi.

Elisabeth (aka Sisi), shown in the middle of the engraving below, was a Princess of Bavaria, a wild and immature teenager of 16 who became the reluctant ‘Empress of Austria’ by marriage: unwilling to comply with the Viennese court etiquette, unwilling to surrender to her commanding mother-in-law and with a husband who did not understand her emotional needs. She felt ‘imprisoned’ and soon set out on a lifelong escape from Vienna and from all her duties. She became an egocentric, a self-obsessed beauty icon with sudden impulses, a liberal mind and a disposition to depression. Talented, too, a champion on horseback and in literature and poetry in foreign languages – a total failure as a mother and wife and as a monarch; for much of her life she was aimlessly wandering the world, nowhere at home, nowhere at peace, nowhere to hide – she was murdered in Geneva aged 61.

Rudolf, shown on the left in the engraving below, was the only son of Franz Joseph and Sisi, Crown Prince of Austria, neglected by his beautiful mother, whom he adored, and was despised by his father for his lack of a ‘Habsburg’s’ manly virtues. A child with a fragile health, a sensitive youth, interested in natural sciences rather than in the military. Liberal minded and a friend of the intellectuals – many of them Jews - rather than aristocrats. With political ideas contrary to his father’s - and like his mother, with a disposition to depression, he was considered a failure by the entire court. Rudolf committed suicide in Mayerling aged 30.

Valerie, being held by her mother in the engraving below, was the youngest daughter of Franz Joseph and Sisi. She was Sisi’s Hungarian gift to Franz Joseph for his consent to the ‘political compromise’ with Hungary. She was a victim of Sisi’s sudden and overwhelming motherly love, until then unknown with the empress. Sisi’s source of comfort: an overprotected child, disturbed by the tensions between her parents and within the family. She became the shareholder of her mother’s unhappiness and increasing despair.



The Austrian Imperial Family at Gödöllő Palace near Budapest, circa 1870

Karl von Habsburg, the patron of our tour, is the current head of the House of Habsburg. He is the grandson of the last Austrian Emperor Karl.

Places of Action (pictured later in this book)

Lake Starnberg, where Sisi spent her ‘wild’ childhood, to which she escaped from the Viennese ‘prison’. Hotel Strauch (now Hotel Kaiserin Elisabeth) where Sisi stayed 24 times in the summer, where she secretly met King Ludwig II – where she and Valerie learned of his tragic death in the lake on Sunday 13th June 1886.

Bad Ischl, where Franz Joseph made the fatal mistake to choose Sisi as his bride and where they became engaged. At the Kaiservilla which was Franz Joseph’s ‘Heaven on Earth’ – where the Imperial family spent their vacations - often in the absence of Sisi - where Franz Joseph made another fatal mistake, namely, signing the declaration of war against Serbia in 1914. Where Sisi’s and Franz Joseph’s and Valerie’s descendants, Markus von Habsburg-Lothringen and his family live today.

Mayerling, a former hunting lodge, where Crown Prince Rudolf, the only son of Franz Joseph & Sisi, committed suicide aged 30 after killing his lover Mary Vetsera, with her consent. This was a major blow for his Imperial parents.

The Palaces of Hofburg and Schönbrunn in Vienna: the major venues of Habsburg policy and private life for more than 600 years – with its pomp and glory, with its routines and intrigues and with an etiquette that ruined our protagonists’ marriage.

The Palace of Gödöllő, the ‘Hungarian’ gift to Sisi for her support to free ‘Hungary’ from her husband’s absolute rule. Sisi loved Gödöllő and Hungary.

Buda Castle where Sisi and Franz Joseph spent the only few months as a happy young family without the supervision of Sisi’s mother-in-law. Where their much loved first baby daughter Sophie, aged two, died of a fever. Where the Hungarian branch of the Habsburgs rest in the Castle’s **Palatinal Crypt**.

The author continues:

The Hotel Kaiserin Elisabeth was a comfortable and appropriate place to start the tour. Apart from its links with Empress Sisi, the atmosphere was relaxed, the food was excellent and there was plenty of parking for our precious Rolls-Royce motor cars. Of interest, two visitors with Rolls-Royce connections had booked to have dinner at the hotel and were delighted to meet participants. The first was Klaus-Josef Rossfeldt, a German author of books on the marque, who took a number of photos of our cars, some which are reproduced at the end of this book. The second was Ian Cameron, an honorary member of the 20-Ghost Club, who was formerly Chief Designer and Engineer of Rolls-Royce Motors Limited. It was also an opportunity to relax after a long journey from the US.



Ron and Nanette Elenbaas enjoy tea (or is it coffee?) on the terrace of the hotel

The magnificent Schloss Tratzberg, a medieval style hunting lodge of Emperor Maximilian in the Tyrol, was the first venue on the Sunday as we travelled into the Tyrol. Travel to the castle itself was in the mini tram 'The Tratzberg Express'. Mary Narvell and Ruth Evison were prominently located in the drivers' seats.



We were greeted by the Countess von Schubert (pictured on the left below with Angelika Elliott) on behalf of Count Ulrich von Goess-Enzenberg.



A welcome finger buffet and a glass of wine were served in the spectacular courtyard.



Above left: Delwyn Klevenow, Kimberly Shadduck, John Deane and Dave Shadduck
 Above right: Bill Johnston, Alexandra Müller, Peter Velvart, Jean-Pierre Müller, Gerald Davies, Fran Fuzzey, Michael Elliott, Jane Forbes, Ken Forbes, Albert Eberhard, Ronda Stryker and Ron Elenbaas

After refreshments, there was a tour of the castle during which we learnt more Habsburg dynastic information and a properly confusing family tree.



It was at Schloss Tratzberg that, in the third vignette, Sir John Stuttard managed most skilfully to condense 700 years of Habsburg rule into 10 minutes.

Michael Elliott was listening intently to confirm that John got the story right – and said afterwards that he was most impressed that the Habsburg history could be explained by reference to themes and with barely a mention of the dozens of names of Emperors, Kings and Archdukes!

The Habsburgs and their Empires – An Historical Overview by Sir John Stuttard

In the next 10 minutes, I shall attempt to describe the 900-year history of the Habsburgs and their Imperial world.

Actually, this is an impossible task and three matters in particular make the family's history even more complicated.

- As the Habsburgs acquired more territories, the titles of the individuals changed. For example, in 1519, the senior member of the family was Archduke Charles I of Austria, but he was titled Charles II as Duke of Burgundy, and Charles V when he became the Holy Roman Emperor
- As the Habsburgs expanded their Empires, different sons and other close relatives were made heads of state of the various territories. For example, one Habsburg became King of Bohemia, another King of Spain, and so on. The family had many sovereigns at the same time
- Over the centuries, the Habsburgs ruled over three separate Empires: Austria (which became Austria-Hungary), Spain (with its territories in the Netherlands, Italy and the New World) and finally the Holy Roman Empire.

This last was a multi-ethnic complex of territories in Europe which developed during the Middle Ages and continued until its dissolution in 1806 during the Napoleonic Wars. It was viewed as a sort of Christian successor to the Roman Empire and was a confederation of decentralised monarchies and principalities which elected its Emperor. The French writer, Voltaire, is quoted as saying that it was neither Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire.

Fortunately, the origin of the dynasty is easier to explain. The name 'Habsburg' is derived from the name of a Swiss castle near Zurich which was built in 1020 and known as 'Hawk's Castle' or 'Habichtsburg' from which the name 'Habsburg' is derived. A grandson of the first owner, Otto, began referring to himself as Graf von Habsburg.

Over the years, the family prospered, acquiring more land in Switzerland and in the surrounding territories including parts of Austria.

In the 14th century another Rudolf, known as the Founder, ruled as Archduke of Austria. From this time onwards the age-long identification of the Habsburgs with Austria began. Austria flourished and Vienna became a city of learning, with the University founded in 1365.

From there, during the 15th and 16th centuries, the territorial reach of the Habsburgs extended to a large part of Europe and also included the overseas Spanish territories in the Americas and the Philippines. The Habsburgs became so powerful that, for 400 years, nearly all the Holy Roman Emperors were members of the Habsburg family.

A notable feature is that the expansion of their Empires was largely achieved through marriage rather than through conquest. Most noteworthy was Maximilian I who married the heiress of Burgundy in 1477 thus gaining territory in the Netherlands as well as Eastern France. Then, both his son and daughter married into the Spanish Royal family thus resulting in the Habsburgs reigning over the Spanish Empire for 200 years until 1700. Another famous example was the 'Double Wedding' organised in 1515 by Maximilian I for two of his grandchildren which secured both Hungary and Bohemia for the family.

The Habsburgs reached the zenith of their power towards the end of the 16th century but there were four problems:

- The Habsburgs were Catholics, and the Reformation was to weaken their influence in Northern Europe, where the Prussian Empire began to threaten
- Ferdinand I's accession to the throne of Hungary meant that the Habsburgs had to bear the brunt of the Ottoman Turkish invasion from the Balkans into Central Europe. This continual harassment proved costly particularly in defending Vienna from siege in 1529 and then again in 1683. But the Islamic conquest of Europe was halted by the Habsburgs and a further benefit was the introduction of coffee to Vienna for which it is renowned today
- Despite their common religion, France proved to be a continuing enemy over the years culminating in Napoleon invading Austria in 1805

- Finally, to keep their heritage in their own hands, they began to intermarry, resulting in fatal inbreeding, including deformities and childless marriages. For example, King Charles II of Spain died without issue in 1700, resulting in the War of the Spanish Succession after which Philip of Anjou became the king of Spain. During this War, the English came to the aid of the Austrian Habsburgs, with the Duke of Marlborough routing the French in 1704 at the Battle of Blenheim. Another Habsburg who had no male heir was Emperor Charles VI. When he died in 1740, his daughter, Maria Theresia, faced a Prussian invasion of Silesia, which unleashed the War of the Austrian Succession. This was followed by the Seven Years War from 1756 to 1763. The Habsburgs lost territory.

Maria Theresia's marriage to Francis Stephen, the Grand Duke of Lorraine and later Holy Roman Emperor, brought the Habsburgs and France closer together. This was enhanced by the marriage in 1770 of one of their daughters, the Archduchess Marie-Antoinette, to the future King Louis XVI of France. But both were guillotined 23 years later during the French Revolution. At this time, in the second half of the 18th century, Austria flourished. The monarchy was still expanding its reach; it fielded Europe's largest army; it possessed a stable yet innovative government; it led the way in public education; and it was without peer in the world of music. Many of Mozart's operas were premiered in Vienna.

The French Revolution of 1792 put an end to the status quo. Napoleon was proclaimed Emperor of the French in 1804 and in response to this, the Habsburg Francis assumed the title of Francis I as the first Emperor of Austria. Then, in 1806, after defeat at the Battle of Austerlitz and under pressure from Napoleon, Francis abdicated as Emperor of the Holy Roman Emperor so ending this thousand year old phenomenon.

The next few years saw Austria both ally with, and also fight, the French. The wily Austrian statesman, Metternich, arranged a marriage in 1810 between Napoleon and Francis' daughter, Archduchess Marie-Louise. Initially Austria supported Napoleon's invasion of Russia but, when he thought the French might lose, Metternich changed sides. In early 1815, Metternich engineered the Congress of Vienna bringing together the nations which were fighting Napoleon. After the Battle of Waterloo, the Habsburgs, under Emperor Francis, benefitted and recovered many of the territories they had lost in the 18th century.



In 1848, in the wake of the revolutions spreading throughout Europe, and after the abdication of his uncle who was an epileptic and incapable of ruling, the 18-year old Franz Joseph von Habsburg became the Emperor of Austria. He set about stabilising the Austrian Empire.

Tomorrow evening, Fokko Keuning will relate the story of Emperor Franz Joseph, Empress Sisi and the tide of nationalism which proved unstoppable for the Habsburg Empire. Subsequent vignettes will also cover the story in the 19th and early 20th century. 900 years is a long time for one family to have such a dominant role in Europe and I hope that I have given you a glimpse of some of their achievements.



The author continues:

Passing Lake Achensee and climbing into the Tyrolean Alps, the cars started to perform. Considering the entire length of the tour we have to admire these fine motors. John and Denise Dolan's early tourer of 1908 (60756) was picked out later by Mary Narvell as the most popular backdrop for tourist selfies closely followed by Dave and Kimberly Shadducks' 1929 Springfield Phantom I Newmarket (S138FR) and Doug Magee's 1912 Ghost (2092). Maybe unsurprisingly the cars outperformed the drivers. None failed to proceed and with some gentle encouragement from resident mechanic, Roy O'Sullivan, they all completed the tasks asked of them. Sadly, the drivers were less fortunate. Covid wreaked its havoc with Peter and Rea Velvart retiring early as did Jean-Pierre and Alexandra Müller. They were missed but we hear are recovering well. Others did complete but were hampered by illness and hindered by masks. Tom Heckman was the first to succumb, but open Ghosts are perfect for ventilation. Alas poor Sandy Sayer fell victim on arrival, a baptism of fire for a first trip in an open Ghost as navigator to John Snook. For the second week personnel and cars were replenished by Chip and Jacque Connor in their sleek Phantom II, Martin and Susanne Halusa in their speedy 1912 Ghost and Sir Michael Kadoorie and David McKirdy in Michael's elegant Phantom III



No car had a puncture on the Alpine roads but the M3 out of Budapest took out John Snook in his beautiful 1914 Ghost, mothballed during Covid. Fortunately, an EM Rogers lorry close by was able to help. What was not helpful was an irate local driver who claimed his car had been damaged by the soft rubber inner tube in the road and insisted on calling the police. Fortunately, the Hungarian police were unimpressed, and he retired still irate but unrecompensed. It was a day for flat tyres as Clayton and Helen Banks were held up by a tyre on their returning aeroplane which needed repairing on the runway. 'Time-expired' was the excuse. Speaking of tyres, Fokko felt that the Moravian roads were maladapted to his 'rut-seeking tyres'. I don't think his car had a monopoly of those. Most of us felt in that camp but at least they remained intact.

Hotel Kitzhof, Kitzbühel (12th June)



We associate the Tyrol with Austria but, like most of the lands around, it had had some ownership changes. The Wittelsbachs of Bavaria, including King Ludwig and Sisi herself, lost it to the Habsburgs. They lost it to Napoleon in 1805 only to regain it in 1814. After a spectacular drive through the Tyrol, our one night stand was the Hotel Kitzhof in Kitzbühel, redolent of ski-ing and of course the site of the Hannenkahn downhill race.



There was an opportunity to see the attractive town of Kitzbühel as well as plan the following day's route. Nanette Elenbaas and Ronda Stryker, above, are focused on ensuring that the navigation goes to plan.

The following day the scenery started to shift, and a longer drive took us through the Pillersee Valley between the Northern Limestone Alps and the Slate Alps. On through the federal state of Salzburg and finally to Styria.

Imlauer Schlosshotel Pichlarn, Aigen im Ennstal (13th, 14th & 15th June)



Our destination in Styria for three nights was Schloss Pichlarn, a fine country retreat/golf club and a popular venue for car clubs. It was a little alarming to be housed in the covered indoor tennis courts as most of the cars are prone to minor incontinence issues overnight. Sir John and Gerald Davies came to the rescue with sheets of polythene. That evening our happy congregation for drinks under the ancient Linden Tree in the courtyard was interrupted by a persistent buzzing of Ferraris, Porsches and Lamborghinis. Recalling the robotic mower at the Hotel Kaiserin (which in fact spent the night docked under Ken Forbes' car and was lucky not to be destroyed). Doug Magee likened the first few of these low slung buzzing Porsches driving onto the lawn to giant robotic mowers. They did however displace Fokko from his perch. Fokko's vignette of Kaiser Franz Joseph that night had to be relocated to the restaurant. But, as predicted, it was a masterpiece. The Kaiser was a military man of great discipline and sense of duty, but relationships were not his forte. Tragedy and longevity (he reigned for 68 years) have resulted in enduring affection and sympathy such that he is much seen on the wrappers of chocolates, remarked Fokko.



Kaiser Franz Joseph by Fokko W Keuning



Tonight's subject is Kaiser Franz Joseph, Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary, King of Croatia and Bohemia, etc, etc, etc.

When does our story start? With his birth in 1830. His ambitious mother realised her son had a good chance to inherit the throne and set about organising a thorough training. The young Franz Joseph was imbued with diligence, duty and devotion. Growing up during the time of absolutism, it comes as no surprise that constitutional rights did not figure high on his educational agenda. As a Habsburg, Franz Joseph was a devout Roman Catholic and a strident believer in his right to rule 'Deo Gratia'. At the tender age of just 13 years old, he was made a colonel in the army. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, he served with distinction, a gallant and capable officer. He remained a military man at heart all his life, preferring to dress in military uniform.

In 1848 revolutions raged all over Europe and Emperor Ferdinand, a friendly but mentally deficient man without issue, was forced to abdicate. Franz Joseph became Emperor at just 18 years of age. He inherited a vast and diverse Empire, encompassing many nationalities with more Slavic than Germanic inhabitants. Although the Habsburg administration was generally considered strict but fair, the Empire faced many threats, both from within and without.

Franz Joseph set about trying to stabilize his Empire. He spoke German, Hungarian and Czech fluently as well as some Polish and Italian. He was well liked and even respected, but he was very strict and quite pig headed. During his long reign Franz Joseph was plagued by nationalism and ethnic strife. Whilst capable of compromise when absolutely necessary, it was mostly a case of 'too little too late'. He was no visionary man, not stupid but no Bismarck, one of his main antagonists.

It is perhaps this notion of inevitability that explains the popularity of Franz Joseph to this day. Rather than black-balling him for being one of the instigators of World War I, he is remembered as a bewhiskered patriarch, stern but fair, looking down benignly on the multitudes of his subjects.

In order to better understand the political dynamics of 19th century Europe, we have to take a step back to 1815. Waterloo was literally a watershed. The balance of power shifted. Even if some territories were restored to Austria, England and Germany became the dominant powers. In Germany the trend towards unification intensified. Franz Joseph was in favour of the so called 'Gross Deutschland' or greater Germany solution: Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire under the Habsburgs. But he was outwitted by Bismarck and the 'Klein Deutschland' or Germany proper solution under Prussia became a reality. It proved to be the beginning of the end for the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Surprisingly, Franz Joseph married for love: the beautiful but capricious Sisi. Over the centuries the Habsburg court etiquette had become quite stifling and Sisi could not adapt. It is generally felt that the marriage was unhappy. Their first born, a daughter, died in infancy and their only son committed suicide. Sisi very much went her own way, much to the dismay of Franz Joseph who, in 1885, took the actress Katharina Schratt as his mistress. To his credit he was very discreet about it, not to say that he was reticent to a point.

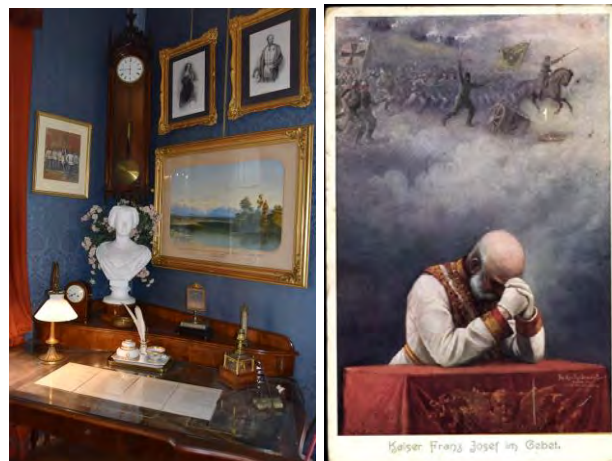
It is easy to blame Franz Joseph for the many mistakes he made. Not relinquishing more power, not seeing the 'mene, mene, tekel', staying in power for far too long, declaring war on Serbia at the age of 84, entering World War I on the losing side. These points are clear in hindsight. But it must not be forgotten that, in fact, it is doubtful that the downfall of the Habsburg dynasty could have been prevented, whatever Franz Joseph would have done or not done. What was started in 1848, a swell of republican revolutions, proved an unstoppable tide. The time for Empires was running out, come what may.

Franz Joseph had more than his fair share of tragedy. An unhappy marriage, the death of his daughter, the suicide of his only son, the execution of his brother in Mexico and the assassination of his wife. There was even an attempt on his own life, but he survived. The older he grew, the more set in his ways he became. His cousin and heir apparent wanted to marry the wife of his choice but Franz Joseph was not pleased, commenting that the bride-to-be was 'a mere countess' and not from a reigning dynasty. He forced the couple into a morganatic marriage, excluding their children from the throne. When the couple was assassinated in Sarajevo in 1914, the ageing Franz Joseph spoke of 'Divine intervention' and was perhaps secretly pleased.

Just imagine what Franz Joseph would have thought of the beloved, his only son. We shall never know, but such a mindset from a domineering father might just have tilted this rather weak son into suicide. It has been said that the life of Franz Joseph is like a Greek tragedy, a 'tragos oide' or goats' chant, mournful indeed. But to my mind there are Wagnerian overtones: brooding, haunting, hammering, even pompous. There are mysterious mists steaming from dark Germanic woods, obscuring Greek lucidity.

For all practical purposes Franz Joseph was the last Habsburg Emperor. He died in 1916, aged 86 years, having reigned 68 years. He died in the middle of World War I and must have realised that all was not well. His life was a difficult one, but he suffered all adversities with dignity. He was succeeded by his grandnephew Karl, a good, willing man who was forced to give up power in 1918, thereby ending Habsburg rule. Contrary to general belief, it is not so easy to learn from history. But what we can see here are some plain home truths: nothing is absolute, everything changes, nothing is eternal, total control is impossible. A recurrent theme in the works by Wagner is 'Schicksal': destiny or fate. For Franz Joseph fate proved fatal.

Below left is Franz Joseph's desk at the Kaiservilla, Bad Ischl, at which he wrote *An meine Völker* (To My Peoples) and signed the declaration of war against the Kingdom of Serbia, unaware that this would trigger World War I.





The author continues:

Spectacular scenery with less climbing was provided on the Tuesday in the area known as the Salzkammergut. The salt deposits have been exploited from the 2nd millennium BC and were the source of much prosperity. It is also an area of outstanding beauty with Hallstatt a gem. Stuart and Ruth Evison got into some problem with parking in a coach space as due to general busyness the designated Car Park 2 was full. No leeway for size of car is given. A coach is a coach, and we are not, as we too discovered later at Mayerling.

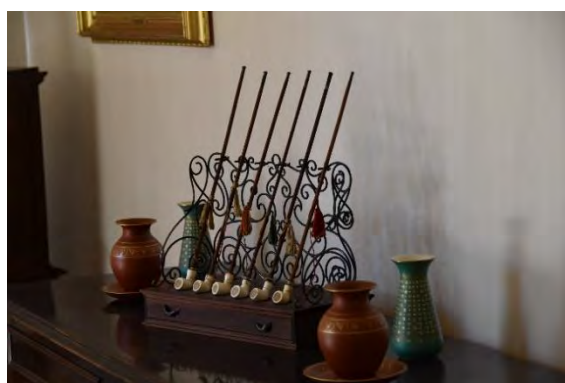
After Hallstatt, more Habsburg history at the Kaiservilla in Bad Ischl. This is where Franz Joseph met his Sisi, and he called it ‘his heaven on earth’.

The cars fanned out in front and were welcomed by Markus von Habsburg-Lothringen, a great grandchild of Franz Joseph and Sisi.

Our tour around the Kaiservilla was notable for the huge number of sporting trophies on the walls and the more informal feeling of the place. Franz Joseph was a great devotee of hunting and carried it on throughout his life. The historic desk was displayed on which his ‘Letter to his Peoples’ was written in 1914, with the declaration of war on Serbia. Stuffed animals were admired by Fokko.



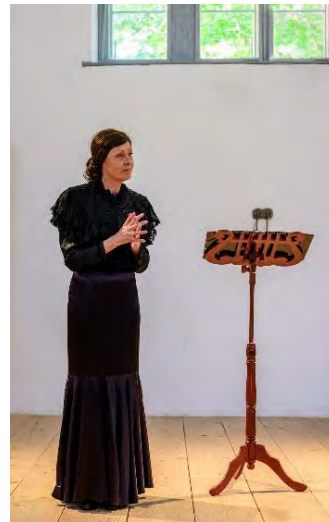
Left: Angelika Elliott, Maximilian von Habsburg-Lothringen, Markus von Habsburg-Lothringen
Right: Markus von Habsburg-Lothringen explains the Kaiservilla's history and its contents



Franz Joseph's pipes and his hunting horn, at Kaiservilla



The Piano Nobile at Kaiservilla, Bad Ischl



At the Kaiservilla, Angelika had arranged for the Austro-American actress, Elisabeth-Jo Harriet in the form of Sisi, to read some of Sisi's poems. Delwyn Klevenow was impressed by her translations into English. Some are rather sad and poignant. Kathy Deane was struck by her Anti-Drinking Song of which the refrain is :

*I don't need love
And wine I just spit
The one makes me sick
And the other vomit.*

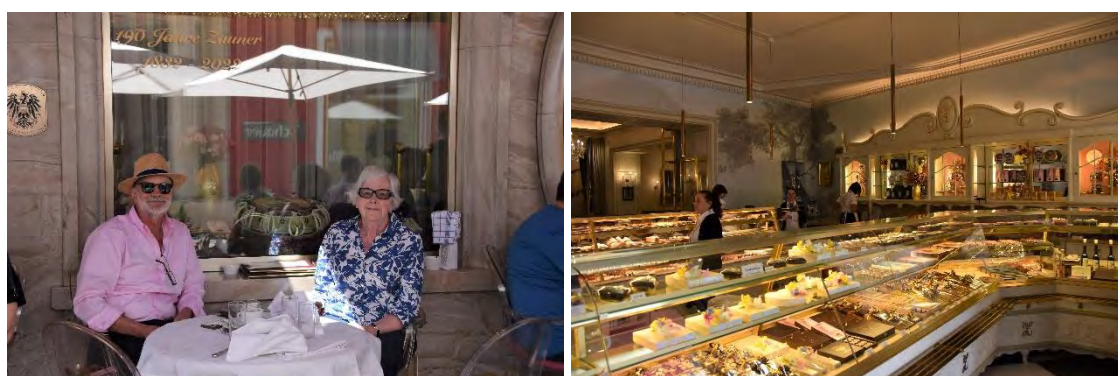
Our drinking was prolific but of course never to excess. The wine just flowed in copious quantities throughout the tour. A minor mishap occurred when one of the Habsburg great-great grandchildren (perhaps just four years of age) not over-enthused by poetry was fidgeting and fell off her chair. She was comforted by the black clad Sisi, but this possibly just increased her tears.



The ornamental fountain in front of the Kaiservilla



John Snook and Mike Beveridge with 1914 SG Tourer (50YB) at the Kaiservilla



Café Konditorei Zauner in Bad Ischl was a favourite of Franz Joseph for coffee and a cake
John Narvell and Lady (Lesley) Stuttard agree

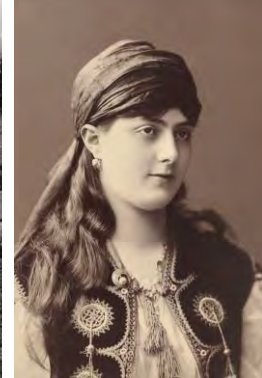
On the Wednesday we had the opportunity of venturing in to the Sölkertäler National Park. This, we were reminded, was the home of the liberal Archduke Johann, a Habsburg prince of the 19th century and key in the rebellion against Napoleon. A highly educated man, he had a degree from the University of Edinburgh. This recalled an event earlier on the trip when Strone Macpherson had a minor breakdown and was supported by a local dignitary who asked him where he was from. On replying 'Scotland', his new found friend was happy to reveal that he was the Mayor of Munich which is twinned with Edinburgh. Smiles and refreshments were forthcoming for a hot Strone and Alex. On this occasion, participants stopped for refreshments at the Alpengasthof Kreuzerhütte before climbing the Sölkpass.



In the evening, back at Schloss Pichlarn, it was Clare Corbett's turn to give a vignette – this time on *The Mayerling Affair: Tragedy, Crime, Scandal*. [The editor writes: Her vignette was rigorously researched, delivered with authority and great sensitivity – and very well received.]

The Mayerling Affair: Tragedy, Crime, Scandal by Clare Corbett

Mayerling was the hunting lodge 26kms from Vienna where Crown Prince Rudolf, the only son of Emperor Franz Joseph and Empress Elisabeth, Sisi, was found dead on the morning of 30th January 1889, along with his mistress the Baroness Mary Vetsera. They are shown below, together with the hunting lodge at Mayerling, which no longer exists.



1. Who were they?

Rudolf was born in 1858. His mother, Sisi, was side-lined and Franz Joseph's mother, Archduchess Sophie, appointed a nurse to raise him. She was the Baroness Karolina von Welden (known to him as Wowu). Age 6, Wowu was removed and Major General Count Leopold Gondrecourt, the local military sadist, became Rudolf's governor. The aim of Franz Joseph was to toughen him up. Gondrecourt used to wake him at night by firing pistols. Military drill was at 6am. During a zoo trip little Rudolf was locked in a cage and told a wild boar was coming to get him. Unsurprisingly he developed nightmares and bedwetting. Aged 7 he collapsed. Probably a breakdown, ostensibly diphtheria, Sisi made an ultimatum and Gondrecourt was fired. He was replaced with her choice; the liberal Colonel Josef Latour vom Thurmburg. He was cultured and sympathetic, but Habsburg education was no picnic. From 7am to 8pm, 50 different instructors teaching history, strategy, languages, arithmetic, fencing, etc. Rudolf was not interested in music or arts but liked natural sciences. Aged 15 he was introspective. A diary entry notes 'all day long my brain boilsAre u already a madman or will you become one ?' He was generally liberal and was to mix with journalists including Szeps, the Jewish journalist, whose newspaper was to be shut down by his Uncle Albrecht. He shared his mother's love of Hungary. Sisi to him was a beautiful ideal. At 18 he was given a stipend but no palace and was kept in the Hofburg. He joined the army but was careless and undisciplined. Franz Joseph appointed a group of officers, in particular Vice Admiral Count Karl von Bombelles who was made High Chamberlain. He introduced Rudolf to alcohol and women. Mad about women but easily bored, he was misogynistic 'Women bore me to death when they are not laughing or singing. As a matter of fact, are they good for anything else?' Princely conquests of suitable rank were given on ending an affair, a silver cigarette box engraved with his signature and coat of arms. Noble ladies of lesser rank got a box stamped with his name and coat of arms. Conquests of lesser rank still got an engraved name and archducal crown.

By 1880 Franz Joseph insisted on marriage. He had to marry a Catholic of equal rank. Princess Stephanie of Belgium aged 15 was chosen. Sisi commented 'nothing good can come out of Belgium'. By 1885 he was having affairs.

In 1886 Rudolf fell ill. He was drinking and consorting with prostitutes. Mitzi Caspar was the favourite mistress. Medical files were destroyed but it is accepted that he suffered from gonorrhoea. Stephanie fell ill. He relieved joint pains and urinary symptoms with morphine, opium and cocaine prescribed by the Imperial physicians. His marriage suffered. He would escape from the Hofburg. His usual driver was Bratfisch who worked for a local cab company.

In 1888 he was temporarily reunited with Stephanie. She described fierce outbursts of anger. Stephanie spoke to the Emperor but was accused of being fanciful. His sister Gisela reported Rudolf 'as a person to be treated with caution'. Lady Walburga Paget (the German wife of the English ambassador) recorded that 'Vienna had the highest suicide rate in Europe'. It became entertainment and was reported in the Press. Rudolf told Marie Larisch 'I am tired of life'. Mitzi Caspar reported him speaking of killing himself. In December 1888 he asked her to join him in a suicide pact She reported it to Vienna's chief of police Baron Franz von Krauss who ignored it.

Mary, just 17 years of age, had thick dark brown hair and large brown eyes. She was the favourite child of her mother Baroness Helene Vetsera. When Marie was born there was a craze for English things, so she was called Mary. Helene's aim was to marry Mary well. Mary herself had a passion for immoral and highly coloured French novels. She told her piano teacher that this 'the only reading that interests me.' She was regarded as coquettish. In 1888 she saw Prince Rudolf at the races. Noting the encounter in her engagement book she wrote 'Today I have seen the Crown Prince. He was so beautiful.' She became Rudolf's mistress.

2. The end of the affair?

Rudolf enjoyed Mary's fawning admiration, but his interest was waning. There were reports of a recent new affair with a chorus girl. On 21st December he sent Mary a silver cigarette box. After this he did not see her again until 13th January. Mary then gave him a gold cigarette box inscribed January 13th thought by some to be the date of consummation of the affair (unlikely given frequent nocturnal visits to the Hofburg) but may have been the date she confirmed a pregnancy. The strongest evidence for pregnancy is in the report Mitzi Caspar gave to the police on 3rd February. She could only have heard it from Rudolf himself.

Rudolf told Countess Marie Larisch that Mary: 'won't be shaken off'. (Larisch was a cousin of Sisi's and an illegitimate daughter of Ludwig II of Bavaria. She was heavily involved in the affair and probably blackmailing Rudolf. Her memoirs are therefore somewhat edited) On 24th January Rudolf had a row with his father. He was ordered to end the affair. This was unusual, so why? In his diplomatic file Albin Vetsera (Helene's husband, 21 years older and a diplomat appointed by Franz Joseph) is shown not to be Mary's father. He left Vienna in May 1870 while Helene remained in Vienna. Mary was born in March 1871. Helene was rudely alluded to as 'the Circus' as she went round a lot. Could the paternity of Mary be the responsibility of Franz Joseph himself? Other causes of the row were political intrigues and a possible application for an annulment.

Retreat to Mayerling gave Rudolf a brief respite. Mary joining him was probably a last-minute decision as she had no luggage. It might have been his aim to tell her of his decision to end the affair as ordered by his father.

3. What happened?

On Tuesday 28th January Mary was delivered by Countess Marie Larisch to the Red Lion Inn. There she met Rudolf being driven by his driver Bratfisch and together they took the back roads to Mayerling. Rudolf's apartments were on the ground floor with his valet Loschek adjacent to the anteroom. Rudolf was due to go hunting on 29th January but said he had a cold. This was the excuse he also gave for missing a formal dinner to celebrate the engagement of his sister Marie Valerie. His hunting companions were Count Joseph Hoyos and his brother-in-law Count Philip Coburg. The latter went back to Vienna for the dinner.

Much later, in his memoirs, Loschek recalled hearing two shots and 'serious voices from the room'. He went to the door and Rudolf, who was fully dressed at about 6am in the morning, asked him to come back later. When he returned later the door was locked and he was unable to gain entry. He was afraid to break in and called for Count Joseph Hoyos and Count Philip Coburg to be there. Coburg told him to break a panel which he did and Loschek reported that both were dead. He was then ordered to go in. Mary was on the right side of the bed, Rudolf on the opposite side with legs extended and torso bent forward. The top of Rudolf's skull was gone. There was a revolver on the bed and a single bullet wound to the left temple had shattered the right side of Mary's skull. Hoyos claimed that the valet declared Mary and Rudolf had taken strychnine as this can cause bloody haemorrhages. This is reportedly where the idea of poisoning came from.

4. How to get news to the Emperor

Panic ensued. How to tell the Emperor and keep it secret until he had been informed. Hoyos told Loschek to telegraph Dr Hermann Widerhofer (the Imperial physician) asking him to come to Mayerling. Bratfisch then drove him to the station. Hoyos ordered the station master to stop the train, The *Trieste Express*, not due to stop at Mayerling. The station master refused so he had to be told the news. Despite being sworn to secrecy, he ran to the telegraph office to inform Baron Nathaniel Rothschild who owned Southern railway, not the state. He in turn told his brother in Vienna, Baron Albert Rothschild who then rushed to the German Embassy, informed the ambassador Prince Reuss and then to the British Embassy where he told Sir Augustus and Lady Paget. Thus, the embassies heard before the court.

At 10.11 Hoyos arrived at the Hofburg where he briefed Bombelles and asked him to tell Franz Joseph. There was then a standoff between the three high chamberlains and Count Edward Paar Franz Joseph's adjutant general until a decision was made.

It was finally decided that Baron Ferenc Nopsca, high chamberlain of the Empress's household, should inform Sisi of the tragedy. She was having her Greek Lesson and initially refused to be disturbed.

Nopsca then sent for her reader, Countess Ida von Ferenczy, who pressed Sisi to see him. Sisi was advised that Rudolf's death was likely to be from poisoning and she proceeded to tell Franz Joseph in private.

At 1.30pm Prime Minister Taaffe met with Baron Krauss, chief of police, who was informed that the Crown Prince had been found dead in bed with the Vetsera woman.

The most important thing was to conceal her body and bury her in secret. Count Paar was sent to the Vetsera palace and ordered to get Helene to leave Vienna and to tell her that Mary had poisoned the Crown Prince. It was not till later that she heard the true story from her brother.

Helene meanwhile was looking for Mary. Countess Ferenczy tried to dismiss her but eventually Sisi said she would see her and was informed that her daughter was dead. *'My R is dead too but remember he died of heart failure'*.

In the afternoon edition of *Wiener Zeitung*, Rudolf's death was attributed to a stroke. By Wednesday afternoon the bulletin stated: *'Crown Prince the Archduke Rudolf died between 7-8 in the morning of heart failure'*.

5. Back at Mayerling

By the afternoon, Dr Widerhofer arrived at Mayerling with the seven member Imperial Court medical commission. Mary was in full rigor mortis, Rudolf in the early stages. He was thought to have survived his lover by six hours. Mary was not in her skating outfit, found neatly folded on an armchair. Blood was everywhere. What had been going through Rudolf's mind after shooting Mary? The seven member Imperial court medical commission included Dr Heinrich Slatin who also wrote his memoirs. He noted a tumbler of brandy on the bedside table, two broken champagne glasses, a small hand mirror and gun moved to the table. A number of notes and letters were found:

From Rudolf :

1. Dear Loschek *'Fetch a priest and have us buried together at Heiligenkreuz'*
2. Letter to his wife, Stephanie
3. To his mother. A transcription in Marie Valerie's diary refers to *'the necessity of his death to save his stained honour'*
4. A letter addressed to Count Ladislaus von Szögyény-Marich was written in Hungarian. Rudolf asked him to open his locked writing desk in Vienna *'Dear von Szögyény I must die. It's the only way to leave this world like a gentleman'*.

From Mary: The letters written support the fact that she was compliant in her death. These were found in 2015 in a bank vault in Vienna mysteriously deposited in 1926. Among them:

1. To her mother, *'Dear Mother Forgive me for what I have done. I could not resist love'*
2. To her sister Hanna, *'I could not resist love. I am going with him. I go to my death serenely'*.

6. What happened to Rudolf?

At midnight a hearse arrived for Rudolf. At 2am he was carried into the Hofburg. Franz Joseph wanted to see the body but had to be dressed in appropriate uniform to pay respects to an Austrian general. On 31st January 1889 Rudolf's autopsy was attended by four doctors including the two Court physicians, Dr Hermann Widerhofer and Dr Franz Auchentaler, and the director of forensic medicine. The complete report is missing but an excerpt published in a newspaper on 2nd February notes that he *'Died from a shot. Fired against R anterior temporal region at close range. Shot himself and death instantaneous'*. It also noted changes in the skull bones and brain which they stated are usually accompanied by abnormal mentality and therefore justify the assumption that he died in *'a state of mental derangement'*. He was embalmed with the help of liberal wax.

Franz Joseph was receptive to the declaration that his son had mental illness, Sisi less so: 'I have inherited the taint of madness'. Because the Catholic Church disallowed burial of suicides unless in a state of mental derangement, Franz Joseph had to approach Pope Leo XIII. He won his burial. Cardinal Rampolla protested and persuaded the entire college of cardinals to boycott the Vatican requiem for the Crown Prince. (When Rampolla was due to be elected Pope after the death of Leo XIII Franz Joseph, recalling this behaviour, boycotted it).

On Sunday 3rd February the coffin was carried through the Hofburg to the Hofkapelle where Rudolf would lie in state dressed in the uniform of an Austrian general. More than 100,000 people attempted to view the body. An immense cortege went to the 16th century Capuchin church where he was placed in the crypt among his Habsburg relatives.

7. What happened to Mary?

Meanwhile Mary's body was hidden in a basket under her clothes and in a storeroom. Court physician, Dr Franz Auchentaler, had examined the body. He found a small wound in the left temple. A right-handed person, as Mary was, would have shot herself in the right temple. The hair was singed so she had been shot at close range. He was ordered to find it a suicide, a murder would have had to be investigated.

On the evening of 31st January her uncle, Alexander Baltazzi, and Count Stockau (Helene's brother-in-law) would be allowed to take her body from Mayerling to the monastery of Heiligenkreuz. No hearse was allowed, and she was to be smuggled out in a regular carriage. Police Inspector Gorup, sent ahead, found Abbot Grunbock less agreeable to this secret burial. He had to be told it was not a suicide (disallowed in the Catholic church) but that she had been shot. 31st January was a stormy night. The Uncles were ordered to support the corpse as best they could. They used one of Rudolf's walking sticks and tied the head to her neck with a handkerchief. They then sat on either side of their niece's corpse during the two-hour circuitous journey. Bells were tolling midnight when they eventually arrived at the monastery. Vienna was due to send a coffin, had failed to do so, so they had to get a local carpenter to make up a plain pine box. Too stormy to dig the grave, the funeral service was postponed to the next day. Mary was placed in an unmarked grave. Two weeks after her death Helene was allowed to publish an obituary 'Died on the way to Venice. Her body taken to Bohemia for burial on a Baltazzi estate'.

Then what?

Within a week of the tragedy Helene leaked two of Mary's letters to the French newspaper *Le Figaro*. Prime Minister Taaffe tried to bribe Helene and offered her money, but she was fed up and decided to make a spectacle of the grave. On 16th May she had Mary's plain pine casket placed within a large ornate bronze casket and reburied in a more prominent grave at Heiligenkreuz. She commissioned a Romanesque style marble memorial chapel in the cemetery. Officials vetoed use of Vetsera name. She also wrote a booklet drawing on her daughter's letters. Copies were confiscated and destroyed. *The Times* of London got a copy. However, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador intervened. Finally, the *Liverpool Daily Post* printed it whole in September.

Then what?

In 1945 Heiligenkreuz was shelled by the Russians. The graveyard was ransacked by Soviet troops the following year, leaving the bones in disarray and the skull severed. In 1948 the grave was resealed with a stone slab. Then in 1959 an Italian lady offered to pay for a new coffin. The original bronze coffin was full of water. The gravedigger Klein examined the skull and bones and reported them shattered and fragmented whether from death or the Soviets. Local physician, Gerd Holler, inspected the remains and saw no evidence of a bullet wound. He claimed death was due to a botched abortion, a story supported by the supposed midwife's grandson. This he said happened at the Hofburg on 28th January. Mary supposedly went to Mayerling to recuperate and bled to death and Rudolf then shot himself. This is not supported by the suicide letters or by the facts.

Not the end for Mary

In 1991 Helmut Flatzelsteiner, a middle-aged furniture salesman from Linz obsessively believed he was in psychic communication with the couple. He had read Holler's book. He secretly exhumed her remains 'It was all wet, dirty and smelled awful'. He approached forensic experts claiming the bones belonged to a relative of his. He then made the error of also approaching writer and historian George Markus who went to the police. They then seized the remains. Professor Dr. Zoltán Szilvássy of the Institute of Forensic Science at Vienna University agreed that it was an 18-year old girl, skull too fragmented to comment but he noted a small groove in the left temple which could have been caused by a bullet. In 1993 Mary's remains were reburied and, after a court case, Flatzelsteiner paid the abbey 2000 Euros compensation. At last, she was at rest.

8. Conspiracy Theories

Of these, there are many: Within 24 hours there were rumours of a vengeful gamekeeper. The French press carried the story.

Murder: The Papal Nuncio, Luigi Galimberti, absorbed gossip and relayed it to the German Ambassador Reuss who reported to Bismarck that both were murdered, and judicial investigation would have revealed immoral circumstances. Rumours abounded about the direction of the bullet and other wounds. Even Reuss noted they do not fit in with the fact that a great many circumstances point to suicide.

Raucous party gone wrong: Rudolf was supposedly beaten over the head – usually with a champagne bottle and Mary shot by a drunken guest. The Lodge was in a shambles. In 1942 a carpenter at Mayerling said there were signs of a bitter struggle in Rudolf's bedroom. Death by champagne bottle first appeared in 1897 booklet '*De Mord am Kronprinzen Rudolf*', and in other accounts from courtiers, possibly a more acceptable explanation than murder and suicide.

Political assassination: Hungary looms. Rudolf discreetly supported opponents of Prime Minister Tisza. In the summer of 1888 at a shooting party in Transylvania, Count Teleki produced a document apparently signed by Rudolf to support the rebellion. According to Emperor Carl I (nephew of Franz-Ferdinand) Rudolf had involved himself in a Hungarian adventure from which it was difficult to find a way out. In 1893 Zita, Emperor Carl I's widow, suggested that Rudolf was murdered as part of a conspiracy against his father. She also claimed the French Prime Minister Clemenceau, whom she disliked, was behind it. The finger has also been pointed at Bismarck with accusations of German agents shooting Rudolf. At the height of World War I, books blamed Berlin for his death. In 1969, the author Victor Wolfson in *The Mayerling Murders*, asserted all the letters were clever forgeries.

9. Aftermath

The story continues to be remembered in film and ballet. For example, the 1978 ballet by Kenneth Macmillan, the 2006 musical *Rudolf*. Ten films including the 1968 British version with Catherine Deneuve and Omar Sharif. The German Director Rolf Raffé made a film about Sisi, and Countess Marie Larisch, happy to tell all, starred as Sisi. When he made a film of *Mayerling*, Leni Riefenstahl starred as Mary Vetsera. Both films are lost.

Less than a month after Rudolf's death Franz Joseph took control of the lodge and ordered it to be transformed into a convent for an order of Carmelite nuns. In 2014 the nuns opened a visitor centre featuring some furniture from the lodge as well as Mary's original bronze casket and a few planks from the pine coffin which the monks at Heiligenkreuz kept stored away after her 1959 reburial. The new Gothic revival style chapel (shown left below) lies over Rudolf's former private apartments. The altar now stands where Rudolf's bed had once been (shown right below). Nuns still pray for Rudolf daily and hopefully say the odd prayer for Mary too.



Palais Hansen Kempinski Vienna (16th, 17th, 18th & 19th June)



The author continues:

The drive to Vienna over limestone Alps was punctuated by pilgrimage. The first was at the Benedictine Monastery of Admont (below left) with its magnificent library. Thursday 16th June was the feast of Corpus Christi when the people process in local costume following the monstrance carrying the Blessed Sacrament. Sir John managed to get a ringside view for the procession but was upstaged by Gervase and Margaret Forster who somehow managed to end up leading the procession in their yellow Ghost before speeding away no doubt blessed by the experience. John and Kathy Deane picked up the procession in Mariazell (below right) , one of the world's oldest pilgrimage sites.



The final step before Vienna was Mayerling. I had introduced in my vignette the night before the topic of *The Mayerling Affair: Tragedy, Crime, Scandal*. This was the scandal of Prince Rudolf's suicide in 1889 and the depredations visited on the body of his mistress Mary Vetsera who was supposedly disappeared out of history but in fact added to it. Very little remains of the original hunting lodge which Franz Joseph demolished in favour of a Carmelite nunnery, but the small tea-house was original and the site of a rather grisly exhibition. What was left was however well displayed in a no holds barred exposé with some wonderful photos of the time.

The route into Vienna took us past the Abbey of Heiligenkreuz (where Mary Vetsera was buried) and onto the motorway. Arriving in Vienna is often hot and bothersome but this one was challenged by a spiral corkscrew ramp to the carpark level 3 which tested the 3-point turn uphill when reverse gear is in kangaroo mode. Some participants left their cars outside the hotel after special permission had been obtained from the Vienna Police Department. The Palais Hansen Kempinski was soothing and air-conditioned, so all were restored before dinner at the Mezzanine Restaurant.



Sir Michael Kadoorie's splendid 1936 Phantom III (3AZ158) Three Position Drophead Coupé leads the alfresco parking outside the Kempinski Hotel on Vienna's Ring

Here it was the turn of Martin Halusa to introduce us to *The Ringstrasse (Arts and Culture of the Jahrhundertwende in Vienna)*. He described the demolition of the old fortifications of the city and its replacement with the fine treelined Ringstrasse and the building of those palatial residences belonging to some of the rich and often Jewish families. He mentioned the astonishing flowering of culture. Names such as Klimt, Schiele, Mahler and Freud. A fine and fluent vignette which he told us was produced for 'fear of the headmistress'.

Fortunately, Angelika took this as a compliment and indeed confirmed that the qualities of a headmistress have been very useful in the organisation of this trip, what with the endless changes of personnel at the hotels and venues not to mention the participants whom we accept need to be kept in order. On the ladies table, dining in the Pichlarn Restaurant, she had summoned the chef to ask from what lake the remarkably cod-like 'trout', had been caught in. He sheepishly admitted that this was not trout but indeed cod. What attention to detail.

The Ringstrasse (Arts & Culture of the Jahrhundertwende in Vienna) by Martin Halusa



Martin & Susanne Halusa (right) with Chip & Jacque Connor at Schönbrunn

Our headmistress, Angelika, has tasked me with speaking about the Ringstrasse and how its creation led to the high-point of arts and culture of Viennese modernism.

The Ringstrasse is the boulevard on which our hotel, the Kempinski Palais Hansen is located and which you walked along to reach this dinner venue. As its name indicates, this broad, treelined road forms a ring around Vienna's inner city. It follows the perimeter of Vienna's medieval walls and the glacis, the 300 meter wide military no build zone in front of the wall.

The Vienna City walls existed since the current inner city was a roman fort called Vindobona. In 1192, Leopold V of the Babenberger Dynasty, who were predecessors of the Habsburgs, used the enormous ransom of 23 tons of silver to build the walls which remained more or less in the same location until they were razed. The funding was provided by the English for the release of Richard Lionheart, whom Leopold had captured on Richard's return from a crusade.

In 1858, Emperor Franz Joseph took the decision to raze the walls. The task was completed six years later. The reason for the decision was two-fold:

- First, the inner city of Vienna was overpopulated and squalid. Over 400,000 people lived within the walls, with an average of 53 people per building. In comparison, the inner city of Vienna today has 16,000 inhabitants. There were no green spaces and the walls prevented air to circulate which led to the fact that tuberculosis caused 25% of all deaths.
- Second, in the revolution of 1848 the protesters had barricaded themselves in the city and closed the gates. All of a sudden, the enemy was within and the army outside the walls. To avoid that happening again, the army insisted that the Ringstrasse is not round but consists of six straight segments, the lengths of which correspond to the reach of an artillery shot at the time.

The razed walls together with the glacis created an enormous space available to be developed. The development took almost 50 years in which 850 buildings and many parks were created. Different to Paris or Berlin, there was no Imperial master plan that was implemented, but in the typical Austrian way of muddling through, the army, the city of Vienna, various ministries and the court all negotiated a series of compromises. One stroke of genius, however, was to create a development fund. The fund would receive money by selling building sites along the Ringstrasse and would spend this money on erecting public buildings.

The question was who would buy and develop the available building sites. It was not the aristocracy whose main source of wealth was agriculture. Agricultural profits had been in continuous decline since serfdom was abolished in 1782 and indentured serfdom ended in 1848.

The new wealth was with the investors and industrialists who had funded Austria's belated industrial revolution, in particular the building of the railroads from the 1830s onwards. This new form of transportation had led to an enormous increase in trade, capitalized by the Vienna Stock exchange which was opened in 1812.

Many of these newly created capitalists were Jews. In the Austrian Monarchy they had been prohibited from owning land and had only been allowed to work in trade and money lending. In order for the development fund to access these wealthy customers, the full emancipation of the Jews was decided in 1867 with all citizen rights, including the right to own land. At the time, about 40,000 Jews lived in Vienna and they owned about 80% of the Viennese stock market capitalization.

Many of the leading Jewish families such as the Rothschilds, Guttmanns, Schey, Tedesco built magnificent palaces along the Ringstrasse. For example, the building you see at the corner opposite was built by the Ephrussi family: wealthy grain traders and bankers from Odessa whose family history, including that of this particular building, is documented in the wonderful book *The Hare with the Amber Eyes* by Edmond de Waal.

Their purchases funded the creation of many public buildings along the Ringstrasse, such as the Royal Opera, the Royal Theatre, the Parliament, the university, the city hall, several museums and the new wing of the Royal Palace infamous for its courtyard and balcony from which Adolf Hitler announced the Anschluss in 1938. The Staatsoper is shown below, in 1863 under construction, and in 1898.



The architectural style applied to build the Ringstrasse was historicism, akin to the Victorian style in England. It applied the vernacular of previous ages, considered appropriate for their modern use: for example, the Parliament, logically, is neo-Hellenistic, the city hall neo-gothic reminiscent of when the first burghers established themselves. The arts and science buildings such as the university, the museums and the opera house are neo-Renaissance, while the Royal Theatre is neo-Baroque. Our hotel, which was conceived as a hotel, was built by one of the leading architects of the Ringstrasse, Theophil Hansen, in the neo-Renaissance style.

The opening of the Ringstrasse was an unequivocal success. It turned Vienna into a metropolis to rival Paris and Berlin. It triggered a vast population migration to Vienna. Between 1850 and 1910 the population increased four-fold from 500,000 to two million which is more than today. The Jewish population increased five-fold from 40,000 in 1867 to about 200,000 in 1910. This population explosion combined with the wealth created from industrialization drove Vienna to be one of the leading cities in Europe and a magnet for intellectuals and artists.

- In philosophy and science, you had Sigmund Freud, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Arthur Schopenhauer;
- In music, Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schönberg the father of the 12-tone music and Alban Berg
- In literature Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rainer Maria Rilke, Arthur Schnitzler and Karl Kraus to name just a few;
- In economics you had the Austrian school with Friedrich von Hayek and later Joseph Schumpeter.

In terms of art and architecture, the defining moment was the foundation of the Vienna Secession in 1897 by the artists Gustav Klimt, Koloman Moser, the architects Josef Hoffmann and Joseph Maria Olbrich. It was an association of avant-garde artists of the fin de siècle who rejected the artistic norms of historicism and the conservative attitude of the official artist association, the Künstlerhaus. In 1898, they built an exhibition hall, designed by Olbrich, called the Secession, which still exists as a venue today. The best place to see the work of the Vienna Secession artists such as Gustav Klimt, Richard Gerstl and in particular Egon Schiele, is the Leopold Museum. Besides its extraordinary permanent collection, they currently have an exhibition of Alfred Kubin. In the Secession itself you have temporary exhibitions of contemporary artists, but in the basement, they have preserved the famous Klimt mural of the 1903 exhibition dedicated to Ludwig van Beethoven.



The famous Wiener Werkstätte evolved from the Vienna Secession and was founded in 1903 by the painter Koloman Moser, the Architect Josef Hoffmann and the industrialist Fritz Waerndorfer. The idea was to bring aesthetic design and fine craftsmanship to the applied arts in terms of jewellery, homewares, furniture, leather goods and fashion, much like the arts and craft movement in the UK. Its major customers were the wealthy, primarily Jewish, Ringstrassensociety, as they were called, who were looking for a new, modern identity other than the traditional aristocratic tastes. Of course, it ended up being highly elitist, always lost money and went bust after the stock market crash in 1929. Today, the objects are much sought after and are considered pioneers of modern design which later influenced Art Deco and the Bauhaus. There is currently a wonderful exhibition of the designs for the Wiener Werkstätte by Josef Hoffmann at the Museum of Applied Arts.

I hope the next three days will whet your appetite to come back to Vienna with more time to enjoy its long and rich history, its architecture and museums, its music, its gastronomic delights and its leisurely pace of life. To quote Gustav Mahler: 'if the world comes to an end, I will move to Vienna. There everything happens 50 years later'.

The author continues:



Vienna at leisure for two days based at the Kempinski Palais Hansen. Clare and William were photographed outside the hotel with Gervase and Margaret Forster and 60NE.

So much to see and do. Many corners were covered with trips to the various museums or just wandering the streets and drinking in the cafes. St Stefan's Cathedral, The Capuchin Crypt (site of the tombs of many of our now more familiar Habsburg protagonists), Schubert Mass at the Augustinerkirche, The Vienna Boys Choir and The Spanish Riding School. A select group of us including Dolans and Shadducks made it to the extravagantly ornate Opera House for Orpheo. Early music but a highly original production. John Dolan was impressed by the individual i-pads attached to each seat with details of the opera and translations of the score but sadly not the football score. We did not waste our time.

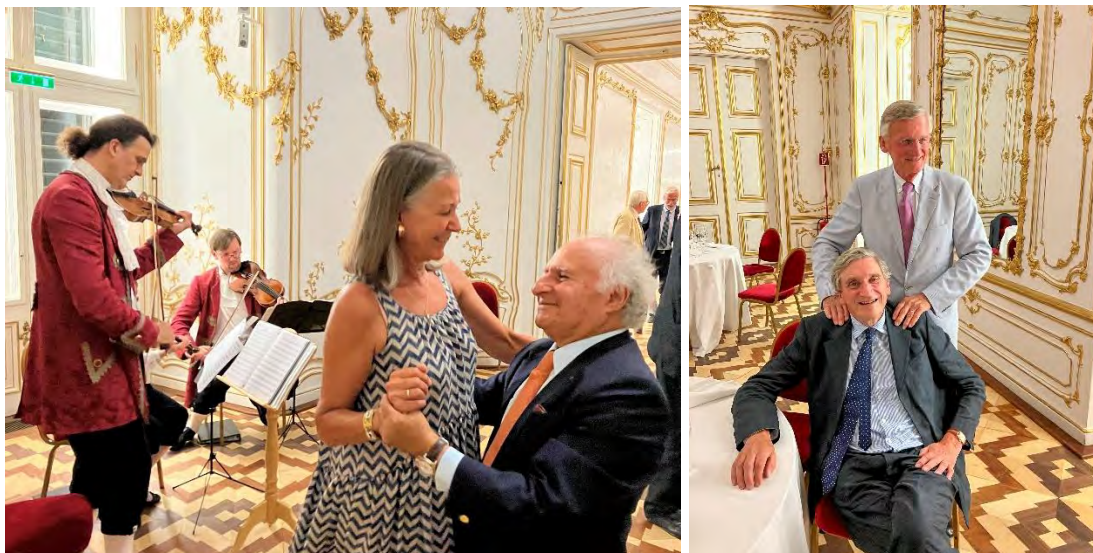
On the second evening in Vienna, we were treated to a private tour of the Hofburg Imperial Apartments with questions being asked of some of the erstwhile occupants. Sisi's mother-in law Countess Sophie, Sisi's Greek teacher and her Hungarian lady-in-waiting (the recital of another poem from Elizabeth-Jo Harriet). The Emperor Franz Joseph himself deigned to speak to us. Clayton Banks crept back for a further audience and witnessed him carrying a Marks and Spencer bag. Hastily hiding the bag from view 'Franz Joseph' did agree that he was looking forward to the end of the evening and a cool beer. We moved on to dinner in the open at Plachuttas Gasthaus zur Oper for a traditional Austrian dinner of Wiener Schnitzel and potato salad. The portions were immensely generous and sadly we had no dogs to feed.



Our last day in Vienna featured an optional tour of the Vienna Woods, site of the Imperial hunting grounds. The route covered the Höhenstrasse which included a dust-free road for automobilists started in 1907. Extensions offer recreation and 'motoring joy, so the participants joyously wound their way from Grinzing to Stift Klosterneuburg - Austria's oldest wine estate. The impressive Monastery of Klosterneuburg founded in the 12th century and remodelled in Baroque style was stuffed with treasures. The route back took in the Kahlenberg hill which in 1683 was the site of Vienna's victory over the Ottomans. From there were views of Schloss Schönbrunn, site of our dinner that evening.



Schloss Schönbrunn was a relaxed coach trip from the hotel. A wedding gift for Maria Theresia the renowned Empress alluded to frequently during our trip. She, who was not allowed to be official Emperor but with the compliant husband Emperor Francis, was known by all to wear the trousers despite begetting 16 children. We saw her impressive lacquer room and a magnificent State bed. Drinks were in the courtyard to the lovely strains of the Mozart Ensemble, who serenaded us throughout the evening and encouraged dancing from those of the party who were either fleet of foot or sufficiently uninhibited to take to the dance floor. Strictly Come Dancing eat your heart out. If prizes were to be given, Terry Bramall and Jane Forbes would have to feature and of course Michael and Angelika as most glamorous couple. Angelika danced with Sir Michael Kadoorie (below left), while William Corbett (below right) received treatment after physical excess on the dance floor.



Grand Hotel River Park, Bratislava (20th June)



Monday 20th June saw us back in our cars for the Marchfeld Castle Tour to Bratislava. The first castle was Schloss Eckartsau, in theory closed for a wedding but this did not deter eager viewers. Tom & Mary Jo Heckman's 1914 Silver Ghost Tourer (36PB) is shown above, parked at the entrance. The museum was small but interesting for original film footage of Franz Joseph's funeral and the wedding of the last Emperor Karl to Zita as well as grim viewing of first World War memorabilia and film of soldiers suffering from shell-shock. Next was Schloss Niederweiden, an informal hunting lodge lacking in shade for the cars so bypassed by some. This, too, was remodelled under Maria Theresia but fell into disrepair under the Red Army. Finally, the impressive Castle Hof (pictured below). This was a baroque palace which had belonged to Prince Eugen. He was a man renowned for military victories including helping the Habsburgs against the Turks.





Crossing the Danube at the end of the day we found ourselves in Slovakia heading for Bratislava. This had been very much part of Hungary and, in 1536, then called Pressburg, was declared the capital. It was the site of the crowning of Maria Theresia as Queen of Hungary in 1741, from her portraits a substantial lady. William Corbett alluded to this in his vignette on the Austro-Hungarian Compromise. She spent months training to ride a stallion, wearing the pudding basin shaped Hungarian crown with iconic bent cross, to the top of an artificial mound. In her hand she carried a sword to be turned to the four corners of the kingdom. Hungarians are proud horsemen, and she did not disappoint.



Permission to park on the plaza (seen left) of the hotel River Park organized for the cars was revoked but not in time to stop Fokko and Helene whose car remained stalwartly in place for our one night stay with the agreement of the hotel manager who admitted to admiring the car. The hotel had an excellent riverside restaurant, where we able to savour our first Slovakian wine.

Walks were undertaken to the historic centre of town and meals were taken on the banks of the Danube or within the city walls. The heavens opened but amazingly by morning clear skies resumed and we were spared wet driving throughout the trip bar a few drops on latecomers in Vienna and when pedestrianised in Budapest.



Chateau Appony, Slovakia (21st & 22nd June)

Leaving Bratislava, the urban sprawl extended for some considerable way before emerging into rolling fields with no fences. Very few animals were seen. Terry and Liz Bramall managed to spot a few pigs. The Forsters found bees and were treated to honey tea. The first recommended stop was at Svätý Jur, but it seemed a little early in the day to enjoy a glass of Chardonnay in the local bar and winery.



Our destination for two nights was Chateau Appony, seat of the Hungarian Appony family and set in beautiful grounds with the ruined Chateau Oponice a walk away. Gerald Davies & Fran Fuzzey's 1927 Phantom I Torpedo Tourer (95LF) is shown on the left parked at the hotel entrance.

Other cars were photographed in the parking area of the chateau.



We were treated to a tour of the fully restored Baroque library with 15,000 books. Our guide was keen to show off the American millionaire who had visited along with Josephine Baker and other luminaries. This was followed by a vignette by William Corbett on *The Hungarian Compromise*. After that, dinner was served on the terrace as we were blessed by the continuing good weather which was a feature of the tour.



The Hungarian Compromise by William Corbett

The Austro-Hungarian Compromise was an agreement made in 1867 whereby the Habsburg Empire was divided into two separate states of Austria and Hungary with each having effective self-government but each still subject to the Emperor as Head of State.

To understand how and why this happened it is necessary to go on a short tour of the history of Hungary.

Hungary from the medieval period to the 19th century was huge, incorporating modern Hungary, parts of modern Romania, most of Slovakia, parts of Ukraine, bits of the Balkans and parts of modern Poland. It was a mixture of nations. The Magyars (or Hungarians) were, in the medieval period, the majority race but by the 19th century it was a country of many races and many languages. But it retained a distinct sense of itself. Why?

Medieval Hungary was an important medieval kingdom with a strong allegiance to its monarchy. The monarchy which was part hereditary, and part appointed was represented by the famous Crown of St Stephen an 11th century crown shaped like a pudding basin and surmounted by a bent cross. The bent cross has become iconic but was not the result of any brave battle but rather of an official slamming the down the lid of its box in the 16th century.

In 1526 at the Battle of Mohacs Hungary was defeated by the Turks and the King was killed. Hungary was divided into three parts. The Turks ruled southern Hungary. Eastern Hungary (Transylvania) was semi-independent under Turkish influence and Northern Hungary was taken by the Austrian Habsburgs.

When the Ottomans were finally defeated and withdrew in the late 17th century the entire country came back under Habsburg rule but unlike many of their other dominions the Habsburgs were never able to fully Germanise and Catholicise it and fully integrate it in their dominions. The principal reasons for this were

1. So much of Hungary had been under Ottoman rule for so long
2. Hungary kept out of the religious wars of the 17th century and Protestantism (mainly Calvinism) remained strong in Hungary. The high nobility was, or reverted to, Roman Catholicism but the minor landowners and commercial classes were Calvinist as was Transylvania
3. The strong historic sense of nation
4. The monarchy and the Coronation. Under Hungarian tradition when a King died his eldest son would not automatically become King. There would be no King until a new King (who might or might not be the eldest son) was chosen and crowned. The coronation was the crucial act. Accordingly, the Hungarian nobility would never accept the authority of a Habsburg Emperor unless and until he was crowned King of Hungary.

As an aside this system proved very helpful in allowing Maria Theresia to be crowned Queen of Hungary. She practised for weeks for the coronation ceremony. It took place in Pressburg (now Bratislava) and involved her mounting a white stallion wearing the pudding basin crown and holding a sword and then galloping to the top of a hill made from the soil of all parts of Hungary and at the top turning the stallion and brandishing the sword to all four corners of the Kingdom. She carried it off magnificently and always commanded the loyalty of Hungary.

So, this was the Hungary under Habsburg rule when Napoleon defeated Austria and conquered most of Europe.

Following Napoleon's defeat Europe was reconfigured at the Congress Of Vienna. Partly due to Metternich's skill, Austria came out as a substantial territorial winner at the Congress. The Congress tried to put back the Ancien Regime. But there were new forces at play . Liberalism. Nationalism. The rise of a prosperous middle class alienated from power by the nobility. In Germany a new confederation was established with Austria as President, but this was challenged by a powerful and ambitious Prussia.

The Ancien Regime could not hold. Revolts broke out in France in 1830 and then all over Europe in 1848. Apart from the pressures of liberalism and nationalism, the situation was exacerbated by a potato blight and harvest failures all over Europe. The crowds came out onto the streets. For the rulers of Europe, the memory of the French Revolution in 1789 was recent and raw. They knew that crowds on the streets could mean Kings being guillotined.

The King of France fled into exile. There were riots in Vienna and Budapest and Metternich fled to England. The Habsburg court fled Vienna to Innsbruck. In Vienna the liberals formed a parliament. Also, in Budapest led by Andrassy and Kossuth, a Diet was called, and very strong liberal demands were made. The Emperor Ferdinand, a weak and epileptic man, gave in to the demands from Hungary, enacting the April Laws.

In the Spring all seemed lost for the Habsburgs. But they fought back. There were military victories in Italy. Ferdinand abdicated in favour of Franz Joseph who was crowned Emperor of Austria (but not King of Hungary). The liberals in Vienna started to fall out. In 1849 Kossuth sensing the Habsburg resurgence made a bid for freedom and declared a fully independent Hungary. There was a full war between Hungary and the Habsburgs with Serbia/Croatia remaining loyal to the Habsburgs. Initially Hungary started to win but then Czar Nicholas and Russia intervened, and the Hungarians were defeated. Andrassy and Kossuth went into exile. Thirteen Hungarian generals were executed at Arad. It was a disastrously brutal political mistake. Hungarians have never forgotten Arad. The Austrian soldiers were reputed to have drunk and chinked glasses during the brutal hangings. As a result, no Hungarian would chink a glass for 150 years. Andrassy himself was sentenced to death in absentia and hanged in effigy. He was known in Paris as 'le beau pendu' – the handsome hanged man.

Martial law was imposed on Hungary and all the April Laws revoked. Under Bach as governor some good work was done in Hungary with railway building and the start of a commercial and industrial society, but there was seething discontent against the Habsburgs.

Meanwhile the Empress Sisi visited Hungary and became entranced with its culture and its people. She learned Hungarian, she wore Hungarian dress and hunted with the Hungarian nobility; she came to know Ferenc Deák, a lawyer and rising new political leader, and also Andrassy who was now allowed to return to Hungary. It is suggested she was also entranced by Andrassy, a legendarily handsome man. She tried to influence Franz Joseph to give a degree of independence to Hungary and acted as go-between for the major Hungarian politicians and the Emperor.

Meanwhile things went badly for Franz Joseph and the Empire. He thought of himself as a military man, but he managed only to involve his Empire in disastrous wars. He was coaxed into a war with Napoleon III and lost at Solferino. Under the peace treaty all of Lombardy was lost. There was fierce rivalry with Prussia as to who should dominate Germany. It eventually broke out into war engineered by Bismarck. The occasion of the war was a dispute over the succession to the dukedom of Schleswig Holstein. The dispute was so complex that Palmerston remarked 'Only three people have ever understood the Schleswig Holstein question. The first was the Prince Consort who is dead. The second was a German professor and he has gone mad. The third was myself and I have forgotten'. Austria was badly defeated at Königgrätz (muzzle loaders were no match for Prussian breech loaders) and Veneto was lost. Austria was now very weak and could not afford to have a recalcitrant Hungary.

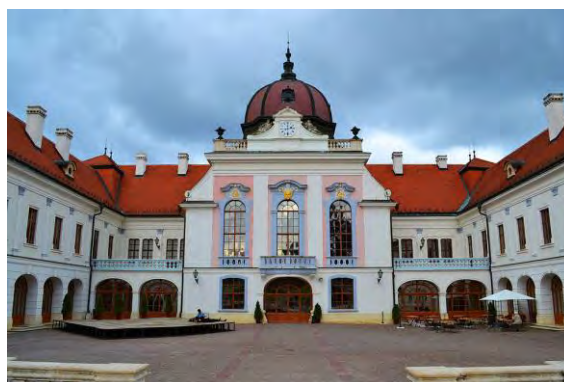
It was in these circumstances in Christmas 1865 that Deák was sitting in his rooms at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel. There came a knock on the door. It was the Archduke Albrecht, the military governor and a hated man who had nearly been lynched in 1848 on the Chain Bridge. He had come to ask for terms.

Terms were negotiated. Hungary would become pseudo-independent. The Empire would be divided between Hungary and Austria (technically called Cisleithania as the division line was the River Leitha). Franz Joseph would be Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary. Austria and Hungary would each have their own parliament. Only defence and foreign affairs would remain joined. These areas were handled by joint ministers responsible to the Emperor. Delegations from each parliament would meet to discuss matters of common interest centralised in Vienna and these matters would be run by common ministers subject to parliamentary committees from both sides. There was a crown council to advise the Emperor comprising two prime ministers and an Emperor's choice.



Gróf Andrassy Gyula (1823–1890) and his statue next to the Parliament in Pest

The compromise was celebrated with great ceremony in Budapest. It was rather like a decolonisation ceremony with flags lowered and raised etc. Franz Joseph was crowned King of Hungary and Sisi crowned as Queen – an unprecedented honour. In 1866 Sisi had asked Franz Joseph to buy her Gödöllő Palace; he refused. In 1868 the Hungarian Government bought it for her as a gift for her coronation.



Did it work? In Hungary there remained a party who saw it as a sell-out. They had deputies in the Parliament – ‘the 1849 ers’ and Kossuth, who remained in exile, was their spiritual leader. And there were some plots to go for full independence. But the majority backed the deal – ‘the 1867 ers’ led by Deak and Andrassy. Andrassy became Prime Minister of Hungary. As he noted he had received his new chain of office in exchange for the noose that he had been previously sentenced to.

One distinction between the now created two halves of the Empire was in the treatment of minority races. Initially the compromise was seen by some as a way that the Magyars could suppress their minorities while the Germans could suppress theirs. As Andrassy said ‘You look after your Slavs, and we will look after ours’. In Hungary the Parliament was hugely biased towards the Hungarian Magyars (48% of the population and 90% of the seats). Magyarisation was enforced. For instance, the Magyar language was strictly enforced. There were movements amongst the minorities to go for a revision of the 1867 compromise and Franz Ferdinand was a backer of this movement. But these movements made little progress. In Austria the position was different. There was no dominant race in the Parliament and no common language was adopted. German, Czech, Polish, Ruthenian, Croat, Serbian, Slovenian, Italian, Romanian and Russian were all permitted. Deputies could not understand each other, and the parliamentary sessions became a tourist attraction and free theatre. Many matters of dispute went to the courts. There were 7,000 judges in the Austrian Empire against 162 in the UK at the time. However, against the odds, competent government did emerge. Liberal laws were passed, the economy flourished, and a prosperous middle class (with a strong Jewish element) emerged in Budapest.

In both states the tensions were masked by a period of strong economic growth. This was manifest in railways, industrialisation and the emergence of a strong middle class and very prosperous Jewish communities. And so, the compromise held until 1914 and the outbreak of the First World War but that is another story.

The author continues:

On the following day, the Moravian countryside was visited in a circular tour including a gentle climb. The minor roads were wonderfully free of traffic. The tour took in the castle at Nitra visited or viewed from afar as it perched on a hill. Rolling countryside took us on to Kistapolcsány Castle. Stuart & Ruth Evison, Ron & Nanette Elenbaas and Bill Johnston & Ronda Stryker were all interested to view the National Stud farm next door which breeds Arabs and Lipizzaners among others.



The castle, itself purchased by the Habsburgs in 1890, had moved ownership to the Czechoslovak state and Masaryk's office was on view amongst other diverse objects including an enamelled table of Louis XIVth surrounded by 17 medallions of all his mistresses. The décor was in keeping with its current trade union ownership. Albert Eberhard, who often seems to have a language at his fingertips, told us that Russian gave him a good understanding of the Slovakian guide. So, he was able to pay rapt attention. Monique ever-dutiful navigator was by his side. The rest of us had to make do with crib sheets and some slunk away early. The basement bar was frequented by a team of Slovak school children. They were fascinated by the influx of these ancient automobiles. Wonderfully self-assured, they engaged in conversation and were fascinated to meet a genuine American in the form of Doug Magee.



This tour was followed by a vignette on *Sisi & Diana a Comparison* by Lady (Lesley) Stuttard which she gave on the terrace of Chateau Appony. After the vignette, the hotel arranged a barbecue, also on the terrace, with a lively local string band accompanied by a delightful young girl playing the cimbalom. This is a box on legs with strings stretched across the top which she struck with cotton tipped sticks. Later in Budapest at the Aszu restaurant we heard an equally proficient player who was able to serenade Denise Dolan on her birthday with tunes of Happy Birthday and 'I Did It My Way'.



Above left: Clayton & Helen Banks, Angelika Elliott, Clare & William Corbett and Michael Elliott



Above right: Stuart & Ruth Evison, Denise Dolan and Ronda Stryker



Helène Boonstoppel and Fokko Keuning



Margaret & Gervase Forster, with Roland Duce



Gerald Davies, Liz & Terry Bramall and Fran Fuzzey



Jane Forbes, Fran Fuzzey, Kathy & John Deane



Delwyn Klevenow, Kimberley Shadduck and Denise Dolan



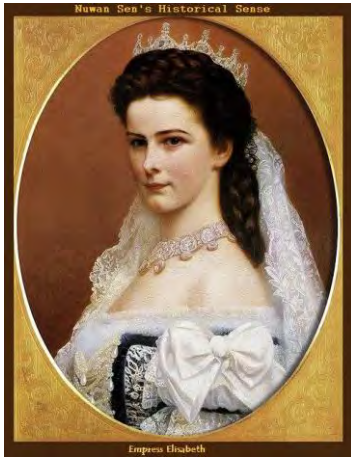
Jacque Connor, Martin & Susanne Halusa, Chip Connor



Above left: Tom Heckman, Sandy Sayer, John Snook, Alex & Strone Macpherson and Mary Jo Heckman



The Similarities and Differences between Empress Sisi and Princess Diana by Lady Stuttard



You may have noticed that some of the buses on the Ring had the Winterhalter portrait of Sisi on the back. This was to advertise an exhibition at Schönbrunn called 'Empress Sisi, the Princess Di of her time'.



And there are definitely similarities in their lives. Both were married young, Sisi at 16 and Diana at 19 and both to men who were reported to be interested in their elder sisters at one time! Franz Joseph had been considering becoming engaged to Helene, Sisi's elder sister, but then fell in love with Sisi. And Prince Charles briefly dated one of Diana's elder sisters, Lady Sarah Spencer. And both Sisi and Diana found themselves thrust into the glare of publicity in an unwelcoming and unsympathetic court. Both had had a non-court, country upbringing. In fact, it meant that they were able to converse with ordinary people and gave them both the common touch that their husbands lacked. And both covered their shyness with an emphasis on their appearance. They were both regarded as great beauties and became national icons. They both faced a public adoration verging on hysteria and were the subject of endless gossip, paintings and for Diana, press attention. They both went to extreme lengths to stay slim, Sisi with her exercises and corsets, Diana constantly going to the gym, and both had strange diets and eating disorders. They both later looked back on their wedding day as being traumatising with all the crowds watching. And they both died tragically, Sisi assassinated in her sixties by an Italian revolutionary anarchist, who had originally wanted to kill Prince Henri of Orleans. (When the Prince cancelled his visit to Geneva, the anarchist read in the newspaper that Sisi was staying at the Beau Rivage Hotel, and she became his target.) And Diana was killed in a car crash in Paris, aged only 39, while being chased by paparazzi.

But I think there were also huge differences in their lives. Sisi's was a love match, and she was lucky to have supportive parents. She had four children but was separated from them by her controlling mother-in-law, and sadly lost the first born girl to illness at a young age. She was only really close to the youngest child, Marie Valerie, with whom she did manage to spend time. In fact, Marie Valerie's diaries are very sad, dominated by her mother's odd whims, worrying about her father Emperor Franz Joseph, and then the tragic death of her older brother Rudolf, whose parents had not realised how alienated he had become. You cannot imagine any of that happening to Diana. Although she was caught in a loveless marriage and finally divorce, her two sons were a great joy, and she gave them a happy and secure childhood. Diana also took on a role with her charity work and empathetic approach to the sick and dying, and she did keep up her Royal duties.

Sisi was certainly more cerebral than Diana, learning several languages including modern Greek and writing endless poems. She was also far more self-centred in pursuing her love of hunting and restlessly moving from place to place, spending a lot of time away from Franz Joseph and Royal duties. Both Sisi and Diana embarked on affairs, but Sisi did at least find a suitable mistress for her neglected husband, Frau Schatt, an actress in Vienna. Of course, Diana did not need to do that!

But for me the big difference between the two is Sisi's involvement in politics as William explained and as you will find out in Hungary. Diana seems to have been apolitical. Sisi had learnt Hungarian and appointed a Hungarian lady-in-waiting, initially to have someone in whom to confide, in a language that no other court lady could understand. And then, whether by learning to love Hungary, or by clever manipulation, she became involved with the pro-Hungarian movement. She persuaded Franz Joseph firstly to reinstate the outlawed Hungarian nationalists from the 1848 uprising and subsequent repression, and then arranged for their joint coronation as King and Queen of Hungary. This gave Hungary far more power within the Empire and ensured Sisi's huge and enduring popularity in the country we are about to visit. There we will find out more about the coronation and the palace they were gifted.



Kempinski Hotel Corvinus, Budapest (23rd, 24th & 25th June)



The author continues:

The final drive was to Budapest. On the way stops were made at the 19th century Esztergom Basilica, seat of the Catholic church in Hungary and a huge and imposing neo-classical structure with ornate interior. It was a hot day and some of us found a handy lift which took us to the top of the hill from the car park. Others like Gerald Davies and Fran Fuzzey did it properly and went all the way up to the dome. These intrepid climbers and drivers were planning to extend the tour and drive home, not quite to Botswana. Dave Shadduck and John Dolan were to be seen circumnavigating the church holding handbags having lost Kimberly and Denise to the interior. Ron Elenbaas was spied snoozing feet up in car deciding to avoid the citadel entirely.

En route to Budapest, the country road up and down to Szentendre was nice and shady and happily not overused, unlike the route 11 to Budapest which seemed intent on bypassing it. The old town of Szentendre features Baroque architecture, churches and colourful houses for those that managed to access it. I am afraid we took a wrong turn and ended up in the station car park, not a scenic spot to be recommended.



Budapest the final countdown. The first night was free. Jane Forbes reported on the iconic Első Pesti Retseshaz restaurant. Strudel available with every course. The 19th century Café Gerbeau was an easy walk and frequented by quite a few. Ruth and I favoured the suitably named Esterhazy slice. Delwyn Klevenow and Jeremy Greene (he of rebuilt knee-cap fame) were enthusiastic about the covered market.



Budapest is a mecca for tourists and renovations are proceeding apace. The Parliament building has the Hungarian crown. The Fine Art gallery had an exhibition of Hieronymus Bosch. We were punished for Brexit by not being afforded our senior status. The thermal baths were a must. Mary and John Narvell raved about their time in the Art Nouveau Gellert baths finding it remarkably restorative.



The second evening featured a visit to Gödöllő Palace. The palace itself as mentioned by William was a coronation gift to Sisi from the Hungarian government in gratitude for her interventions in support of the Austro-Hungarian compromise, Franz Joseph having rejected it as too expensive. Originally built by the Hungarian Grassalkovich family in the 17th century, it too fell into disrepair under Soviet occupation but benefitted from massive refurbishment. In the grounds we were greeted by a lovely Sisi look-alike accompanied by a less look-alike clean-shaven Count Andrassy. William had unfortunately circulated a photo of this dashing Count, friend of Sisi and known as ‘le Beau Pendu’. This referred to his hanging in effigy after the 1849 Hungarian rebellion. He was pardoned by Franz Joseph and returned as Prime Minister of Hungary in 1867. To revert to the photo, he was a heavily bewhiskered man and had failed the popularity contest with our ladies. Nanette Elenbaas and Ronda Stryker were particularly unimpressed. Tastes have changed.



Ron and Bill rejoice.

Sir John gave us our final valedictory vignette on *The end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire*. We were saddened ourselves that the approaching close of our most enjoyable and informative tour felt similarly as remnants left to experience in memory.



The two look-alikes then guided us around the rooms culminating in the fine dining room, site of our gala dinner. Musical accompaniment was from an accomplished harpist.

To Dr Michael Elliot's horror, news had leaked that today was his birthday and a fine cake was produced topped by an ambulance.

This struck a chord as it was Michael who had helped to summon an ambulance for William back at Schloss Pichlarn and persuaded them to allow me (Clare) to sit in the front rather than their suggestion to follow on by car. Would have been tricky in a 1920 Ghost when the blue lights are flashing, and you don't know where you are going.

The end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire by Sir John Stuttard

As we recall from Fokko's vignette, Kaiser Franz Joseph's reign started well. He set about stabilising the Austrian Empire. In 1867, to prevent the threat of Hungary wishing to break away, he granted Hungary equal status with Austria in what henceforth became the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary.

His marriage to Elisabeth (Sisi), the daughter of the Bavarian Duke Maximilian Joseph, assisted Franz Joseph's plans. She learnt Hungarian and was much loved by the Hungarians who gave the couple Gödöllő Palace, near Budapest, as a coronation gift.

But as he grew older, Franz Joseph became more set in his ways and was unwilling to adapt and respond to changing circumstances. Without a change in attitude and direction, the forces of nationalism (German, Italian, Hungarian, Slav and Romanian) proved too difficult to resist.

There were also family tragedies which hastened the end of the 900-year Habsburg history as a major ruler in Europe.

- First, albeit remote from Austria's national concerns, but still wounding to the house of Habsburg, was the fate of Franz Joseph's brother Maximilian. Established by the French as Emperor of Mexico, he was executed by a Mexican firing squad in 1867.
- No less grievous to the dynasty and of more concern to Austria-Hungary was the suicide of the Crown Prince Rudolf in 1889, though his fitness for the Imperial and Royal succession was questionable
- Then the assassination in Geneva of Empress Sisi in 1898 was a terrible blow, removing a beneficial influence
- This was to be followed in less than two decades by an assassination of world shattering consequence: in 1878 Austro-Hungarian forces had 'occupied' Bosnia and Herzegovina, which belonged to the declining Ottoman Turkey. In 1908 that territory was formally annexed to Austria-Hungary in a manner that was outrageous not only to Serbia (which coveted Bosnia for itself) but also to Serbia's patron, Russia. Visiting the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo, in 1914, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir presumptive to the Dual Monarchy, was shot dead by a nationalist Serb. This led to the final blow. The Empire declared War against Serbia and then against its ally, Russia. The First World War began with inevitable consequences for the losing side, Germany - and Austria-Hungary.

Emperor Franz Joseph died at the age of 86 in the middle of the War, in 1916. He was succeeded by his nephew Karl, but the die was cast. Franz Joseph had reigned too long. His desire to expand the Empire into the Balkans against the rising tide of nationalism was to prove disastrous. He had become set in his ways presiding over an Empire which was experiencing tremendous social and political change. As the War was drawing to it close, in October 1918, American President Woodrow Wilson demanded that the various nationalities of Austria-Hungary should have the 'freest opportunity to autonomous development'. The nationalism that had seen the break-up of the Imperial Czarist Empire was also wreaked on the Habsburg's last remaining Empire. On 11th November 1918, Emperor Karl announced his intention of withdrawing from Austrian politics and he relinquished his right to take part in Austrian state affairs. Two days later he issued a similar proclamation for Hungary. Although Karl did not officially abdicate that was the effective end of the Habsburg Empire.

Looking back, one admires the foresight and the drive of some members of the Habsburgs over the centuries. However, one can't help feeling a touch of sadness over events and practices which led to the final act of the dynasty. There was an obsessional focus on family control; some of the family members met a tragic end; the aging Franz Joseph failed to realise that the Empire he had inherited was changing. The result was the loss of the Habsburg's world, their palaces, their grandeur and an end to the family's many accomplishments and contribution to Europe over centuries. 900 years is a long time for one family to have such a dominant interest in so many countries and over so many people. It was a Wagnerian tragedy.

One thing is certain. Nothing lasts for ever except, perhaps - the memories, the history, the wonderful music, the fine art, the fine food, the fine wine and, of course, the magnificent buildings such as the Royal Palace of Gödöllő. Tonight, we will be shown the State apartments and we can enjoy dining in the grand hall just as Franz Joseph and Sisi might have done after they were given this palace by a grateful and admiring Hungarian Government.

Clare Corbett finalises her reflections on the tour

Saturday 25th June was the final day and loading of the cars for transportation from the Formula 1 circuit at Hungaroring.



John Dolan with 1908 40/50 (60756)



Ron Elenbaas backing 1912 40/50 (1676)



Gervase Forster with 1921 SG (60NE)



John & Kathy Deane with 1934 PII Continental,
EM Rogers driver and tour engineer, Roy O' Sullivan

The afternoon was free for more sightseeing.



Left: Delwyn Klevenow finds an interesting mural



Right: Perhaps the world's most beautiful café inside the Anantara New York Palace Budapest Hotel

The final dinner was preceded by a journey in hired minicabs to Buda Castle and a private tour of the Crypt in the company of Archduke Joseph von Habsburg-Lothringen and his wife, Princess Margarete of Hohenberg. The entrance was through the National Gallery with Art Deco posters and artefacts on view and teeming with people. This was the day the Hungarians open all museums until midnight. The crypt itself was the only part of the castle to survive the bombing during the war and the fine marble tombs remained intact and cool.

The final dinner was in the Halászbástya Restaurant. The top floor was a circular turret with stunning, balcony views over the Danube and the whole of Pest. This provided an exceptional venue for the pre-dinner champagne cocktail party, with a gypsy band.



Clare & William Corbett and John & Kathy Deane



Kimberly & Dave Shadduck, Bill Johnston and Denise Dolan



Fran Fuzzey & Gerald Davies



Jane Forbes, Roy O' Sullivan and Gervase Forster



Ronda Stryker, Ken Forbes and Terry & Liz Bramall



Strone Macpherson with Stuart & Ruth Evison

The setting for our grand finale was a cavernous room, featuring a large circular table, flanked by vaulted chambers all under the turret terrace. A Habsburg cousin (a cranio-facial surgeon and keen driver) and his wife joined us and were instrumental in getting the band to play authentic Hungarian songs.



Joseph von Habsburg-Lothringen and his wife,
Princess Margarete of Hohenberg



Dr Michael Elliott, Sir John Stuttard,
Joseph von Habsburg-Lothringen and Angelika Elliott



Mary Narvell, Terry Bramall, David McKirdy, Sir Michael Kadoorie, Liz Bramall,
John Narvell and Ruth Evison



Angelika Elliott thanks and awards prizes

Angelika produced surprise presents for the vignettters and for John Narvell who had so



valiantly produced the TomTom route guides. Ken Forbes initiated the thanks and introduced Mary Narvell. Poetry was the flavour of the evening as Mary recited her ode to our magnificent organizers, Angelika Elliott and Sir John Stuttard. The gifts included a book of Sisi poems as translated by Elisabeth-Jo Harriet. David McKirdy (poet) kept his light under a bushel and was not outed by Sir Michael Kadoorie.

Sir John Stuttard presented Angelika with a suitably Hungarian Herend tea set, chosen by Lesley who knew Angelika's preference for tea in the morning. And so ended the unrepeatable Habsburg Tour.

Mary Narvell's Limerick Vignette:

Two weeks ago it was
We set out on a quest
To drive our RR cars
In search of Franz Joseph.
The Emperor had an Empress
The beautiful Sisi
We would learn about her life
With all its tragedy.
In Bavaria we'd start
In Budapest complete.
Angelika, Sir John
Your planning was a feat.
A masterful route book
Navigators never cried
All we had to find?
A nearby konditorei.
Thoughtful too you added
Abbeys for our prayers
That Roy need not be called upon
To engineer repairs.

At night the food divine
Fine wines a certain bet.
And as an appetiser treat,
An historical vignette.
Be it shots at Mayerling
Or the Habsburg family tree
No detail was neglected
From Wien to Hungary.
And through it all there wove
A landscape so sublime,
Our cars enjoyed the ride
And every mountain climb.
Gala dinners, music too
You worked to fill our hearts
Delivering a Gute Reise
And a Gute Fahrt.
To tell you Vielen dank
Is inadequate at your success
In treating us all here
As Emperor and Empress.









Participants and their cars

	<p>John & Denise Dolan 1908 40/50 Open Tourer Chassis number: 60756 Coachbuilder: Wilkinson Registration number: R-549 Photo: Kimberly Shadduck</p>
	<p>Ron & Nanette Elenbaas 1911 40/50 Roi-des-Belges Chassis number: 1676 Coachbuilder: Littin Registration number: FY-718 Photo: Ron Elenbaas</p>
	<p>Martin & Susanne Halusa 1912 40/50 Torpedo Tourer Chassis number: 2079 Coachbuilder: Wilkinson Registration number: BF-5491 Photo: Martin Halusa</p>
	<p>Doug Magee 1912 40/50 Tourer Chassis number: 2092 Coachbuilder: Arthur Mulliner Registration number: R-1472 Photo: Kimberly Shadduck</p>
	<p>Albert & Monique Eberhard 1912 40/50 Cabriolet Chassis number: 2145 Coachbuilder: R Fry & Son Registration number: BF-8058 Photo: Kimberly Shadduck</p>

	<p>Dr Terry Bramall CBE & Liz Bramall 1913 Silver Ghost Tourer Chassis number: 23NA Coachbuilder: Ferguson of Belfast Registration number: IA-4 Photo: Kimberly Shaddock</p>
	<p>Stuart & Ruth Evison 1914 Silver Ghost Tourer Chassis number: 11AB Coachbuilder: Mulliner Registration number: R-2114 Photo: Kimberly Shaddock</p>
	<p>Tom & Mary Jo Heckman 1914 Silver Ghost Tourer Chassis number: 36PB Coachbuilder: Brooks Ostruk Registration number: 6009 Photo: Tom Heckman</p>
	<p>John Snook, Mike Beveridge & Sandy Sayer 1914 Silver Ghost Tourer Chassis number: 50YB Coachbuilder: Clanfield Registration number: LE-7478 Photo: Kimberly Shaddock</p>
	<p>William & Clare Corbett 1920 Silver Ghost Tourer Chassis number: 60AE Coachbuilder: Woodall Nicholson Registration number: 79-FLY Photo: Klaus-Josef Rossfeldt</p>
	<p>Gervase & Margaret Forster 1921 Silver Ghost Tourer Chassis number: 60NE Coachbuilder: Lopes Registration number: SV-6608 Photo: Gervase Forster</p>

	<p>Sir John & Lady (Lesley) Stuttard 1921 Silver Ghost All Weather Tourer Chassis number: 33LG Coachbuilder: Harrison Registration number: XF-7646 Photo: Peter Baylis</p>
	<p>Clayton & Helen Banks 1922 Silver Ghost Tourer Chassis number: 34MG Coachbuilder: Hooper Registration number: JL-1 Photo: Klaus-Josef Rossfeldt</p>
	<p>Bill Johnston & Ronda Stryker 1923 Silver Ghost Tourer Chassis number: 23EM Coachbuilder: Replica Registration number: S-22 Photo: Ron Elenbaas</p>
	<p>Jeremy Greene & Delwyn Klevenow 1923 Silver Ghost Tourer Chassis number: 41EM Coachbuilder: Windovers Registration number: XR-3431 Photo: Klaus-Josef Rossfeldt</p>
	<p>Ken & Jane Forbes 1924 Silver Ghost Tourer Chassis number: 68RM Coachbuilder: Windovers & Jarvis Registration number: S-46 Photo: Klaus-Josef Rossfeldt</p>
	<p>Gerald Davies & Fran Fuzzey 1927 Phantom I Torpedo Tourer Chassis number: 95LF Coachbuilder: Robinson Registration number: YU-7464 Photo: Sir John Stuttard</p>

	<p>Peter & Regula Velvart 1927 20HP Tourer Chassis number: GHJ66 Coachbuilder: Edmunds Metal Works Registration number: ZG-97310 Photo: Peter Velvart</p>
	<p>Jean-Pierre & Alexandra Müller 1928 20HP Cabriolet Chassis number: GKM22 Coachbuilder: Barker Registration number: ZH-5947 Photo: Klaus-Josef Rossfeldt</p>
	<p>Dave & Kimberly Shadduck 1929 Springfield Phantom I Newmarket Chassis number: S138FR Coachbuilder: Brewster Registration number: AW-18395 Photo: Kimberly Shadduck</p>
	<p>Strone & Alex Macpherson 1930 Phantom II Continental Tourer Chassis number: 62GY Coachbuilder: Hooper Registration number: GH-2966 Photo: Rosemary Jeffreys</p>
	<p>John & Mary Narvell 1931 Phantom II Continental Sedan Coupé Chassis number: 67GX Coachbuilder: Carlton Carriage Company Registration number: DR-9727 Photo: Ron Elenbaas</p>
	<p>William (Chip) & Jacque Connor 1933 Phantom II Henley Roadster Chassis number: 277AJS Coachbuilder: Brewster Registration number: 749-LBM Photo: Kimberly Shadduck</p>

	<p>Dr Michael & Angelika Elliott 1933 Phantom II Continental Drophead Sedan Coupé Chassis number: 80MY Coachbuilder: Barker Registration number: AGN-333 Photo: Klaus-Josef Rossfeldt</p>
	<p>Roland Duce & Kimberly Hughson 1933 Phantom II Continental Tourer Chassis number: 31MW Coachbuilder: James Young Registration number: ALP-178 Photo: Klaus-Josef Rossfeldt</p>
	<p>John & Kathy Deane 1933 Phantom II Continental Sports Enclosed Limousine Chassis number: 121RY Coachbuilder: Hooper Registration number: AYV-929 Photo: Klaus-Josef Rossfeldt</p>
	<p>Sir Michael Kadoorie & David McKirdy 1936 Phantom III Three Position Drophead Coupé Chassis number: 3AZ158 Coachbuilder: Gurney Nutting Registration number: DXT-7 Photo: Kimberly Shaddock</p>
	<p>Fokko Keuning and Helène Boonstoppel 1937 Phantom III Saloon Chassis number: 3CM65 Coachbuilder: Mulliner Registration number: EYY-333 Photo: Klaus-Josef Rossfeldt</p>